

After Death 431

Chapter 431

Since Michael was gone, nobody was around to protect Yasmin.

Yasmin was very selfish, but she had actual feelings for Michael. She was dependent on Michael and was afraid of losing him.

That was why she became jealous and fearful of Stephanie. She tried everything she could to ruin Stephanie.

But she had just lost Michael.

At the moment, it was like she lost her meaning in life.

"You killed him!" Rachel shouted. "He deserved to die, but you deserved it more!"

Zion's expression was grim too. He looked down, then said, "We should go downstairs soon."

The entirety of the seventh floor was unfurnished. It was pitch-black, and there was no electricity. There were no windows, so it was unclear if it was day or night.

The air was humid. I looked at Steven and said, "There are no manual controls on this floor, which means we can go downstairs if we locate the emergency exit. There shouldn't be any traps." Without electricity and light, it was difficult to find the emergency exit.

"Keep your hands on the wall. I'll lead. You guys can follow me," Steven whispered.

Steven left a mark on the wall and then began to move forward.

It must've been an abandoned office building development. In case they were discovered, the mastermind left the lower floors untouched and built the killing ground on the upper floors. The floor was very bare. It smelled like concrete, and there was nothing special about it.

After walking around the floor, we ended up at the same starting place without finding the exit.

"Where's the emergency exit?" Rachel asked.

I tugged on Steven to stop him.

"Steven..."

Steven held my hand to calm me down.

"Don't be scared. You can all stay here, and I'll look for it. If I find it, I'll knock on the floor to alert you. You can follow the sound."

I grabbed the corner of his shirt, my breath quickening.

I had to admit that I was worried about him.

What if... there was someone else with us on the same floor? The mastermind wouldn't let us leave easily.

If anything went wrong...

"Don't be scared," Steven whispered.

I clung to him.

"Why... must it always be you to take the risks? This time, I'll do it."

Steven hugged me and said softly, "I told you... your life matters more than mine."

Steven let me go and disappeared into the darkness.

The rest of us leaned against the wall and waited patiently.

In the empty room, the sound of

Steven's steps slowly faded

as he was taking

one step at a time

figuring his way forward. So

"Officer Landon, will we make it out alive..." Quinn sobbed.

Zion consoled, "Yes, we can make it out alive."

Eason was afraid of the dark, so he hugged Joel tightly.

"Hey man, let me hug you. I'm scared..."

"Get lost." Joel sneered.

"No way... It's so dark. What if somebody stabs me?" Eason said, shuddering as he clung to Joel.

"Wait, I'm scared. Let's do a head count. It feels like there's somebody behind me..."

Eason was the last person, and Joel

was standing in front of him. In front of Joel was the makeshift stretcher,

which Taylor had been lying on.

Ahead of him were Zion, Quinn,

Rachel, and me.

"Stephie... Are you scared?" Rachel asked softly.

"No."

I was calm as darkness was not scary to me. My senses toward the environment seemed to be numb.

"Stephany, you start the counting," Eason shouted from a distance.

I turned around to tap on Rachel's shoulder and then said, "One."

Since everyone was afraid and bored, I decided to play along. "Two," Rachel shouted.

"Three..." Quinn said with a shaky voice.

from the sound of it, it she was sitting downl.

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the

swno.

floor.

"Four," Zion shouted.

"Hello?" Eason said to Joel, trying to tell him to stop messing around.

Joel paused before saying, "There's also Yasmin....."

Just then, Yasmin's voice came near Joel's feet and called out, "Five..."

Ever since she lost Michael, Yasmin had lost her direction, but she still had a strong will to live.

She had no choice but to hold on to whatever she had right now to escape.

"Six," Joel said calmly.

"Seven..." Eason stuttered, hugging Joel.

Chapter 432

"Eight..."

Suddenly, a weird voice continued from behind Eason.

At that moment, everyone went silent and felt the chills down their spine.

There were eight people including Taylor, but he was unconscious and wouldn't have been able to answer. Who was the eighth person?

Suddenly, Quinn screamed, and everyone ran in different directions.

Eason was petrified. In a panic, he ran and bumped into somebody, who he proceeded to hug.

"Help! There's a ghost!"

But suddenly, that person started to laugh eerily.

Panicking, Eason screamed, "Help! There's somebody here!"

Eason was running around, and nobody could hold him down.

Just before he fell down the stairs, Joel pulled him and pressed him down against the wall.

"Stop screaming!"

Eason was terrified. When he heard Joel's voice, he began to bawl.

He was an adult, but he was bawling like a child.

"Stop crying..."

Joel felt like there was a ringing in his head and ears.

Eason clung onto Joel. He didn't care about being mistaken as gay and simply bawled while hanging onto Joel.

"I bumped into a ghost just now!"

"It's just somebody pretending to be a ghost," Joel said calmly.

He didn't push Eason away but simply coldly gazed in the direction of a vague figure.

"Stephie..." Rachel called out panickedly in the dark. "Stephie?"

"Rachel?"

We were all separated, so we couldn't touch each other.

"Rachel..." Quin cried out.

Yasmin didn't know who to look for, so she just kept crying, "Help..."

I frowned and said, "Rach, wait right there and don't move. I'll look for you."

Rachel stopped in her tracks and said, "Zion..."

"It's okay," Zion coaxed her.

We were all walking toward Rachel.

Suddenly, somebody made a soft grunt.

Zion and I both caught Rachel at the same time. She collapsed onto the ground and began to breathe rapidly. "Stephie... Stephie..."

I became tense. In a panic, I touched her abdomen.

Somebody... had stabbed Rachel in the dark.

"Zion..."

In the moment when she got stabbed, Rachel felt no pain. Blood

Coozing out, and p

out,

breath became heavy. Rachel's

"Stephie... Run, run..."

Trembling found her wound.

Choked up, I said, "It's okay, it's.

I

Tet you die, I won't let

"Rachel..."

Zion panicked as well. He was shocked, afraid, and choked up.

"Rachel..."

"Mmph.."

Suddenly, somebody collapsed.

"Yasmin?" Eason shouted.

"Help..." Yasmin said weakly.

She had been stabbed too.

Though the culprit may have stationed his men on this floor, I didn't hear any other footsteps near Rachel.

Somebody among us was going on a killing spree in the dark.

Suddenly, Quinn screamed too. She leaned against the wall, crying.

"Help... Save me... I... Somebody's here. Somebody's here!"

Quinn's voice began to weaken.

We were all tensed up.

Soon, both Quinn and Yasmin became silent.

Suddenly, I could sense that somebody was approaching me from behind.

I turned around to grab the knife,

which cut my hands. When the

person retracted the knife, I subconsciously tried to grab the knife and scratched that person's hand.

If there was light, I would know who had been trying to kill us.

Just then, the tapping sound of an iron bar came from a distance.

That was Steven. He had found the way out!

Chapter 433

"Don't be scared. We'll get out of here together," I softly coaxed Rachel.

"Let's go." Zion carried Rachel and stumbled forward.

"Follow me..."

I took the lead and slowly inched my way forward. I told Zion to stay close.

"Quinn? Are you okay..." Joel said as he checked on Quinn.

"She's hurt!" Eason said, panicking. "She got stabbed in her abdomen."

After briefly checking on Quinn in the dark, Eason got Joel to piggyback Quinn, who was on the verge of dying.

"Taylor, there's also Taylor."

Taylor was still at the same place.

They found their way to Taylor, picked up the stretcher, and slowly made their way ahead.

"Save me..."

Suddenly, a soft voice spoke, and a hand grabbed my ankles.

It was Yasmin.

I paused, then said grimly, "Without Michael around... Do you think any of us would still save you unconditionally? All these years, you've been exhausting our saving grace. It's about time for it to end." Yasmin's fingers were trembling, but her will to live allowed her to keep a firm grip on me.

"Did you think... that he sacrificed his life to push me out of the elevator for my sake? You're too naive, Stephany... He did it for Stephanie Carlson! How can a living person win over a dead person? That's the scariest part about Stephanie Carlson!

Enduring her pain, Yasmin continued to shout, "I still have worth. I know Peter's secrets. Michael was worried that you wouldn't be able to uncover the truth, so he sacrificed himself so that I'd live—because I'm the only person who knows the secrets!"

I frowned and kicked Yasmin's hand away.

"I'm not obliged to save you. If you want to live, get up on your own."

Yasmin cried out in despair, but her will to live enabled her to pick herself up. She pressed on her wound and clutched onto Rachel's shirt so that Zion would bring her along.

"Steven..."

We walked toward the knocking sound.

Suddenly, the sound stopped, and we started to hear the sounds of somebody fighting.

I knew somebody else was with us, and they were headed for Steven.

"Steven!" I shouted out in a panic and continued walking toward the sound.

Suddenly, there was a loud bang! Something fell from a high place.

"Steven!"

My breath quickened, and I continued to call out to Steven. I tried to find my way ahead.

Steven wasn't answering, and my heart dropped.

That was how it felt to be worried and afraid. My heart raced...

"I'm here."

Just as I began to feel helpless and afraid, a hand pulled me over and hugged me.

My breath began to stabilize, and I hugged Steven hard.

"I can't... lose you."

That was exactly what I felt at that moment.

I could not bear to lose Steven.

"I'll always be with you. Always..."

hoarse. He must be hurt. Cones. ispered. His voice

I patted him up and down, sighing in relief when I realized he had no major external wounds.

"Everyone, come over. Let's hold hands."

Steven knew we could not stay here any longer, so he told everyone to hold hands.

"Stay close to the wall, and go downstairs slowly."

Leaning against the wall, Steven

took over the stretcher from Joehet

and

200led him to go do

with Quinn.

SWO

Crackling sounds were heard from under the emergency exit. Then, glimpses of fire could be seen.

swim t

"Hello? Can you hear me?"

A voice resounded in the vacant building. It was Michael.

"Are you all okay?" Michael asked again.

Chapter 434

Yasmin excitedly went down the stairs, but she missed a step and fell down the stairs.

It hurt so much that she cried out, "Michael..."

I peeked down the stairway. With the illumination of the fire, I saw that the emergency exit from this floor would lead us straight to the first floor. "Where did you get fire?" I asked loudly.

"The elevator caught on fire after it dropped down. I picked up some construction waste and lit it up."

Michael was quite intelligent. He knew it would be dangerous to remain in the dark, so he lit up the construction waste.

"If we had known earlier, we should've gone down with the elevator," Eason mumbled under his breath.

"But our survival instincts would make us exit the elevator. It's because we weren't sure if we'd all fall to our deaths in the elevator," I said.

I began walking downstairs. With the fire on the first floor, my eyes slowly adjusted to the darkness around me.

I continued, "Humans, when faced with unknown dangers, will always choose the best possible choice for survival."

I turned around to look at Steven, who smiled back at me.

His smile had always been reassuring.

"After this incident, we should all cherish our lives. Let's live a good life, don't do anything illegal, be kind to people, don't do bad things, don't bully others, be ourselves, don't cause trouble, and don't be afraid of taking on responsibilities," Zion said in a low voice as he held Rachel.

The victims had allied to set up the series of murders and killing games.

The bullies from both the orphanage and schools enjoyed the momentary thrill, disregarding the hurt that they brought to the minorities who were bullied.

But when the victims fought back with even crueler methods, did they ever regret their past actions?

When we got to the fourth floor, Michael came upstairs.

"The people who fell downstairs are from the Genome Society. They wore masks."

Michael asked anxiously, "Are you hurt?"

Steven sulked.

"What does my wife's well-being have to do with you?"

Michael ignored Steven and scanned me up and down, sighing in relief when he realized I was fine.

Before he could say anything, Yasmin jumped into his arms, crying.

"Michael, I'm hurt... They tried to kill me amidst the chaos..."

Yasmin had finally found somebody to depend on. Bawling, she threw herself into Michael's arms and kept holding the wound on her abdomen.

She glared at me and said, "It must've been Stephany! No one else was near me then, and she was the only one who didn't get injured. She wanted to kill me because I know that she isn't Stephanie Carlson!"

I rolled my eyes in response.

That was a display of the evil human nature. Regardless of whether I

rescued Yasmin, she would still

backstab me—just like the farmer

and the viper.

"You should die..." said Rachel. Despite being weak and having to lean against Zion, she still had to curse at Yasmin.

Yasmin clutched onto Michael.

"Michael... save me."

Michael examined Yasmin's wounds and carried her in his arms.

He said to me nervously, "Stephie... She can't die yet. She knows some things... Let's hurry downstairs."

"Wait."

I stopped Michael and signaled everyone else to go downstairs.

Steven glimpsed at me. When he carried Taylor downstairs, he briefly rubbed my head.

Steven always knew what I wanted to do.

After everyone left, Yasmin looked at me and then at Michael anxiously.

"Michael, she wants to kill me... She wants to kill me. Please get me out of this place, please..."

She screamed uncontrollably, crying and begging Michael to take her away.

Michael looked at her, but he didn't move.

I scoffed. "You're right. I'm going to take your life..."

I took out a dagger and put it against Yasmin's neck. I examined her hands to see if there were any scratches.

"Do you think I'll let you live?"

I pulled Yasmin out of Michael's embrace and then kicked her down the stairs.

Yasmin cowered in pain. She couldn't even make a sound.

"Stephie..."

Michael took a deep breath and grabbed my hand.

He was afraid that I would really kill Yasmin.

Chapter 435

"Why? Does your heart ache for her?" I turned around and asked Michael.

"Do you know what's the difference between you and Steven?"

Michael looked hurt. His grip on my shirt tightened.

"No... I just don't want you..."

Michael simply didn't want me to commit a murder. He didn't want me to be a criminal.

I understood where he came from, but he did not understand me.

Michael was different from Steven-Steven would support me unconditionally. If I were the devil, he would be the devil; if I were an angel, he would be an angel.

He would exude kindness if I was kind; he would help me if I was evil.

But Steven knew me too well. He knew that I would never actually commit a crime...

After all, I had my mortals.

"This is somebody else's killing ground. Even if I do murder her, who's going to know?" I scoffed.

Then, I intentionally questioned Michael, "You wouldn't report me to the police, would you?"

Michael grabbed my wrist in a panic.

"Stephie... Don't."

"You're frighteningly righteous."

I shook Michael off and approached Yasmin. I placed one foot on her neck.

Dimly lit by the firelight, I said, "You should spill all the secrets you know now."

Yasmin was trembling from the fear and pain. Since my foot was on her neck, she knew well that it would be easy for me to kill her.

She was not an honest person. But since she refused to speak, it only proved one thing...

Peter was scarier than I was. Peter had the means to torture her.

"Yasmine, you have no other choice. If you want to live, you have to listen to me..."

I retracted my foot and got down to grab her hair.

"Even if you don't tell me, do you think Peter can trust you after we escape? For somebody as skeptical as him... If I just stir the pot, he'll make your life miserable. Why don't we collaborate?" Yasmin glared at me with hatred as she trembled.

"Aren't you worried that I'll kill you after we get out..."

"If you can, try me."

"Stephany was capable too. But she still died... So you won't be an exception to that." Yasmin continued glaring at me. She was displaying her grit.

I put my hand over Yasmin's wound and dug my fingers inside.

Yasmin screamed, and it resounded in the stairway.

I remained unfazed, and Yasmin looked at me as if I were the devil.

"Mikey, save me. Mikey!"

Michael looked at me with a conflicted gaze. He wanted to stop me, but Yasmin's life was in my hands.

"I'll tell you! I'll tell you!" Yasmin couldn't take it.

I shook the blood off my fingers in disgust.

"Tell me something I want to hear."

Otherwise, I would not let Yasmin off easily.

"Aren't you worried... that Michael will discover the truth?" asked Yasmin, lying weakly on the floor.

She looked at Michael and said, "If I say this, the secret of how you pretended to be Stephanie... will be exposed!"

"Stop babbling." I slapped Yasmin.

Yasmin cried as she lay on the floor.

She sobbed as she said, "Michael...

as

Didn't you want to know why

Stephanie Carlson and Stephany Larson are so similar? And why

she's so successful at disguising

herself as Stephanie Carlson, so

much so that both you and Steven couldn't see through her? Instead, you happily and willingly accepted her."

Yasmin continued, shouting, "That's because Stephanie Carlson and Stephany Larson are cloned embryos with the same genes. They

were transplanted onto different

mothers...

"In other words, both Stephanie Carlson and Stephany Larson are experiment subjects from the

Genome Society. They're clones!"

After Yasmin finished, Michael stumbled backward. He had to hold the wall to keep himself up.

Clone experiment subjects...

"Peter is very cautious. I don't know much..." Yasmin cried, looking at me.

"I found out about this because I eavesdropped on his calls... They conducted genetic experiments with humans, doing cloning experiments with embryos.

"In the beginning... it was done so

that rich people around the world

would

have access to organ

transplantation technology. But later

on...I'm not sure what research

they've been doing in secret."

Yasmin began to hyperventilate from crying too much.

"Stephany Larson, you're not even human... You're a test subject, and so was Stephanie Carlson. You're both incomplete experiment subjects.

"In fact, there are many experiment subjects who have been transplanted to different mothers around the world just like you."

It was a terrifying fact.

That meant that there were countless Stephanie Carlsons.

Countless me existed in places I could not see and did not know.

After birth, cloned embryos were diversified due to the different environments and development conditions within the mothers' wombs.

As such, Stephanie Carlson and Stephany Larson might seem similar, but we were not identical. Even our temperaments had some differences.

Chapter 436

Clones.

It was a terrifying word.

"What about Steven..." I asked in a hoarse voice.

If I was an experiment subject, what was Steven?

"He's not an experiment subject..." answered Yasmin, leaning against the wall as she tried to endure the pain.

"He went through genetic screening, but he was just a selected experiment subject. Unlike you... he's a normal person. But you're not, Stephany Larson... You're not even human.

"In their eyes, you're a lamb that's about to be slaughtered. You're like livestock in the human society... You were their experiment subject, something that can be killed anytime if the research data turns out poorly."

Yasmin continued, "Just like Dolly the sheep, your final destiny would be to become a specimen. You would be trapped in the research lab's underground specimen bank.

"I'm guessing... that the Genome Society has countless specimens of 'your' corpse in the underground lab."

I scoffed. I silently got up and slowly made my way downstairs.

A clone. How pathetic.

Even science fiction movies could not accurately reflect human desire and evil.

For the sake of development, evolution, immortality, anti-aging, and survival...

Humans had many unknown dark sides that were hidden from the sun. It existed in a darkness that the average person might never be exposed to in their lifetime. They might be unable to imagine how terrifying such darkness could be.

Perhaps living an average life would be blissful too.

"Stephie..." Michael called out to me with a coarse voice.

"In The Godfather, it was said that behind every great fortune, there's a crime. It was also said that capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt..." I said hoarsely as I slowly made my way downstairs.

I was not only saying it to Michael but also to myself.

All the prosperity that we saw in the world was simply things that the world's puppeteers allowed us to see.

There was an unimaginable darkness hidden behind everything.

"Stephie..." Michael said, full of concern. "It's not your fault."

I scoffed at Michael.

"I never thought that it was my fault..."

But whose fault was it?

"Keep an eye on your lover and make sure she keeps her mouth shut..."

Pet

I pointed at Michael and continued, "And you, Michael Ford. You were kind to everyone but were cruel to Stephanie Carlson. Put away that indiscriminatingly soft heart of yours. It'll only enable her to do more.

"I'm not at fault, and neither is Steven."

I turned around and continued going down.

UMS

"As for Peter and the large and sturdy behind him..."

"Tell Peter I'll personally ruin everything that they have."

I would never give in or give way.

The people who "killed" me took advantage of "me". Just like the

Rebels who fought against eve

used the same "evil" ways to tear that apart.

They exposed the geic experiments that Peter and the supporting stakeholders had been conducting.

Now that the police began investigating the case, they began to panic...

But that was only the beginning.

"Stephie... I'll help you," Michael whispered.

Even though he knew that getting involved in the case meant terrifying stakes.

"Before that, I must first find the murderer..." I said softly and continued going downstairs.

I wondered if the mastermind was

guiding me... to find him. So

could ally with him and stathatte

against Genome Society together.

Meanwhile, on the first floor, Steven stood by the fire and had his arms spread wide.

I began to tear up. I jumped into his arms from the stairs.

"Don't be scared. We're on the first floor, and there's light over there."

Steven pointed at a tiny ray of light that peeked through the gaps in the wall...

We were in Huma. This was a place where the light shone. It was not a place for evildoers to go rampant.

"Yeah, let's go home."

I looked at Quinn. She was drenched in blood and sat there weakly. But she looked at me with a meaningful gaze. Unsurprisingly... I left bloody scratch marks on the back of her hand.

Chapter 437

My expression darkened, and I frowned at Quinn.

She looked at me too, as if she was not afraid of getting discovered.

"Stephie?" Steven said softly.

I snapped back to my senses and straightened my posture.

"Go look for the exit. See if we can call for help."

Steven stared deeply at me, then nodded. When he left, he brought Eason and Joel with him.

Meanwhile, Zion took Rachel somewhere with light and examined her wounds anxiously.

"Zion... If I die, would you carve 'Wife of Zion Landon' on my tombstone?" Rachel said with a weak and hoarse voice.

Even at times like this, she could still tease Zion.

Zion continued to compress her wound.

"You're not going to die... You won't."

Rachel began to tear up.

"I don't want to die. I haven't gotten married, I don't have a boyfriend, and I'm still single..."

Rachel began to sob.

Seeing how Rachel was behaving, Zion thought she should be fine.

"Don't be scared. Don't..."

Zion pulled Rachel's shirt up to examine the wound. It was not a deep cut, but the wound continued to bleed. She wouldn't die anytime soon, but she didn't have time to spare either. "Zion, will I die?" Rachel cried loudly.

"You won't... for now," Zion whispered.

I glanced at Rachel and Zion. After ensuring that Rachel would be fine, I turned around to face Quinn.

Quinn was looking at me with a smile. Ever since she saw the scratches on the back of her hand, she knew that I must've guessed...

"Come with me."

I grabbed Quinn by her collar and dragged her under the stairs.

I slammed Quinn into the wall, and her face became pale from the pain.

"Wow... You were pretty rough on yourself," I said as I tightened my choke around her neck.

Quinn smiled provocatively and said, "You won't kill me..."

"You thought wrong."

My fingers continued to tighten around Quinn's neck as I gazed at her coldly.

"You exposed Carol's position on purpose so that she'd die, right?"

Quinn tapped my hand with a painful expression.

I gradually loosened my choke and grabbed her hair instead.

"As a woman who was domestically abused, how did you find the

Sth to kill your husband a

hang him on the ceiling?" S

M

When we were on the 17th floor, every time the electricity went out, one person would die.

But how did Quinn do that?

"I just set up the mechanism beforehand," Quinn said with a smile, but it was cold like an emotionless devil.

"I knew it was you. What's your objective?" I scoffed.

I wanted to know the truth.

"We're trying to awaken a god. A god that can cleanse this world."

Quinn laughed.

I grabbed her collar and put my knee against her wound.

"Don't play games with me."

Quinn fell to the ground but continued to look at me, smiling.

"Stephanie... The person who planned this game... isn't me. I'm just an executor."

Quinn turned out to not be the mastermind.

"What are your objectives? Killing people? Taking out your anger? Or standing up for justice?"

"No, no, no... All of this has just been the beginning."

Quinn smiled and stood up. She slowly walked to where the sunlight seeped in.

She stood under the sun and turned around to smile at me.

"We have a common goal," she said.

I frowned. I wasn't sure what she was up to.

Quinn continued, "This is a sad world. Fate only tortures the unfortunate, and the rope always breaks where it's the weakest... People with no power and money

can neither control their fate

nor change it, so they can only live in

sadness and pain.

"But the upper class... controls the fate of the lower class."

Quinn kept saying random things.

"Stephanie, this world is much crazier than we think," she said, smiling as she backed away.

"Callum deserved to die. He abused

his wife, raped minors, organized and employed prostitution, trafficked women and children, and committed all sorts of crimes... He

was a great chess piece and a great

stepping stone. How

did we complete the killing without connecting these people?"

Quinn had married Callum on purpose.

She deliberately allowed Callum to abuse her. She created a pitiful image for herself, waiting for us to join this game.

Chapter 438

"Stephanie, you've grown an interest in us, right? You're welcome to join us..."

Quinn lifted her hand toward the sunlight.

"Callum worked for Peter. He also supplied women to the Genome Society to be used as mothers. He deserved to die."

Callum trafficked women at ideal childbearing ages. He handed them to the Genome Society as test subjects for the geic and embryo experiments. It was cruel.

"Everyone who died here wasn't innocent."

Quinn walked up to the wall and pressed a switch. Following that, the windows that were sealed with bricks shattered and let in a lot of sunlight.

Quinn smiled at me and said, "Stephanie, the game isn't over yet... The mastermind is still among you."

Then, Quinn turned around and jumped out the window. She disappeared into a car.

I stood by the window and looked outside, wondering where we were...

"Stephanie!"

Behind me, Michael held Yasmin and shouted at me.

I snapped back to my senses and ducked behind a wall, dodging the bullets fired from outside...

"Everybody get down! Get down!"

A group of mercenaries rushed in with guns. They gathered everyone together.

"Get down. Hands on your heads!"

I glanced at Steven and did as told.

Soon, the leader walked in and looked at the dying Yasmin.

"It was... Quinn Lloyd," Yasmin said hoarsely.

Quinn was the spy.

"She escaped. I saw her escape..."

The leader said to his subordinates, "Go after her."

They were mercenaries working for the Genome Society, and they all had the same tattoo behind their ears.

"Take them away!"

Amidst the chaos, we were pushed to leave the ruined building.

"Take him. He's not dead."

Zion and Eason insisted on carrying Taylor, whose breath and vital signs had

become weak. But he was still alive.

When I got outside the ruined building, I closed my eyes from the bright sunlight.

"Where is this?" Eason mumbled.

"Crime haven Myrindara, Loania, or... Cambrela?"

Eason gasped.

We had to take nutrient injections when we were unconscious. It
out that we were transported

soned

isolated country.

SW

There was a bustling market just outside the ruined building.

While a killing spree was going on inside, the local citizens were do

60s and have fun

t belongs to swet

As I stood among the bustling crowd, my ears began ringing.

My head started to throb.

When Quinn escaped, she said that the mastermind was still among us.

"Get in!"

The mercenaries were pushing us to get into the car.

I examined the rest of the group as my breath quickened.

Rachel, Eason, Joel, Zion, me, Steven, as well as the unconscious Taylor.

There was also Michael and Yasmin, who was taken away to receive treatment.

I scoffed.

I wondered who was the mastermind.

Chapter 439

"Stephie... Don't be scared," Steven consoled me softly.

He deliberately crashed into a mercenary, colliding with a local in the process.

The leader of the mercenaries rushed to him angrily and then pointed his gun at Steven.

"Don't shoot!" I said in a panic.

We were all resistant. Their guns were pointed at us.

Discussion broke out among the locals. They were speaking in a language that we didn't understand,
but it was evident that they were used to seeing armed mercenaries.

With his hands in the air, Steven slowly walked back and obediently got into the car with us.

In the car, we all curled up in the back seat. Our hands were on our heads.

Steven shot me a look, then he secretly took out the phone that he stole from the local passerby whom he collided with.

Eason gave Steven a thumbs-up, and Zion nodded at Steven too.

We were in a foreign country, which meant reporting this to the police would do us no good...

He could only send out our GPS location and wait patiently for the right timing.

During the ride, the leader of the mercenaries answered a call. When the car stopped, he started comparing us to his phone screen. "This, this."

The man pointed at Steven and I. Then, we were dragged out of the car.

Steven passed the phone to Zion.

"What are you doing?" Michael questioned them, trying to protect me.

But we were in a foreign land. Nobody cared about Michael.

The mercenary hit Michael with the gunstock.

"They're not important. There's a police officer among them. Let them leave," the mercenaries' leader mumbled.

He signaled his subordinates to release Zion and the rest.

Zion frowned and gazed warily at the mercenaries.

"Where are you taking them?"

"It's none of your business. If you want to live, get lost."

The leader pointed at Zion, then left.

"Stephie..." Michael said anxiously. He took a hard blow, but he still wanted to protect me.

I frowned and signaled him to shut up. Did he want to die?

Michael stopped in his tracks and

I avoid me with a conflicted gaze.

I avoided his gaze and made eye contact with Zion.

SW

Rachel and Taylor needed treatment, so they had to leave first.

Zion nodded at me reassuringly.

If they were safe... Steven and I wouldn't be worried.

I smiled at Steven, and he smiled in return, holding my hand.

After we got into a different car, the people tied our hands up and made us wear eye patches.

"Maybe... this is where the human traffickers' base camp is," I whispered.

Steven hummed in agreement, but his grip on my hand tightened.

"Silence!" the mercenary that was guarding us cursed.

The car

slowly, and we could still hear the bustle outside the

I lightly placed my finger where I could feel my pulse on my wrist, and I closed my eyes.

Steven and I could remember directions through sounds.

After a little over an hour, the car finally stopped.

They removed our eye patches.

I looked at Steven, and he looked at me.

"Let's see who remembers it better," I said.

Steven raised his brows in amusement and said, "Sure..."

He always pampered me. Even

when we had just gotten lost

to the enemy's base camp, we could still joke around.

"Give them a jab."

Chapter 440

The mercenaries' leader instructed his subordinates to get us injected.

Steven and I had to separate temporarily. I was taken to a room by someone else.

Inside that room, there were many weak-looking women. They were locked in a tiny room, and they all looked like they were about to go into labor. They couldn't even scream for help.

Frowning, I leaned against the wall and waited for the person to approach me.

Suddenly, I recalled when Quinn had said, "Stephanie, you're getting interested in us, right? You're welcome... to join us."

I could understand why Quinn was so confident. She knew that the Genome Society would take us away once we left the ruined building.

She knew that I would be exposed to portions of the truth and darkness.

I would not be able to rescue everyone with my powers alone.

And the police?

In gray areas like these-where crime and greed were most condensed and had no military government-nobody would care about the well-being of the trafficked children and women.

The person approached me with a needle; I pretended to comply but injected the needle into him when he had his guard down.

The person was dressed in a hazmat suit and gas mask. I removed his hazmat suit and put it on, leaving him tied up in the wardrobe. In the smaller room, the women looked at me as if they saw hope. Teary-eyed, they were all begging me to save them.

Most of them were heavily pregnant. They were like experiment subjects, locked away in a sealed room with glass panels and doors. There was only one bed in the room. They must've observed what these women did and made records of so-called data.

I nodded toward the women and communicated in sign language. I wasn't sure if they would understand me.

I would try my best... to rescue them.

"Are you done?"

Outside, somebody outside urged.

I filled the syringe with drugs that I took from the shelf. Once I left the room, I injected it into the person's neck.

When the man lost consciousness from the drug, I took away his gun.

Meanwhile, Steven exited the other room in a hazmat suit too. He disarmed the guard in the exact same way that I did.

We smiled at each other.

But it was too early for us to rejoice.

"This isn't their base camp. It's just their data collection site," I whispered.

Based on my observation of the pregnant women inside, I could tell this was not the ultimate base camp.

Genome Society's base camp had to be extremely secluded. We couldn't possibly find it so easily.

"I've memorized all their profiles."

Steven had a photographic memory.

I said to Steven, "I've memorized them too."

I paused briefly. When I regained all

my

midories in the abandoned

building, my intelligence and

y had seemingly improved

too.

We left the place, casually waving to the other mercenaries who passed by.

We had to leave before they discovered us.

But it was apparent that they were not very alert. Otherwise, it might have been... on purpose.

Everything went too well. From the

seventh floor to the first floor of the

ruined building, we left that place and came here with these people to witness these things too easily. Now, we escaped easily too.

"Did you realize that somebody let us go on purpose?" I asked Steven.

"The Rebels are among the

mercenaries. Even now, we're not completely detached from the killing game that they designed," Steven said.

We were only seeing what they wanted to show us.

I scoffed.

We were caught up in the war between the Genome Society and the Rebels.

In fact, they had predicted every action and every step we made.

The mastermind of the Rebels had to be a genius.

"They showed us these things to incite our hatred toward the Genome Society. Next, we'll find them..."

We would find the Rebels.

And join them.

Steven said to me, "I'll support everything you do."

I smiled at him.

"Let's join them, then."

"Darkness is always behind power. In that case, we should become powerful."

Steven held my hand and led me out the back door brazenly.

"Quinn said that the mastermind of the killing game is still among us..."

I stopped and took Steven's hands.

"Steven, is it you?"