

After Death 521

Chapter 521

"If you want to find the mastermind of the serial murder case, I can help you. But first, you need to tell me where my friend is," I warned as I grabbed his collar.

"Ha... You'll never find her," he said with a provocative smile as if unconcerned about the outcome.

I firmly put my foot between his legs and applied increasing pressure. My voice became lower as I stepped harder. "You pretend to be a woman and only target women who are weaker than you. You're nothing more than a coward.

"There's a high probability... that this part of you is defective, right? So there's no point in keeping it."

Joel, rushing in from the side, felt a surge of fear that constricted his lower abdomen. He turned, protectively clutching his abdomen, and swiftly pulled Eason out. He then turned back and dragged Steven out as well. "Let's go. My balls hurt..."

"Go to the monitoring room with Zion to locate Rachel!" Eason kicked Joel.

Steven cleared his throat before speaking in a hushed tone, "My wife wouldn't treat me in such a manner." Joel snorted and cast a meaningful glance at Steven, then hurried to the monitoring room with Eason. Meanwhile, the serial murderer was still screaming.

I squatted in front of him and said again, "If you die, the serial murderer will look down on you even more. He'll revel in the fact that it's not him imitating your modus operandi but rather you imitating his..."

Since he had such strong self-esteem, I undermined him further. He became enraged and attempted to resist, but Steven immediately kicked him back down to the ground.

Realizing there were many of us, he decided to compromise. "I'll take you there..."

I pulled him up and warned him, "Don't try to play any tricks."

After leaving the bathroom, Zion quickly rushed over and pushed the murderer against the wall.

"He'll take us there," said Steven as we quickly stopped Zion. Hence, Zion released him.

He limped toward a storeroom and pushed open the door. As he entered, he made his way to a large blue barrel and pointed at it. "She's inside."

In a panic, Zion hurriedly opened the barrel's lid and rushed to pull out the person, only to find it empty when he looked inside. Zion's anger surged, and he kicked the murderer out. "Where is she?"

Steven and I also ran over to look into the barrel.

The murderer was also confused. He didn't look like he was acting. He rushed up anxiously and looked into the barrel carefully. "Where is she? This is impossible. I left her here after I knocked her unconscious. Where is she now?"

He was clearly distraught as he gripped his hair tightly. "It's the serial killer. He's provoking me. It must be him! It's definitely him!"

Was Rachel taken away by the serial killer? I was shocked. I stopped Zion. "He's probably not lying. This is Rach's earring."

The barrel was nearly empty, with lingering oil stains at the bottom. Traces along the barrel's wall suggested that someone had dragged it. Beneath the barrel lay Rachel's earring.

"Someone took Rachel away afterward." Steven scanned the surroundings.

He continued, "But..."

Steven didn't finish what he was about to say.

"The other person is literally provoking you face to face. Shouldn't you investigate further?" I firmly seized the collar of the murderer.

"I'll find him, I'll definitely find him," he said determinedly as he sniffed the air.

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He seemed to be very sensitive to smells. Luckily, he put Rachel in the diesel barrel. The smell of diesel was very strong.

"Diesel... I can smell the diesel. Let's go find her." The murderer exited the storeroom, sniffing the diesel in the air as he walked forward.

"Look at the ground." I also found a few drops of diesel on the ground.

When Eason and Joel returned, we were outside Room 1563.

"The surveillance is controlled by those scoundrels. No one has the authority to access the surveillance except for their people. These damn idiots," Joel cursed.

I signaled him to be silent.

The murderer acted oddly, leaning on the door and sniffing. He looked back at me with excitement. "I smell blood... she might be dead."

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Zion's and my expressions changed drastically. Then, we kicked the door hard. Finally, the door was kicked open, and we ran over in a panic.

The white sheets on the bed were stained red with blood. Rachel's palms lay open, blood gushing from the cut blood vessels in her wrists. Her face was now drained of color. The bed was adorned with scarlet rose petals, evoking a strange and unsettling ambiance.

"He's laughing at me! He's laughing at me!" the murderer roared crazily. He turned around and ran out. Zion and I ignored him. We hurried over to check on Rachel's condition.

"Zion, there's been significant blood loss, and her pulse is very weak. Get her to the doctor right away!" I urgently yelled.

Zion's entire body trembled with fear. He hastily scooped up Rachel and sprinted toward the medical capsule with all his might.

"You'll be fine, Rachel. Nothing will happen to you," Zion said, his voice choked with sobs and trembling.

I hurriedly rushed outside, only to realize that Steven hadn't followed me. He remained by the bed, gazing at the blood pooling on the sheets. He grazed it with his fingertips, bringing them to his nose to smell.

"Steve?" I gazed at him with doubt, deeply concerned about Rachel's condition.

"The average blood content of a woman is approximately 4584 ml. Losing more than 50% of this volume can lead to complete loss of the body's blood pumping function, ultimately causing the heart to stop.

"The medical team on the cruise ship is highly skilled, but the cruise ship is too far from the port to access a blood reserve. She can't be saved," Steven whispered, glancing back at me.

I stood there, frozen. I unconsciously took a step backward.

"No... But what if there's a miracle?" I suddenly realized the immense significance of faith and the potential for a miracle to occur. What if she could be saved?

"A miracle? Could it be possible that there's a backup blood bank on this cruise? But why would a cruise ship be equipped with blood supplies? How logical is that? What is the true intention behind this cruise? Why did the Rebels select this particular cruise?

"What's their ultimate purpose in creating such a commotion?" Steven lifted his head and fixed his gaze upon my eyes.

It was evident that the masterminds behind the Rebels organization were true geniuses. Every move we made was part of their calculated plan, including Rachel's life-threatening blood loss and the arrival of the Yesa murderer. Everything went as planned.

They wanted to reveal a shocking truth. I understood instantly. I sprinted toward the medical area in a panic, praying hard that she would be fine.

"Excuse me! Move aside!" Simultaneously, numerous medical professionals were rushing to a hospital bed to save a patient.

"The patient is in cardiac arrest. Hurry!"

I stood beside Zion, offering words of reassurance. "She'll be fine..."

"There's a blood bank on this cruise ship..." Joel also realized that something was amiss.

Zion simply wanted to pray for Rachel's well-being. He might not have any extra energy to spare for other

thoughts. I glanced at Steven as he accurately guessed that there was a blood bank on the cruise.

"The patient has congenital heart problems and needs a heart replacement urgently..." whispered the doctor to the patient's family members outside the operating room.

Fortunately, I had a good hearing and looked at them warily. It seemed that those people noticed I was watching them and swiftly left with their families.

The doctor emerged from the operating room, shaking his head at us. "I'm sorry... There was excessive blood loss, and the patient is now brain dead..."

I rushed forward uncontrollably and grabbed the doctor's collar. "Say it again! Are you telling me that the blood bank on the cruise ship isn't enough to save her from blood loss? That's impossible! You're talking nonsense!"

Meanwhile, Zion stood there, feeling numb and helpless. He was unsure of what to do. However, he knew that brain death equated to death itself.

"I'm sorry for your loss," the doctor whispered sympathetically.

I grabbed the doctor's collar. "Sorry?"

"What was the cause of brain death?" Steven interrupted the doctor and asked calmly.

"Excessive blood loss..." The doctor was so stunned by Steven's presence that he replied without confidence.

Steven forcefully pushed the doctor aside to enter the operating room.

"You can't enter. It's sterile inside..."

Before the doctor could finish speaking, Joel hastily covered his mouth from behind.

Steven stood in the dressing area, wearing protective clothing. He disinfected himself in the designated area before stepping into the operating room.

Rachel lay on the operating table, her face drained of color. Her hands and wrists were now sutured and wrapped in bandages. As Steven examined her dilated pupils, a hint of concern marred his face.

Zion's voice trembled as he cried out, "When she came in, she was still conscious. She called my name... She definitely called my name."

"Who's the anesthesiologist?" Steven asked.

A doctor wearing a mask raised his hand nervously. Steven gazed at the oxygen mask in silence.

At that precise moment, the doctor from the adjacent operating room rushed over. "Are you all family members of the patients? If the patient is already brain-dead, would her family be willing to let her undergo a cardiac compatibility assessment?"

"The other patient has promised that as long as the family agrees, they can provide a consolation money of five million," the doctor continued anxiously and looked at us.

Zion was furious and felt the urge to fight him.

The doctor quickly added, "If it's not sufficient, feel free to request more."

Such a compelling temptation... If it were just an average tourist from a regular family, the family would likely have given in by now. After all, there seemed to be no hope of saving a brain-dead person.

I glanced at Steven. I immediately felt a chill run down my spine. I trembled at the thought of what had happened.

Every year, this cruise ship departed from ports in various countries, welcoming both wealthy and ordinary tourists from around the world.

However, it wasn't just a matter of letting ordinary fortunate tourists on board, allowing the wealthy to witness the big gap between them and pumping them with a sense of superiority. Instead, the wealthy were allowed to choose the organ donor that best suited them.

Once the match was successful, those regular people would become the target of the wealthy. They would end up in the operating room due to different accidents, never to wake up again.

"I agree to the assessment," confirmed Steven in a low voice.

Zion lost control and wanted to rush forward. "Steven!"

Steven didn't explain a word. I stopped Zion. "Eason, take him away and let him calm down."

The doctor who came to inform him was beaming with joy, and the family members who followed him nodded in agreement.

"They put so much effort into it. They must have known that Rachel's heart was compatible," I whispered. Steven nodded approvingly. "Wealthy individuals typically target young college students who are in good health. Rachel's blood type and other personal information were probably leaked during her time at school.

"They exploit opportunities such as free or public welfare physical examinations on campus to gather comprehensive data on students, which they can then sell and profit from..."

Genome Society likely had massive genetic data across the country, even from around the world. This was concerning.

"Is Rach okay?" I whispered.

"She won't die," Steven replied faintly.

I gazed at Steven. "Why are you so certain?"

Steven replied softly as he gazed into my eyes, "The blood on the bed didn't belong to Rachel, which means that someone intentionally faked the scene to deceive us into thinking she had suffered severe blood loss and was on the verge of death.

"And brain death is the least severe result. Do you know what the requirements are for a heart transplant? The heart must be alive. If too much blood is unintentionally released and the patient passes away, the donor loses their value."

Hence, they wouldn't take the risk of actually killing Rachel.

"But..." I remained slightly anxious, as Rachel's present state was indeed one of being brain-dead.

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Steven didn't explain further and took me aside to wait for the result.

Zion had finally regained his composure and decided to trust Steven. He realized that if Steven wasn't in a rush, so there might still be an opportunity. It became evident to Zion that something seemed suspicious about the situation.

Indeed, shortly after, the family returned. The family members were filled with excitement and

immediately said their thanks. A female family member cried intensely, showcasing remarkable acting skills. "Thank you, my benefactor. I truly appreciate it. The match was successful..."

"Thank you so much."

As Steven observed the family member repeatedly thanking us, he said indifferently, "30 million, not a penny less. Payment must be made upfront."

She was stunned for a brief moment, and her gaze shifted toward Steven. "Sir... I understand your need for money, but asking for such a significant amount is unreasonable. My father's life depends on finding a suitable donor quickly.

"If he weren't on the cruise, we would've had other donors. You should know that donor organs are normally free"

"We're not offering it for free," Steven interrupted her nonsense.

She panicked and glanced back at the doctor for help. The doctor also came to convince Steven.

"Sir, could you agree to the surgery first and then discuss the price? This is a matter of life."

Steven replied expressionlessly, "No."

The doctor became slightly awkward. "Could you lower the price..."

Steven sneered, casting a disdainful gaze at the woman in front of him. "So, the chairman of Hexagon Group is unable to come up with a mere 30 million? Also, you're not his daughter. You're his mistress. Am I correct?"

She stood frozen for a moment, then straightened up nervously. "You know...us."

Steven sneered. "Ha... 30 million, and ask Winston Thorpe to discuss with me in person."

She panicked. "What do you mean? I... Mr. Thorpe has been rushed to the emergency room. How could he possibly come and talk to you?"

"He's fine for now. Let him come out, or I can go in," Steven offered the woman a choice.

She got scared and wanted to get the bodyguards for help. However, Joel and Eason immediately approached and pushed the bodyguards against the wall.

"You..." The anesthesiologist next to Rachel seemed a bit panicked as well.

"Wake her up." Steven pointed at Rachel.

The anesthesiologist was stunned. "She's brain dea-"

Before he finished speaking, Steven forcefully pushed the anesthesiologist against the wall. Afterward, he seized the anesthesia breathing mask that Rachel had been using and forcefully placed it over his face.

Steven sneered and challenged, "You should know the consequences of ingesting excessive carbon monoxide. Go ahead, hold your breath. Let's see how long you can last."

I turned on the switch smoothly. Soon, the anesthesiologist couldn't hold his breath anymore and slapped the wall hard for mercy.

The anesthesia masks used on patients contained carbon monoxide. Damn it.

Quickly, the doctor stood up and tremblingly placed the oxygen mask on Rachel's face. "She'll regain consciousness soon."

Zion swiftly responded by promptly presenting his identification. "Police! You're suspected of participating in illegal organ transplantation."

Shortly after, the door of another operating room opened. Winston emerged from it, sitting in a wheelchair. His expression was cold and exuded a powerful presence. "You seem to have uncovered the secret here..." Winston said in a low voice.

He then glanced at the doctor behind him and said, "Then we can't keep them alive anymore."

The doctor nodded. "Yes."

Soon, the doors of the entire medical area were sealed, and not a single creature could escape the medical capsule.

"Kill them all, clean up the place, and schedule surgery as soon as possible," the chief doctor instructed the bodyguards behind him in a hushed tone.

I looked at Steven, and we carefully moved back. These people came with guns...

When they started firing, Joel cursed, "Damn it! This is way too exciting!"

Eason grabbed Joel by the back of his collar, swiftly pulled him into Rachel's operating room, and closed the door.

"It's over... We have to die here today," Eason said nervously. There were many people on the other side with no way out.

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Steven looked at Zion. "Take care of Rachel."

Rachel let out a cough after inhaling some oxygen. She wanted to open her eyes but looked like she was struggling to do so.

"Don't worry, rest for a while longer," I soothed in a soft voice while helping her put the oxygen mask on.

The switch to the surgery capsule's door was inside. It would've been extremely difficult to turn it from the outside. It could only be shut from the inside as well.

"These people are crazy. They're not planning to let us go." Joel took a quick glance out the window. The bodyguards were planning to force the door open by cutting off the electricity.

"Get ready. Once the electricity cuts off, we'll rush out in the dark." Steven asked Joel and Eason to help with pushing the operating table. They charged outside immediately after the electricity cut off.

The people outside couldn't bring themselves to shoot. The sound of gunfire would catch the Rebels' attention.

However, the bodyguards miscalculated. The second we ran outside, the doors to the medical capsule also opened.

It must've been someone from the Rebels. Their purpose was to expose the secrets of the cruise. Hence, they wouldn't let us die that easily.

Once the doors opened, the tourists who were already gathered around immediately started taking pictures and recording videos.

"They're doing illegal organ transplants here," one remarked.

"That's horrifying. This cruise is horrifying."

"It seems like what was played on the screen was true!"

The passengers were murmuring cautiously. The ones who were more ambitious peeked inside.

"Turns out we're all lambs awaiting slaughter."

Winston's face paled. He had started to panic.

He sat in his wheelchair and had his assistant wheel him away.

Unfortunately, it was too late.

The passengers stormed into the medical capsule and surrounded him and the other foreign doctors.

"How dare you disrespect the lives of others just because you're rich!"

"Just how many people have you killed!"

"People get injured or die on this cruise all the time, but they pay them off so they wouldn't say anything! Who knows how much blood is on their hands!"

"Demons!" People were starting to protest. They became angry and violent.

"I'll give you a piece of my mind!"

"Get 'em!"

Amidst the chaos, Steven had Zion pick up the unconscious Rachel. Then, he found a wheelchair and

swiftly left the scene.

Upon reaching the lobby, he saw the surveillance footage from the medical capsule being broadcast live on the public announcement screen.

The Rebels must've done this on purpose... They wanted all the passengers to know that this was a man-eating cruise.

Joel eyed the screen before turning to look at Steven, who was unfazed. "Did you already know that they were live-broadcasting everything? You could've said something, you know. It wasn't very nice of you to watch us make a fool of ourselves."

Steven ignored him and headed straight for the elevator. "The Rebels have achieved their goal. They won't pull anything else for today. Head back to your rooms and get some rest."

"What about the killer?" Eason asked.

"Did you let him escape?" Steven turned to look at him.

"I went after him and locked him in the janitor's closet." He came to an abrupt realization before bolting toward the direction of the room.

"From now onward, we need to work together. You can't move alone. Do you understand the importance of teamwork? If you find anything, tell the group," Joel explained to Steven patiently.

"I just assumed you were as smart as I was," Steven replied bluntly.

Joel was speechless.

"Goob job, you guys." Jimmy walked over from under the screen with a smile on his face. His mischievous expression was as annoying as usual.

"As a member of Genome Society, you were already aware that the operating rooms here were performing illegal organ transplants, right?" I eyed him cautiously.

"I've caught wind of some details, yes. But I'm quite healthy, so all of this is of no use to me. So, you can't really blame me." He laughed. "Besides, before you even boarded the cruise, I did tell you that you shouldn't run about. You might end up... never returning."

"The Rebels have already taken over the cruise. Do you think they'll let you get out of here alive? To them, all investors like you should rot in hell." I scoffed, reminding him not to get ahead of himself.

"How could nobodies like us die before they find the president of Crowdstar Group?" He gave me a knowing look.

Then, he slowly approached me and said softly, "You don't think.... the president of Crowdstar Group is someone among us?"

He reached out to pinch my fingers before looking at the palm of my hand.

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I opened my palm nonchalantly. "There's no wound on my hand."

"A

"What if your soul is here... but your body isn't the original one?" The corner of Jimmy's lips turned up." so-called reincarnation.... It's a fact that you're still the same person, but your body isn't yours anymore. It's impossible for you to open the safe. You have nothing to fear."

He thought that I was the president of Crowdstar Group?

I laughed so hard. "Jimmy Lincoln, you absolute genius."

If I were the president, the first thing I'd do was bury him under a pile of money.

He still wanted to say something before Steven lifted his hand and stopped him. "It's basic courtesy to stay away from someone's wife."

Jimmy raised an eyebrow. "Your wife is too exceptional. She leaves quite the impression on people, you know."

"She's out of your league," Steven replied coldly.

Jimmy laughed before backing away from his brother.

A small distance ahead, Michael was with Una. Next to him was Yasmin, tailing after him as per usual.

The three of them seem quite occupied. Yasmin looked extremely antsy. She was terrified that Una would take Michael away from her.

On the other hand, Michael had begun trying to view Una as Stephanie Carlson.

"He's treating her like Stephanie," Steven chipped in a reminder.

"I hope the three of them live happily ever after," I replied lightly.

He laughed and held my hand tightly. "You're mine."

His and his alone.

"This bastard is still trying to escape." Eason returned with the killer.

The man's face was bruised, and he was limping.

Upon noticing that Rachel was still semi-unconscious, he asked nervously, "Is she dead? Is this a taunt from that psychotic serial killer?"

"No, it's someone on the cruise," I explained. "But the mastermind behind the serial killings might actually be onboard."

The man in the mask... I needed to think of a way to expose his identity.

"I'm going to kill him. I'm going to kill him." The killer was still going crazy.

I yanked on his shirt collar. "If you're that capable, find him in the shortest time possible and kill him. However, if you injure anyone who's innocent, I'll throw you into the ocean."

The man seemed afraid of me. He lifted his hands to shield his face. "He's onboard, I know he is..."

All of a sudden, he straightened up and glanced toward the distance. "I feel like he's going to make a move."

I followed his gaze. A familiar figure flashed through the crowd.

"Carol?"

I let go of the killer and promptly ran after the figure.

How could that be possible? Didn't Carol die in the abandoned building during the game?

Was I mistaken?

I searched within the crowd for a long time, but there was no sight of her.

I was probably too tense earlier.

"My beloved guests, the cruise has left domestic waters and is now sailing toward the open sea. Due to the shortage of resources onboard, from today onward... food and water will be served in limited amounts."

"Please ration your meals. I hope everyone has a pleasant time." The eerie and raspy voice rang out from the speakers.

It then continued, "If you'd like to return home as soon as possible, please help us find the president of Crowdstar Group. I'll display some clues on the big screen soon.

"If we are to return before food and water runs out, we'll need your help in locating this person.

"Otherwise... everyone might just die in the vast and open waters. The first person to find the president would be considered a hero! Hence, not only are we offering to send them back first, but we're also going to offer them a billion dollars in cash!"

Everyone's faces paled as the announcement ended.

The cruise was getting further and further away from Huma!

In a flash, a huge number of passengers started panicking. The urge to survive and the desire for wealth sent them clamoring toward the big screen. Everyone wanted to be the first to see the clue that was provided.

"Stephie." Steven ran over and shielded me into a corner, stopping the fearful crowd from crushing me. Upon looking toward the screen, our expressions immediately turned grim.

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The screen read, "The president of Crowdstar Group is a genius. They have a social communication disorder and are introverted in nature. They also have not made any public appearances."

I looked toward Steven. "What's the point of this clue?"

Steven didn't reply.

"Why is the mastermind going to such lengths to locate the president of a company?" Eason was still holding onto the killer with one hand. He looked up at the screen quizzically.

Joel explained, "This is just the beginning. The president of Crowdstar Group invested a huge amount of capital into Genome Society in recent years.

"It's a very well-respected conglomerate, and the organization wouldn't let anything happen to their money bank. The Rebels want to use this against them."

In this game, the first thing on the Rebels' agenda was to catch the president of Crowdstar Group to provoke the organization.

"Then they should've given us some useful information," Eason complained. "The information on the board is redundant. How else could he have stayed so hidden if he weren't a genius with SCD?"

"The way I see it, the president isn't just an introvert. He's probably a disfigured man with a horrible personality. Let's just pick out people with defects on their body from the crowd."

Joel kicked him as soon as he finished talking.

Eason was extremely mad. "What's wrong with you? Why are you always getting physical?"

Joel rubbed his chin like an old man and started analyzing the situation. "In my opinion, the president is a genius and a remarkable person. His looks should be well above average. He should at least be as good- looking as me."

Eason rolled his eyes at him. "Brat. You were still in diapers when Crowdstar Group was formed. Besides, neither your iris nor your palm was recognized by the system yesterday. Stop dreaming about it."

Joel shot Eason a boastful look. "What do you know?"

I looked at Joel and then back at Steven with a quizzical gaze.

Steven avoided my gaze. He lowered his head and picked at the gauze on his palm.

I smacked his hand. "Why are you picking at your wound? Do you want it to heal slower?"

He brightened up at my scolding. His smile was... captivating.

I grunted. That tactic wouldn't work on me. "Don't touch your wound. Can you feel your fingers now?"

I grabbed his hand and carefully played with his fingers. I touched them one by one and asked if he felt anything.

Due to his injury, his fingertips were all bruised. It was heartbreaking to see.

"I can feel them if I do this." He reached out with his injured hand and touched my face before touching my waist.

How could he flirt like that? Was he crazy?

"Have some shame. This is a public area." Joel rolled his eyes at Steven.

"She's my legally wedded wife." Steven pulled me into his embrace and planted a kiss on my forehead in front of everyone.

That action wasn't aimed at aggravating Joel, it was meant to provoke everyone else. This included Michael, who was not far away, as well as the glaring Jimmy.

"Steven Lincoln, I realized that you—" I lifted my head to tell him off, and he immediately lowered his to kiss me instead.

My brain went haywire. Something was off. What was he feeling guilty about?

"Come on, man... Are you seeing yourself?" Joel was annoyed. He turned around and kicked the killer. "Your existence annoys me."

The killer was still focused on figuring out how to lure the mastermind behind Huma's serial killing cases out of hiding.

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"Once we find the president, the person behind the serial killings will definitely show himself. He's positioned himself as a judge. In his opinion, it's his responsibility to eliminate the source of all evil.

"By aiding Genome Society in secret, the president fits the description. So long as we find the man, the killer will definitely appear, and he'll kill him as a form of judgment. Then, he'll display the body in a display case for all to see."

The killer provided a detailed analysis.

"Hey, you just spouted a bunch of nonsense." Joel kicked him again. He always directed his kicks on the man's limping leg. "Can you find the president of Crowdstar Group?"

"Geniuses often have a particular air around them. No matter how well they keep themselves hidden, something always gives them away," the killer explained.

Then, he leaned toward Joel and sniffed. "You're hiding something... There's another side to you masked under the appearance of this young man."

He looked at him with a gleeful and crazed expression. "Your blood... is exceptionally striking..."

Joel immediately gave the pervert a huge slap. "People like you deserve a beating."

He wouldn't bother wasting his breath if he could utilize his fists instead.

The killer grinned and wiped the blood off the corner of his mouth. "You guys can call me Stan."

Stan approached Eason and sniffed again. "You're probably a police officer. You're lacking a sense of justice, though. You're not that clever and can be a bit arrogant. You're probably considered someone above average at best."

"Is this guy a fortune teller or something?" Joel's interest had been piqued.

Stan then moved toward Zion. "Loyal, straightforward, stickler, athletic. You're relatively smarter than most, but just by a bit."

He was just about to approach Rachel, who was unconscious, when Zion stopped him with a raised brow. "I'll kill you if you go near her again."

If it weren't for this pervert, she wouldn't still be unconscious.

Stan shot a knowing look at Rachel before speaking with a smile, "What an interesting bunch. Aside from him... everyone is putting on a front. You're all wearing masks. What a delightful surprise. All of you are my type of people."

He was referring to Zion. Everyone except Zion was putting on a front.

"Stop being fucking disgusting," Joel said in disdain.

Stan came up to me excitedly, only to be kicked aside by Steven.

The way he looked at Steven was slightly fearful. He swiftly ducked to the side and hid behind Zion. He was quite a good judge of character, though. He knew that Zion was the only one who wouldn't go against the law and kill him.

"He's... a demon. I've never seen such a horrifying person. Surely he eats people..." he rambled on in a crazed manner.

"A murderer like yourself is afraid of a cannibal?" Eason scoffed. He pulled out a pair of handcuffs and cuffed the killer's wrist to one of his own. "You're under arrest. From now onward, you're not allowed to

leave my sight."

Who was he kidding? This was a living ticket to a promotion.

"If regular folk were at the bottom of the food chain, I'd be a class above them. This guy, however... He could outclass the predators at the very top."

Stan was still talking crazy when his gaze fell on me. Then, he became even more excited. "Birds of a feather, flock together "

"Keep your mouth shut if you want to stay alive," I threatened coldly.

"The president of Crowdstar Group is someone in this group, right?" He cupped his mouth like he had just made a joke.

I lowered my gaze and looked back at Steven.

To be honest, I had my doubts since the moment the Rebels asked us to open the safe with our handprints.

"Stephie..." Michael walked over from the other side. He called me Stephie before correcting himself." Stephany... Can we talk? I have clues on Crowdstar's president."

Behind him, an anxious Yasmin followed closely.

Una scoffed. She didn't seem bothered about her in the slightest.

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"Alright, let's talk." I nodded, signaling for him to speak.

Michael frowned and stared at Steven. "I only want to speak with you alone, Stephany."

"You have quite a few requests. Just say it here if you want. Else, that's fine by me too," I complained, looking at Yasmin and Una.

Then, I continued, "You should probably deal with your own problems first, though. You seem to be attracting quite a bit of attention."

He drew a deep breath and said in a low voice, "Stephany, the CEO of Crowdstar Group is a young man. He's been investing in Genome Society continuously for the last few years. He's one of their biggest clients.

"He's not a good person.... He's just a businessman."

I stared at him wordlessly, signaling him to carry on.

"Don't trust Steven, Stephany... There's more to him than what meets the eye." Michael sighed. It looked like he was pitying me.

I didn't need his pity.

I looked at him with a matching gaze. In that case, we would pity each other and see who deserved it more, then. How dare he act all high and mighty when he was being played by two women?

I scoffed at him. "I believe him, Michael."

"You're so foolish," he said with a knowing look. "Just as foolish she was..."

He was probably referring to Stephanie.

"But you're not foolish... You're the smartest one." I laughed. Clever Mr. Michael Ford, how ironic.

"The upper-class rooms on this cruise are assigned based on memberships. Without a membership, they won't give it to you. The regular rooms are not suitable for resting. They get very stuffy.

"I've already gotten rooms for all of you. You're welcome," he said softly before turning to leave.

What a people-pleaser.

"We don't need him to get us rooms!" Joel berated. He turned to look at Eason and continued, "Grow a backbone. Let's not stay in the rooms."

Eason shook his head. "I don't have a backbone, I'm seasick. I want to stay in a better room." Stan pulled on the handcuffs. "What about me? We can't possibly sleep together, officer..."

Before Eason could even get mad, Joel kicked the killer again. "You wish! Sleep on the floor!"

Afterward, he looked toward Eason. "I don't trust this sicko to be alone with you. Let's all sleep in the same room. It's safer, and we can look after each other."

Eason cast him a look of disgust. "You need to calm down."

"You're against me but not this sicko? What's wrong with you, Eason?" Joel was annoyed.

Zion rubbed his forehead. He looked at Rachel, who was struggling to sleep, and said, "That's enough... Look at the situation we're in. How are you bickering during a time of uncertainty like this?"

"It's not safe to sleep alone, so everyone get into groups of two. Sort yourselves out."

Then, he left with Rachel.

Steven also took my hand and left.

Joel and Eason were the only ones left.

They had no choice. There were two couples in our small group of six. The single ones would have to make do.

Stan chuckled creepily. "Sorry for the trouble, officer..."

Eason and Joel sent a kick his way simultaneously.

"I'll beat you to death if you say another word, sicko," Joel threatened.

Stan fell to the ground in pain. He stared wickedly at Joel as he was dragged along by Eason.

"Have you set your eyes on him... We're the same kind. I can feel it from you. You want to pick on him, step on him aggressively, and tear his pride apart. I know you want him to grovel at your feet... You want to watch him beg for mercy... watch him cry out..."

Joel almost hissed at him. This absolute sicko.

There was a loud noise. Eason grabbed Stan's head and rammed it onto the wall. "I'll stitch your lips up in a bit, you sicko. Get on your knees!"

The top of Stan's head was bleeding, but he was still chuckling like a lunatic.

"All of you are lambs awaiting slaughter, and we're the hunters..." He laughed. "You won't make it out of here alive. Prey should be on a hunter's platter. We're naturally superior. We're the evolved version of man. Average mortals like you should be beneath us!"

Eason scratched his head. How was this psycho's head so sturdy?

He turned to look at Joel, whose gaze darkened for a split moment as he stood there.

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Eason stilled, and his chest tightened. For some reason.... he felt a chill run down his spine.

That gaze was gone in an instant, though. Joel soon reverted back to an annoying teenager.

"This absolute sicko! Let's just kill him."

Eason frowned. "Find a way to shut him up."

Joel raised an eyebrow. All of a sudden, he seemed to recall something, and his lips curved upward.

"Let's go back to the room. I have a hundred ways... to make him shut up." He chuckled.

Eason got goosebumps. "You're kind of sick too..."

"Not as much as Steven. That guy is actually insane," he gloated.

Eason wordlessly pulled Stan into the elevator together with Joel.

In order to avoid causing a commotion, he wrapped a piece of clothing around the handcuffs. The people who entered the elevator even thought that Eason was a pervert who wanted to hold hands with a psycho. "No... Stephie, killed... Stephie... Stephie... killed... Stephie... I killed..."

In the elevator, Rachel was extremely disoriented. She kept on mumbling like she was sleep-talking.

This was a common occurrence in patients with carbon monoxide poisoning post-surgery.

I stared resignedly at her. Something about Stephie and a murder...

Steven shot Rachel a knowing look but didn't say anything.

It seemed to actually be like what Stan had said-every one of us seemed to be putting on a front.

"Stephie!" Rachel suddenly yelled my name. The sheer volume gave me a fright.

Zion smiled resignedly. He caressed her hair and had her lean on his leg. His gaze was laced with joy and affection.

I stared at the pair. For some reason... I kept getting the feeling that things wouldn't end well between them.

Maybe I was being too pessimistic.

Upon exiting the elevator, we headed to our respective rooms under the escort of a receptionist. Since Michael was willing to pay, we gladly took him up on his offer.

"Carol!"

Just as Zion was pushing Rachel into the room, she suddenly yelled out Carol's name in a daze.

I almost ran into the door. I glanced at my surroundings, and my entire body froze. At the end of the hall, a figure that greatly resembled Carol flashed by.

I had gone crazy... I genuinely felt like I had gone crazy.

After entering the room, I shut the door and pressed Steven against the wall. "Be honest, are you the president..." I said in a low voice.

I wasn't able to get my question out before he cupped his hand over my mouth and pressed me against the wall instead. I didn't know if he did so because he was afraid of eavesdroppers or if he was guilty.

I sighed. I didn't care anymore. If he was... then we'd just have to be even more careful. I had to protect him. I know he must've had no other choice in order to approach the organization.

If he wasn't, then we'd look for the president together. Then, we'd keep him safe while working out a partnership.

"Stephie... my hand hurts," Steven said in a small voice.

Here we go again. This was his typical behavior. Whenever he had a question he didn't want to answer, he'd start to behave in a cute and pitiful manner.

I was already well aware of his antics!