

After Death 271

Chapter 271

The sound of laughter sounded.

It was Steven laughing coldly.

I wished for him to hurry and escape.

Michael was nothing but a scoundrel.

"Stephie won't go with you." Michael's voice was deep. Then, he ordered his bodyguards to take action.

"Did you actually think I came alone?" Steven chuckled. His voice was cold and hoarse with an unnerving edge.

"Mike..." Yasmin's trembling voice came from outside the door.

As I forced my eyes open, I saw a tall figure in a cap holding a knife to Yasmin's throat.

Steven didn't come alone.

I felt rather relieved.

"Mike..." Yasmin's face was pale with fear. Half of her face was swollen from a burn, and her long hair was cut short due to being singed by the fire.

"Steven!" Michael looked at Steven with intense anger.

Steven scoffed and there was a frightening chill in his eyes. "What's more important to you? Your lifesaver or your personal interests?"

Yasmin, who couldn't help but tremble, cried out, "Mike, save me."

Michael gripped his hands tightly and glanced back at Yasmin.

Clearly, he was unable to decide.

He knew if Steven lost control, Yasmin would likely be killed.

I struggled to sit up and shook my head to clear the dizziness. Though I felt a bit confused, I was mostly okay.

An unexpected advantage seemed to be that Stephany's body, as a new vessel for my soul, didn't fully align with the drugs' effects.

However, Peter was a dangerous element to me. His hypnosis treatments had a significant impact on me.

I needed to stay away from him. He was like my biggest threat.

Steven had a moment of panic when he saw me wake up. Fear flashed in his eyes.

He probably feared that I might have forgotten him again.

Michael, too, watched me anxiously. Hopeful yet unsure, he called out to me tentatively, "Stephie."

He hoped I had forgotten Steven and only remembered him.

"Stephie, come here." Michael gestured for me to choose his side.

I glanced at Michael and then got off the bed.

Steven tried to reach out at me but quickly withdrew his hand as if he'd been electrocuted.

He was unsure if I still remembered him or if I would be frightened by him.

I reached out and took Steven's hand and asked with a hoarse voice, "Where did you go?"

Steven went stiff. His eyes were red as he pulled me into a tight embrace. "Some rats were chasing me. I'm sorry to make you wait again."

I leaned my head against his chest and smelt blood. I smelt blood on him.

He was injured again.

Those people deserved to die.

Those who hurt him deserved to die.

I wanted to kill them all so badly.

"Stephie..." Michael sounded panicked. He clearly didn't want Steven to take me away.

With Peter's treatment, it wouldn't be long before I forgot Steven again.

But if I left now, his plan would be ruined.

"If you don't let us go, Yasmin will die." I looked at Michael and forced him to choose.

Yasmin continued to cry, "Mike, I'm scared."

Michael got annoyed and clenched his fists. I could tell he was hesitating.

"Stephie, he's insane. He will only worsen your condition. Your parents made me promise never to let you be with him. Stephie, please come back to me, will you?"

Michael pleaded softly.

Ignoring his plea, I looked up at Steven and said, "Steven, I want to eat mango pudding."

Steven shook his head. "You can't."

"Why?" I asked softly.

"You're allergic," Steven whispered and held me close.

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"But I like it..." I whispered softly.

I loved mango pudding, but ironically, I was allergic to mango. So every time I sneaked a purchase, Steven would cover for me, claiming it was his favorite. He only allowed me to have a little while eating the rest himself.

He said he loved mango pudding.

But in reality, it was "Stephanie" who loved it.

He was just “forced” to like it.

“Just a little then,” Steven said softly. He was ready to take me away.

Michael stood rigid while trying to make an explanation.

“Stephie...

“I remember telling you ‘Stephanie’ is allergic to mangoes.” Before, his ignorance was excusable, but now,

his continued obliviousness seemed glaring. Love was apparent even in the little things.

“Stephie, it’s not like that. Since you’re Stephany now, I assumed...” Michael was trying to explain that Stephany wasn’t allergic to mangoes.

Still, he was subconsciously suspicious of my identity as Stephanie.

Yet, he stubbornly and obsessively wanted to transform Stephany into Stephanie,

He wanted to treat me like his puppet, a perfect substitute.

love will

“Michael, you’re as selfish as ever. You love no one, only yourself. Didn’t anyone ever tell you fake? Especially love that’s obtained through deception.” I retorted sarcastically while firmly holding

Steven’s hand.

He went to great lengths to deceive me, yet still failed to cherish what he had.

Michael’s hands fell limply. He wanted to say he loved Stephanie.

However, his throat seemed to hurt so much that he couldn’t speak.

He had put in so much effort to make Stephanie love him, to become the lover in her heart.

But in the end, he only moved himself.

“If you don’t want Yasmin to die, let us go,” I spoke again while holding Steven’s hand firmly.

I would not let go of him anymore..

I owed him too much.

Steven’s aggression seemed much lessened perhaps because of my presence. He would look at me softly.

“Stephie, he’s bad. He always wants to take you away,” he whined again.

I tightened my grip on his hand.

Michael’s eyes darkened. In fact, he had no intention of letting us go.

I knew he was stalling for time. Martin's men were probably already on their way.

"Mike, save me!" The threat to Yasmin escalated as the knife nicked her neck. She cried and begged

Michael to save her.

I looked into Michael's eyes. He was waiting.

Suddenly, I grabbed a knife from one of the guards and held it to my own neck.

What if "Stephanie" died?

"Stephie..." Steven panicked and looked at me helplessly.

Michael, too, became frantic. "Stephie..."

"Let us go." My gloomy eyes were fixed on him.

Michael had no choice but to give in. He stepped aside, and the guards opened the door.

I took Steven's hand and led him out.

"Steven, let's go home."

I took him to escape.

Steven smiled as he watched my back and felt me holding his hand.

"Stephie, let's go home."

"Stephanie, he can't protect you. The loss of memory isn't a choice that can be controlled, but you can. It's only the memories you strongly want to forget that get sealed away. You don't love him! It's you who wants to forget him!" Michael shouted from the doorway.

I stopped, but I didn't turn back.

Steven looked at me anxiously. He was scared.

What exactly were the memories that made me so desperate to forget, to erase Steven and everything related to the orphanage from my mind?

"Stephie, don't listen to him," Steven's eyes went red. It was as if he was begging me not to abandon him.

"I don't care what memories I've lost. Right now, all I want is to go home with you." I held his hand and was ready to leave.

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"Steven, your grandfather has passed away. You need to oversee the funeral, Martin said in a deep voice as he stepped out of the car.

I watched him warily because I was aware that his visit was about more than just about a funeral.

“Your grandfather’s body is still in the morque, and we need a direct relative to sign for the cremation. You can’t let him rest unattended, can you?” Martin put on a compassionate look, as if he was just a concerned elder.

Frowning. I glanced at the cars following him and realized the presence of the media.

Ignatius death was a big deal in the business world, and many media reporters were watching. Even if Martin was putting on a show, he needed to make it convincing.

I stepped in front of Steven and whispered, “Steven, don’t be scared.”

With the media around, Steven was safe for now.

After all, they wouldn’t dare harm him under the spotlight.

Martin’s eyes, unseen by others, were sharp. I knew he was furious about his failed attempt to kill Steven a few days ago. Now, with the media swarming in, it’d be difficult for him to make a second attempt.

Steven stood behind me. His gaze signaled the person holding Yasmin to release her.

The person complied and stood with a cold demeanor behind Steven.

It was evident Steven trusted him.

“Mr. Ford, thank you for helping me find Steven. This boy loves freedom too much to be confined at home,

Martin said gently while playing the role of a kind old man in front of the media.

Michael brushed away his gloominess and walked over. He was also a businessman and fundamentally

no different from Martin.

“The passing of my family head is a big deal. I appreciate your assistance today. Let’s discuss the collaboration between the Lincoln and Ford Groups at the charity dinner.” Martin extended his hand to

Michael.

His mention of collaboration clearly meant assuming control of the Lincoln Group.

Apparently, he had assumed ownership of the Lincoln Group.

He deliberately announced the collaboration in front of the media.

He was trying to hype as well as Steven,

pressure

I was a little worried as I looked back at Steven. However, the corners of his mouth seemed to be carrying a hint of a smile that was hard to detect.

“Steven, the media is here. He won’t do anything to you at the moment. Let’s stabilize the situation. Don’t

resist. Follow my lead,” I whispered.

Steven hid his emotions and put on a scared look. “Stephie, will you protect me?”

I held Steven’s hand tightly and nodded. Following that, I turned to the reporters and wiped my tears. Grandpa’s death has deeply affected Steven. He’s been managing his emotions lately and he’ll be sure to get over his grief in the shortest time possible. He’ll be back to manage the Lincoln Group so that grandpa’s hard work isn’t let down.”

The cameras turned to Steven.

The latter appeared reluctant but didn’t dodge them.

“Is it true Steven has a mental illness?” a reporter asked.

I smiled at the reporter. “I believe all of us, even the so-called normal people, have mental illnesses to some extent. He’s fine and has already recovered.”

“Are

e you Steven’s wife? Who will manage the company now that Mr. Ignatius is gone? I heard no one agrees to have Steven, a mentally ill person, run the company. Meanwhile, Martin seems the most qualified.”

Martin frowned. He seemed to be displeased by the media’s involvement.

“Martin is just a distant relative who benefited from the Lincolns and grandpa. But as the sole heir, the Lincoln Group rightfully belongs to Steven.” I gazed over at Martin in challenge.

His attempt to kill Steven hadn’t been forgotten.

Martin looked at me meaningfully but surprisingly stayed silent.

Things didn’t seem right. He was definitely plotting something.

“Stephie, I want to go home, Steven whispered from behind me.

I nodded to him reassuringly and hinted that I would protect him.

The reporters wanted to ask more, but I cut them off. “Sorry, but I’m tired. I’m pregnant, and I get dizzy if I stand for too long. We’ll be leaving now.”

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Leaning into Steven’s arms, I deliberately brought up my pregnancy again to provoke Martin.

Even if Steven was no longer there, I still had our child.

“Mr. Lincoln, Mrs. Lincoln!” Ewan’s car was parked nearby. He opened the door for us to get in.

I glanced at the silent man in the cap, who was vigilantly protecting Steven from behind.

“Who is he?” I asked softly after getting into the car.

“A bodyguard,” the man replied before Steven could answer.

“He’s Joel Bart, Ewan’s adopted son. He’s in charge of our safety,” Steven explained in a low voice.

Joel hummed under his breath, then pulled down his cap and gazed out the window.

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There seemed to be some hostility coming from him, but I couldn’t tell if it was directed at me or someone else.

I glanced at Steven and Ewan.

One was his adopted father, and the other was his employer.

If the hostility I sensed from Joel wasn’t directed at them, then was it aimed at me?

It wasn’t like I had offended him.

“Ewan, did you arrange for the reporters in advance?” I asked.

Ewan glanced back at us through the rearview mirror before nodding. “Yes.”

I sighed in relief, realizing he wasn’t as clueless as I thought. At least Steven didn’t come alone.

He had brought a bodyguard, informed the media, and held Yasmin hostage to thwart Martin.

“Stephie, you’re amazing. With you around, they won’t dare bully me,” Steven smiled at me innocently.

I felt a bit guilty. Wasn’t he the one who had saved me?

Joel gave another noncommittal hum from the passenger seat.

I wondered if there was an issue with his nose.

I looked out the window as Ewan drove past Martin’s car, and my face instantly darkened.

The person who hadn’t gotten out of Martin’s car was actually Peter.

In fact, I had researched Peter. He was a formidable psychiatrist and a renowned counselor in Huma, having received numerous awards and the highest honors in his field years ago. He was considered a prodigy in the field of mental illness, both in Huma and globally.

The weirdest thing about this was that the subject he had been working on was the direction of therapeutic research on children with hypermale disorder and those deemed inherently bad.

Hypermale children were known for genetic anomalies leading to uncontrollable tempers. Without altering their genetics, curing their condition was virtually impossible

Yet, Peter had a wealth of clinical experience and many successful treatment cases. Numerous parents, desperate to normalize their children they consider bad, have entrusted them to Peter's care, hoping for a transformation post-discharge.

Peter rolled down the car window and looked over.

I felt a chill down my spine and instinctively avoided his gaze.

An inner voice warned me that this man was dangerous,

"Why is Peter with Martin?" I asked, my voice trembling slightly.

"With the media now involved, any attempt by Martin to eliminate Mr. Lincoln would raise suspicions. He's likely shifting his strategy to focus on Mr. Lincoln's supposed mental illness by collaborating with a psychiatrist," Ewan replied softly.

My breathing started to quicken. I understood what they were planning to do.

They intended to use Steven's alleged illness to justify forced treatment,

Since they couldn't eliminate Steven, they'd aim to mold him into an obedient puppet. Frightened, I held Steven's hand tightly. "I won't let them hurt you. No one can."

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Joel gave another hum from the passenger seat.

I looked at him with confusion and whispered to Steven, "Does he have some kind of issue?"

Steven's eyes darkened as he nonchalantly said, "He has rhinitis."

His comment seemed casual but carried an implicit threat.

As expected, the handsome guy with rhinitis stayed quiet after that.

I took a closer look at Joel. He was tall, but I couldn't see his face clearly as he was wearing a cap.

I couldn't discern his features clearly, but something about him made me think he was a handsome man. He didn't seem old either, especially since his voice sounded like a teenager.

Sure enough, Ewan stopped the car outside Hunan High School.

However, Joel was reluctant. "I don't want to go."

"You have exams soon. Even if you don't want to, you have to go, Ewan threatened in a low voice.

Joel hummed again. "I can get into college without studying, and it's useless even if I do. I'd rather protect

He didn't finish his sentence. Instead, he looked back at Steven before huffing again. "See? The moment I leave, he ends up like that."

I blinked and found his way of insulting people quite new.

“Get to school now,” Ewan warned, gritting his teeth.

Joel seemed like a troubled teen. He reluctantly got out of the car and huffed yet again.

I was starting to believe that he really did have rhinitis.

“And take that hat off!” Ewan scolded like an ordinary parent frustrated with his child.

I had always thought of Ewan as a robotic workaholic however, brought out a more human side in him,

with little emotion. Seeing him interact with Joel,

Joel cast a resentful glance at Steven, who didn’t even lift his eyes. He was too busy holding me.

Joel took off his cap in frustration and threw it onto the passenger seat before turning to leave.

I caught a glimpse of him. Sure enough, he was indeed a handsome man.

Joel was tall, especially for a high school student. He looked much better without his hat, and his buzz cut gave him a bit of a rebellious air. While he wasn’t as strikingly handsome as Steven, he was certainly a

standout.

I glanced between Joel and Steven.

Sure enough, Steven had a more charming look.

Feeling like I’d found a treasure, I rubbed Steven’s cheek and said without thinking, “You’re no handsome.”

Steven cuddled into me and beamed. “I’m yours.”

My ears felt hot. He was such a tease.

Just as Steven was about to take advantage of the moment for some affection, the car door opened again. Joel had returned. He demanded of Ewan, “Give me some allowance money.”

I fell silent.

Ewan pulled out an envelope from the central console and handed it to Joel.

This time, Joel didn’t glance at Steven but gave me a dark look.

His eyes made me tense up.

He was attractive, and it wasn’t malice in his eyes. However, there was an indescribable feeling he gave off that made me feel nervous.

The car door closed again with a bang, and it startled me.

Ewan apologized. “I’m sorry, Mr. and Mrs. Lincoln. Due to work, I’ve neglected him and spoiled him.”

“If he’s been neglected, then discipline him. Set rules. Otherwise, cut his allowance,” Steven said with a

low tone.

It sounded like a warning.

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“It’s normal for teenagers to be rebellious. It’s okay. He’s handsome. I bet he’s popular at school.” I quickly changed the topic.

Joel had just stepped out of the car when several girls surrounded him. It was clear that they liked him.

Steven, however, seemed quite unhappy. He held my face, making me turn to face him. “I’m good-looking.”

I nodded in agreement. Indeed, he was more handsome.

Steven definitely had a more striking appearance.

I was incredibly grateful that Steven had been in the genius program since his teens. If he had attended a regular high school, girls would have probably gone crazy over him. Then, where would I have been in that scenario?

I was genuinely relieved. “I’m glad no one else took you from me.”

Even someone as despicable as Michael had many admirers.

In fact, Michael was quite good-looking. He was tall, and plus he came from a good family. As I recalled, the girls crazy about him were numerous, but only Yasmin ever really got close to him.

That showed Yasmin must have had some tricks up her sleeve.

Yasmin would be perfect in a palace drama. She’d surely survive to the end.

Ever since “Stephanie” died, Yasmin had been playing weak. She didn’t dare to use her real “talents” because she knew the murderer was after her. Hence, she had been quiet for a while.

But I doubted she would stay quiet forever.

How could she not hold a grudge when I burned her hair and almost destroyed her face? Impossible. She was probably biding her time for revenge.

Besides, Yasmin believed that Steven was behind the murders. I bet she had a hand in Martin’s plot against Steven.

This woman was utterly devious. She and Michael were perfect for each other. The both of them should be locked together.

How did I not see it before?

At least my previous death was not in vain.

“Stephie, it hurts a lot.” Seeing me lost in thought, Steven tried to draw my attention. He rolled up his sleeve to show me the bruises and scrapes on his arm, which were still healing.

I looked at his arm with concern. These were probably the least severe injuries.

I wanted to see the rest of his wounds, but he hugged me tightly, “Stephie, Michael is bad. He wanted to take you away and won’t let me see you. His men hit me.”

Steven whispered his complaints about Michael.

“This is where his men hit me.” He pointed to a particularly swollen spot that looked recently inflicted. It must have happened when I was unconscious, during the time he broke into the Fords and was assaulted by the Ford’s bodyguards.

“And this, too.” Steven continued his complaint.

I listened silently while burning with anger. Michael and Martin’s collusion against Steven was clear. They were leaving no room for him to live.

Back at Steven’s place, Ewan had a doctor treat Steven’s wounds before leaving.

“Stephie, it hurts so much. Michael must be after my life,” Steven said innocently. He seemed aggrieved.

I clenched my fists and vowed to remember this resentment toward Michael.

“Lie down and get some rest.” I comforted Steven to sleep and then went downstairs to call

Michael.

“Michael, you’re a jerk! You disgust me!” I started the call with a barrage of insults at Michael.

Michael sounded excited to hear from me, but due to my scathing words, he changed the subject. “Stephie, don’t trust Steven. He’s a murderer.”

I cut him off. My fingers were shaking with anger. “Shut up! You’re the murderer! Steven is my husband. It’s his right to take me away, but you wanted him dead! Your bodyguard was harsh! I don’t care what you and Martin plan to do, but I swear if you lay another hand on him, I won’t let you off.”

Michael fell silent on the other end.

After a while, he spoke, “Stephanie, who was harsher? My bodyguard or him? I only wanted them to stop him, but he almost killed my guard.”

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“Michael, I have eyes. Weren’t those injuries on Steven caused by your men?” I found Michael disgusting. He never admitted to his deeds.

“Where did he get hurt? My guard almost died stopping him, and he’s still in the hospital,” Michael said. His voice shook with anger.

“I don’t believe a word you say.” I then cursed at Michael again and didn’t give him a chance to argue before hanging up the phone.

Chapter 277

Steven had hidden upstairs without my knowledge. When I noticed him, he seemed to be secretly chuckling. However, when he saw me looking, his eyes filled with a pretense of sorrow. “Stephie, I’m in so much pain. I can’t sleep.”

What else could I do? I sighed and went upstairs to comfort him. I felt like I owed it to him.

“Stephie, give me a massage.” Steven requested. He lied on the bed and extended his arm for

a massage.

Distractedly, I massaged his arm.

Martin was unlikely to give up easily. Steven had just had an accident, and shortly after, I was also involved in an incident. Not long after, Ignatius had passed away. Martin’s tactics were ruthless.

“Stephie, it hurts here too.” Steven pointed to his chest.

Preoccupied with how to counteract Martin’s moves, I absentmindedly massaged wherever Steven pointed.

His chest was firm. Where had he built such a physique during his wandering years? It must be his genetic advantage. What would that make someone who spent every day in the gym?

“Stephie, my stomach hurts too.” Steven glanced at me. He was obviously pushing the envelope.

I was contemplating how to retaliate against Martin for the gifts he’d sent us recently.

Steven took my hand and placed it on his stomach, so I rubbed it.

His abs were well-defined and felt nice to touch.

But I wasn’t in the mood to appreciate it. The connection between Martin and Peter was troubling to me.

It was likely Michael’s doing. After all, he had never shied away from committing indecent acts.

The more I thought about it, the angrier I became.

He actually had someone to hit Steven.

What good could possibly come from a connection between Martin and Peter?

I couldn’t recall what Peter had done to me. He was part of the memories I had lost and it

seemed like I was terrified of him.

“Stephie, it hurts here too,” Steven said while moving my hand lower.

I was lost in thought with my head propped on one hand. Meanwhile, my other hand...

When I realized what was happening, I instinctively raised my hand and smacked him.

Next thing I knew, I saw Steven curled up pitifully while covering his lower abdomen in pain.

“Stephie, you’re murdering your husband.”

My ears burned red. I grabbed his ear and warned him, “Shut up.”

Steven obediently went silent. He buried his head in the pillow, looking like he was about to suffocate himself.

I sighed helplessly and rubbed his head. “Steven, how are you planning to handle grandpa’s funeral? It needs to be grand, with lots of media coverage. You need to cry and act as a dutiful grandson.”

I said this softly, though I knew it was hard for him.

Ignatius had been harsh and even abusive towards Steven.

They had neglected Steven, leaving him in the orphanage despite knowing about his existence. They only wanted to bring him back to the Lincolns to add glory to the family when they realized he was a genius.

Yet, when his “madness” overshadowed his brilliance, they ruthlessly abandoned him. They even wanted to erase this blemish completely.

The Lincoln family’s lack of humanity was starkly evident.

“The funeral won’t happen,” Steven said deeply while burying himself in the pillow.

Steven’s voice was cold and laced with bitterness, likely due to his throat’s condition.

“Won’t happen?” I paused. Skipping the funeral wasn’t an option.

Martin was seizing this opportunity to manipulate the narrative.

He was promoting himself as the current head of the Lincolns, implying that the Lincoln Group should be under his control.

There was a knock at the door, followed by barking.

I knew it was a stranger who had arrived.

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But here... It should be unknown to anyone that Steven was here.

“Stevie.” I opened the door. It was the deaf uncle. He told me through sign language and somewhat non-standard pronunciation that it was Stevie who had come back.

I looked at him in surprise and then walked downstairs.

Stevie, having been sent to the hospital by Zion, must be out of danger now.

“The dog has quite a strong vitality. It’s just like its owner. It is smart enough to be a police dog.” Zion was in his traffic police uniform. He must have just gotten off work and took the opportunity to bring Stevie over.

I squatted on the ground and looked at Stevie, who still had bandages around its abdomen. I reached out to it, and the wolfhound happily wagged its tail and jumped into my arms.

At that moment, memories from

my

childhood surfaced in my mind.

“Georgie, bite him!”

“Georgie, attack!”

“Georgie, snatch!”

I recalled doing many things with Georgie in the past.

However, I couldn’t recall much at the moment.

The only thing I remembered was that I often used Georgie to threaten and intimidate

Michael when we were kids.

Thinking about those times, I could understand why Michael hated me and thought I was inherently bad. However, he should have despised me, right? Why did he pretend to be so

affectionate after my death?

Was he masochistic? I made the dog bite him when we were little, yet he still showed deep affection for me and even lied to me, saying he was my lover.

He really was sick in the head.

“Is Steven okay?” Zion asked while squatting to the side and stroked Stevie’s head.

Stevie seemed to distinguish between good and bad people. It was quite gentle with Zion.

“He’s injured and doesn’t have many good spots left on his body. He’s lying in bed right

now,” I said softly.

“Yasmin didn’t die, and Simon confessed. Recently, the killer suddenly stopped appearing and hasn’t shown up again. I wonder if this serial murder case has come to

an end. I hope Simon is the mastermind. As long as he's dead, everything will be over," Zlon whispered.

From the current situation, it seemed like the killer indeed disappeared without a trace, as if Simon's death meant the disappearance of the murderer.

"Besides, the police found DNA left over from the assault on the third female victim that

matched the DNA of the first male victim," Zion said in a low voice.

The victim was the murderer, and the murderer eventually became the victim.

The perfection of this serial murder case lied in the fact that the killer was hidden among the victims. It was impossible to guess who the next murderer would be.

"I've heard of exchange killings before, where strangers kill on behalf of each other. But I've never heard of a serial killer becoming a victim." It was obviously an organized and premeditated serial killing.

"The longer there's no new victim, the more likely Simon is the final murderer. But something tells me things aren't as simple as it seems." Zion's intuition was accurate.

I, too, believed that things weren't that simple.

"The person who killed Stephanie hasn't been found yet. Is it possible that she's also one of the future victims? For example, Yasmin was responsible for luring Stephanie to the old alley, and then the real perpetrator acted. There's definitely something fishy about her." I gazed at Zion.

I had always thought that Yasmin was not a simple woman.

Zion nodded. "Hence, besides work, I've been keeping an eye on this woman recently."

"You should also be careful too. The Lincolns are also a dangerous place." Zion stood up and glanced upstairs. Steven was standing by the window.

He waved to Steven. Just as he was about to leave, Martin arrived.

This guy really was like a bad penny.

Charles came with him this time.

"Stephy, Mr. Ignatius has passed away. You and Steven..." Charles seemed scared even mentioning Steven's name. He gritted his teeth and said, "You should get a divorce."

I looked at Charles as if he was an idiot. "What's wrong? Did the rabies virus from Ann being

bitten by the dog get into your brain?"

Charles's face darkened. "You were tricked into this marriage from the first place. As your father, I have the responsibility to help you annul it."

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I smiled. Charles and Martin were prepared to kick me out of the Lincoln family.

With the marriage contract in place, I would be Steven's legal guardian. Only I have the authority to send him to an asylum among his relatives.

If I was no longer around, Steven's guardianship would fall into the hands of Ignatius. Martin would then be able to deal with Steven as he pleased.

"Who said I wasn't aware of it? I'm determined to marry Steven. I am his wife and his only legal guardian. Is there a problem?" I said as I got up and looked at both Charles and Martin.

"This villa of Steven's is rented, Mr. Martin. No one knows that we live here, but I was almost killed at home a while back. Our address has been leaked, and today you came directly to our door.

"Don't tell me..." I looked at Steven before continuing, "The one who wanted to kill me was actually you?"

The power struggle of the Lincolns had now garnered widespread sectors. It has become a hot topic online.

attention from the media and the other

If Martin wanted to whitewash his image to take over the Lincoln Group, he would have to play the kind-hearted persona in front of the public. As such, he couldn't let anything happen to both Steven and I.

But he could certainly sow discord between us.

Martin said, "It's all thanks to the police that we could find you here, Stephany. As an elder of the Lincoln family, I also have the rights to keep both of you safe."

He smiled before continuing, "You're a smart woman, Stephany. It would work to your benefit if you leave the Lincoln family. We will give you anything you want and deserve.

"You will not lack any money, and we'll help to fill in the funding gap for the Larson family. This is all for your own good."

Since forceful approaches didn't work, Martin decided to go with the gentle approach.

Zion remained silent as he was an outsider, but he was worried these people might attack me. As such, he had been vigilantly keeping watch at a side with Stevie.

Charles said, "Your Mom and I had indeed neglected you all these years, Stephy. I was ignorant then, I shouldn't have agreed to marry you into the Lincoln family. My daughter shouldn't have had to marry a dimwit in the first place."

He was even choked in a sob as he wiped his tears before continuing, "Come back with me, Stephy. The Greysons have already annulled the marriage with Annie, and Kelvin said that you are the person he loved."

"As long as you're willing to get the divorce and abort the baby, he wouldn't mind that you've been married before. He will take you as his wife," Charles said as he eyed the car that was parked by the side.

As expected, Kelvin was here too. Was this a scumbag's gathering now?

I looked at Kelvin. He had a terrified look on his face. Clearly he was scared out of his wits by the way Steven had set the dog on him previously. He dared not come, but he had no choice,

He got out of the car and stood behind the car door, looking timid like a mouse.

"Stephy- Kelvin eyed me and tried speaking again, "As long as you leave that psycho, I'll... I'll marry you!"

I raised my eyebrows and replied, "Do you know that mental illness is contagious? I now have a mental

Illness too."

I smiled before looking at Stevie by my side and instructing, "Stevie, bite him!"

Stevie's innocent look turned sharp instantly. It then rushed toward Kelvin and pounced on him. Kelvin was scared shitless and ran into the car in a hurry before slamming the door shut.

"Stevie!" I called out. Stevie, who had been pouncing on the car door, ran back and nuzzled against my

legs.

I coldly looked at Charles, who was beginning to feel afraid, and said, "Ann's grandmother has been caught. You're well aware that your family is full of human traffickers, right?"

The overwhelming public opinion online was all zeroed in on Ann now. The Greysons wouldn't be so eager to get the divorce otherwise.

"Shouldn't you hurry back to coax your precious adoptive daughter now? What is this display of fatherly love now? You're asking me to get a divorce? Are you even worthy?" I said as I looked at

Charles indifferently while caressing Stevie's head.

He was evidently frightened by my gaze and hid behind Martin in a flurry.

He yelled, “You little bitch! We’ve raised you since you were 18. You really put on a good act on pretending to be docile so that we could lower our guards against you-”

“I’m not planning to put on an act now. What can you do to me if I don’t get that divorce?”

I raised my eyebrows and looked at Martin before saying, “Don’t tell me you’re still planning to use forceful approaches on me, Mr. Martin? I believe the media people were everywhere around this villa.

“There were even some self-media bloggers trying to sneak some videos earlier. There are cameras everywhere. You might want to calm down and think twice.”

The color drained from Martin’s face as he snorted coldly and said, “You’re overestimating yourself and

digging your own grave.”

He thought that he was giving me a way out.

“I am the legal guardian of Steven from now onwards, Martin. You’ll have to get my consent for whatever

you wanted to do with him,” I threatened with a low voice.

Martin started to laugh. He was a cunning old fox after all. I knew he had other ways around.

“The funeral is tomorrow. Remember to bring him along,” Martin said.

He then got into the car and left.

Chapter 280

Tomorrow would surely be a trap set by Martin.

I alertly watched them leave before turning back to look at the floor-to-ceiling windows on the second floor. Steven was no longer there.

He was behind me when I turned around.

“You need to be careful nowadays,” I reminded Steven softly.

He hugged me from behind and hummed a reply, “Okay.”

Zion said, “I’ve sent the dog back to you guys already. Don’t go out unless it’s necessary, there are cameras everywhere here. Many reporters and influencers are now staying in the opposite high-rise.

“They are doing live streams and recording videos of your villa. Even though there’s a lack of privacy, at least Martin wouldn’t openly do anything to you in broad daylight.

He then pointed in the direction of the high-rise and said, “I’ve also rented a place over there. Just call me

if something happens.”

I was surprised as I said, “Rachel also said that she’s renting a place in the opposite high-rise building.

Don’t tell me that you’re both neighbors now?”

Zion was stunned before coughing awkwardly and said, “What neighbors-”

They were sharing a place.

I hummed in reply before turning to look at Steven.

I said, “If you’re free, Officer Landon, we can attend Mr. Lincoln Senior’s funeral together tomorrow.’

Zion was a police after all. With him around, Martin would have to restrain himself.

it

Steven was like a huge puppy. He glared at Stevie, who was trying to come closer to me, before nodding. ”

Okay.”

It seemed like he was really at my disposal.

“My wounds still hurt, Stephie. I can’t sleep,” Steven said coquettishly as soon as Zion left.

I was not in the mood to coax him/

I asked, “Are you afraid about tomorrow’s funeral?”

Surely Martin wouldn’t let us off that easily.

“Stephie will protect me,” Steven replied, seemingly trusting in me.

He was putting me on the spot. It made me uneasy.

“Alright, I’ll protect you,” I replied with a nod before taking Steven’s hand to bring him back to his room.

Chapte 290

He smiled at me before jutting his chin out to signal Stevie to head back into its doghouse. Stevie wagged its tail sadly and reluctantly lay down in its doghouse.

“It’s really docile, as if it could understand the human language,” I muttered softly, “I used to have a pet dog when I was young too. It was similar to Stevie.”

“It’s Georgie, Steven softly uttered the name on my behalf.

I was stunned and looked up at Steven subconsciously before saying, “Yes, I think it’s called Georgie.”

“Stevie is the son of Georgie’s son,” he replied softly.

I was shocked and said, “I don’t remember my dog had-”

I couldn't recall where Georgie had gone after that. Did it die of old age? That part of my memory was

blank.

Steven lowered his gaze and tightened his grip on my hand. He opened his mouth but said nothing.

"Did I... give Georgie away to you?" I asked.

How would the son of Georgie's son be with Steven otherwise?

He remained silent for the longest time before smiling at me and said, "Georgie... died of old age."

I was relieved and said, "That's good to hear."

But for some reason, I could feel Steven trembling.