

After Death 581

Chapter 581

The seawater seeped in gradually, and the wait underwater felt endless. Surprisingly, my lung capacity allowed me to hold my breath underwater for two whole minutes. It was evident that Stephany had decent physical fitness before.

However, the hull was rocking violently due to the waves, slowing down the water inflow and increasing the pressure on the bed. I swam desperately to the surface for air and then went down to give Steven a breath.

It was a life-and-death situation. As I was helping him breathe, he still had the nerve to kiss me. He truly knew how to seize the moment with me.

I stared at him, feeling helpless. There were other options at that moment. Beating him was impossible at this point.

I came up for air, took a breath, and dove back down. Steven remained surprisingly calm in the water as if nothing had occurred.

Three minutes had gone by. Most people couldn't hold their breath for such a long time. But I had overlooked the fact that he wasn't an ordinary person.

"Stephie! Steven!" Their shouts could be heard above the roar of the storm and the crashing waves against the cruise ship. I knew that everyone was still alive, giving us the motivation to hold on.

Moreover, Ashton and Xandra were still up there. Under the water, I held Steven close, silently encouraging him to hang on. He hugged me back. We were simply waiting for the perfect moment.

With a violent jolt, the cabin shook nearly 90 degrees. The heavy object pinning Steven's leg finally gave way under the force of buoyancy and shaking. Seizing the opportunity, Steven freed his leg, held me close, and kissed me passionately. When I was almost out of breath in the water, he carried me up to the surface. We gasped for air in the gap. I looked at him helplessly and reproachfully. Perhaps it was the relief of having survived a disaster. I couldn't truly hold it against him.

He held me in his arms and whispered, "Stephie, we're safe."

"Huh?" He seemed very determined that we would not die.

"Listen." The faint sound of rescue ship sirens echoed through the waves, signaling their arrival. The Huma police must have coordinated with a peacekeeping force that was having a rescue operation in a neighboring country.

I heaved a sigh of relief, and an overwhelming sense of surprise coursed through my entire being. I gazed at Steven with profound emotion, tears welling up in my eyes.

"I was absolutely terrified just a moment ago." I choked up.

"He fooled you. The longest time he's able to hold his breath underwater is 16 minutes, and that's without much professional training." Joel tied a lifebuoy to a rope and threw it down from above.

I stared at Steven in utter disbelief. The Guinness World Record for holding one's breath underwater was 20 minutes. Steven could hold his breath for an impressive 16 minutes. No wonder he seemed so comfortable taking advantage of me underwater just now.

"Explain it to me," I said, placing the lifebuoy on his head in annoyance.

Steven started to act pitifully. "Stephie, my leg hurts so much."

My heart ached as I touched his body and dove under the water, desperate to check his leg. However, he

held me in his arms with malicious intent, even accusing me of molesting him.

"Stephie, you took advantage of the situation and touched me."

I was filled with anger and amusement. At that moment, I embraced him tightly. Only then did I truly experience the overwhelming sensation of shedding tears of joy.

Tears flowed uncontrollably down my face as I cried out loud. The sound of the waves drowned out my cries. However, that moment that Steven and I shared seemed bound together for eternity.

Chapter 582

It felt as if Steven's and my souls were tightly embracing each other.

Climbing onto the deck, we waited anxiously for rescue. However, when the rescue ship finally arrived, Genome Society's ship had not left. Instead, they actually drew closer.

"We're here to save you! Hurry and come aboard quickly." Their team quickly disguised themselves as humanitarian aid workers and commenced the rescue operation for the survivors aboard the cruise ship.

On the deck next to ours, I spotted a familiar woman. She was Lois, Michael's mother. She was wearing a raincoat and standing on the deck, the sea breeze blowing her hair. She looked unfamiliar and scary.

She stood there as she watched Michael participating in the rescue with a serious look in his eyes. Maybe she didn't expect him to be so vulnerable and felt that he was not worthy of her lifetime plans and efforts. "Mike, save me!" Yasmin's desperate cries reverberated through the waves.

She had been hiding in the room. She wore a life jacket and was holding onto the balcony railing tightly, which saved her life. Her instincts to survive danger had always been very strong.

I looked at Yasmin in the seawater and realized that she wasn't meant to die. It was such a pity that she knew too much. Even if Michael and I wanted to save her, Genome Society wouldn't allow it.

A gunshot pierced the air. Steven, Michael, and I were shocked as we witnessed Lois shoot Yasmin. "Mike..." The bright red blood was spreading, and her life jacket was deflating. She looked down in shock and fear at the blood slowly spreading around her body. In her final moments of terror, she called out Michael's name.

"Yasmin!" Michael reached out to grab her hand.

Yasmin reached out desperately to grab him too. Michael's hand was injured. Coming into contact with her could potentially infect him with HIV.

With no access to emergency antiretroviral drugs in the harsh conditions at sea, they were facing a race against time. Within the crucial 72-hour window, reaching shore and obtaining the necessary medication seemed increasingly unlikely.

I instinctively tried to stop Michael, but then I decided not to interfere. Nobody could alter someone else's destiny.

Yasmin cried and reached out to hold Michael's hand. She was such a selfish person that she definitely would not care about Michael's well-being. She was desperate for a final sense of security. However, ultimately, this selfish person chose to retract her hand.

The blood had already entered her lungs. She spat out a mouthful of blood and looked at Michael with a pale face. "Mike... don't... come over here."

She was gesturing to Michael not to come near her blood. Everyone had gotten injured to different extents, and her blood was a source of contamination.

Her final gaze at me was filled with reluctance, jealousy, and sadness. I couldn't help but wonder if she felt regret before she passed. Perhaps not. After all, conscience was inherent. It either existed or never did.

She released her grip gradually, allowing her body to submerge into the depths of the sea. Michael knelt in the boat, his eyes filled with sorrow as he glared at Lois. She responded with indifference, choosing not to speak and offer any explanation.

"Everyone, hurry up and board if you want to survive." The Genome Society members were still striving to persuade everyone to go on board.

The rescuers arrived from a rescue ship to save us. I gazed at Lois, and we couldn't look away from each other for a while.

Finally, she said first, "Stephie, I now kind of believe that you're Stephie."

I stared at her, feeling angry and sad. I wondered why she did that, but I couldn't ask the question.

Chapter 583

The rescue ship had arrived, and the peacekeeping forces along with the rescue workers had swiftly commenced their life-saving operations. The majority of the cruise survivors had been successfully transferred to the rescue ship.

Unfortunately, this cruise ship incident resulted in a devastating loss of lives.

Most of the wealthy died at sea, and some civilians killed each other because of the earlier game. As we stood on the deck of the rescue ship, Steven and I supported each other. I had broken my left leg, and he had broken his right, so we could truly say we had endured our hardships together.

"Honey, my leg's in pain." Steven hugged me from behind, holding me tightly.

I sensed that he was gripped by lingering fear. It was a deep and palpable fear of losing me. I rolled my eyes at him. "If your legs hurt, go back and sit down."

"Genome Society's ship has departed. The rescue workers inspected it and found nothing unusual. They're eligible for humanitarian aid and are a non-governmental organization. This organization has been conducting humanitarian aid in different locations for years," Steven said in a hushed tone.

Genome Society had numerous escape routes planned. Unfortunately, a lot of the passengers on the cruise survived. The video footage and evidence proving the existence of a lab in the cabin would be fully shared on the Internet.

This would alert more people to the dangers of inhumane experiments like genome editing and cloning.

"Genome Society will be heavily affected this time, so they'll avoid taking any noticeable actions for now. "I knew that this wouldn't be sufficient to eliminate them.

The ship sailed slowly on the sea. We watched both the sunrise and sunset. It felt wonderful to be alive.

"I'm incredibly lucky to be alive," Rachel rushed over and embraced me.

I hugged her back and gently patted her back, all while wearing a reassuring smile. "As long as we're alive, the future holds infinite possibilities."

"You're right," Rachel replied, choking out.

Una stepped onto the deck and cast a contemptuous glance at Rachel. "A forensic doctor who knows nothing and is weak, yet manages to survive until the very end. Is that merely luck?"

Rachel became alert and looked at Una warily. "Just because you resemble Stephie doesn't mean that you can bother us here. I don't depend on luck. Instead, I rely on my partner to keep me safe. Is there an issue with that?"

On the side, Zion cleared his throat awkwardly and muttered, "Rachel, could you please lower your voice and try to be more low-key?"

Una glared meaningfully at Rachel. Without uttering another word, she turned and left.

Meanwhile, Jimmy walked out and stretched. "I never expected the president of Crowdstar Group to be the most unassuming son of the Sacco family. It's a reminder that appearances can be deceiving, but I had a hunch it was him all along. Did you already figure it out, Steven?"

"Isn't it a bit too late to say this?" Steven replied coldly.

Jimmy was not angry. Instead, a smile formed on his lips. "When I was younger, I met Dayton in the advanced class at Moulmore Polytechnic. He was truly a genius with autistic tendencies, but he eventually returned here. The instant I saw him stand up, I knew it was him."

"Do you really think it's worth mentioning now? What were you doing earlier? Why didn't you tell us sooner? If you had informed us earlier, Dayton wouldn't have been taken away by the Rebels and we could've protected him in time." Joel strode forward angrily, eager to punch Jimmy. This scoundrel truly deserved a beating.

Furthermore, he went on board immediately when Genome Society invited him. In addition to bringing Una along, he displayed utter disregard for anyone else's well-being.

"Michael's on Genome Society's ship. Will he be okay?" Eason gazed at Genome Society's ship, which was not far away.

"That's his biological mother. Would she throw him into the sea?" Joel retorted and left in a bad mood. Eason fell silent, recognizing Joel's short fuse. That brat was young but short-tempered.

"We've caught the murderer responsible for the interprovincial serial murder case. This undoubtedly marks another merit for us." Eason sat on the deck tiredly and gazed at the blue sky.

"I wish for everything to return to a state of calm," Zion uttered softly.

Chapter 584

"Calm? The storm's coming. The fierce conflict between the Rebels and Genome Society has reached its boiling point. If they don't stop their fighting, there'll never be peace." Eason sighed.

Everyone was well aware that there were numerous puzzles yet to be resolved and countless tasks that needed to be accomplished. It became evident that they could not simply escape from the turmoil that surrounded them.

Now that they were deeply entangled, they had no choice but to press on relentlessly. They were determined to crush Genome Society, dismantle the Rebels, and stop innocent people from being harmed.

"The masked woman from the Rebels is the real murderer who killed Stephanie. I saw the birthmark on her arm. It was her, a woman," I declared seriously.

"At least our direction is correct. The Rebels, led by the masked woman, are ruthless, insane, and radical. Based on our understanding of Huma's Genome Society, it seems that the lab is run by Michael's mother. "Genome Society opposes human ethics, conducting illegal experiments at sea that involve cloning as well as undisclosed practices of genome editing and other inhumane experiments." Zion took a deep breath. They were nothing more than a group of lunatics. Half of the illegal activities in this world were under the control of these lunatics who were motivated by either greed or their own selfish desires. They had completely lost their mind.

"Mom! Dad!" Ashton and Xandra rushed out and threw themselves into Steven's and my arms. Steven and I were both limping, and we almost lost our balance.

Steven and I held the children and exchanged glances. At that moment, we felt the profound joy that could only be found in the simplicity of an ordinary family. It would be great if it could always be like this.

"The two kids appeared out of nowhere and are not on the rescue list. If they wish to enter the country, the process will be challenging. They must undergo interrogation and rigorous psychological testing due to their nature as experimental subjects.

"I'm worried that passing these tests will be quite difficult for them." Zion asked me to keep a close watch on the children. He then took Steven aside and spoke to him in a hushed tone.

I looked at the two children with concern. They were the experimental subjects of Genome Society, products of the survival of the fittest. In their world, the only truth seemed to be killing and desperate survival.

I feared that they might not meet the standards once the psychological test was carried out.

Ashton and Xandra gazed up at me. "Mom, can we always be together with you and Dad? You'll never abandon us, will you?"

I nodded, but I wasn't confident. I wasn't sure if we could keep them. If not, what should I do? "I'll try my best to keep you," I whispered. I was committed to trying my hardest no matter what.

"Mom, we'll try our best too."

Ashton held Xandra's hand and whispered, "Mom, Yara is crying."

I was stunned for a moment, then I looked up at Yara. She was hiding in the corner and crying.

I approached Yara with my crutches and asked, "Why are you crying? Who asked you to go on the cruise?" From the moment those children were rescued and only Yara remained, we should have known that her

true identity was not ordinary. She was a teenage girl who had gone through so much and yet could remain resilient. She was crying now, and it seemed unbelievable.

"If I tell you, will you believe me?" Yara choked up.

I nodded. "Tell me about it."

Chapter 585

"My dad is Peter Jones..." Yara said softly.

I froze, staring at her in shock and disbelief. "That's impossible. Peter Jones only had one daughter. His daughter was..."

Wasn't his daughter the girl who was mentally disabled? She was the girl who liked Steven. She was also the child of Peter and the asylum director's daughter.

From what I heard, his first daughter had passed very early on due to a rare condition.

"I'm... a genome-edited clone," Yara said in a small voice.

I inhaled sharply. That lunatic actually brought his first daughter back to life.

He used her DNA to create a clone. Then, he used genome editing to ensure that she was healthy. That was why he joined Genome Society.

Initially, he must've joined them in hopes of getting his daughter back. So, why did he turn into a Rebel in the end?

"My father has passed away. Before he died, he asked me to lead you guys here and uncover the truth about this ship. That's because... I was also born in one of the experimental capsules onboard." She tucked herself into the corner.

That explained why she was so familiar with the place.

How much more inhumane activity had taken place here?

"Your dad got you thanks to the organization. Why would he still liaise with the Rebels after?" I knelt beside Yara and asked softly.

I couldn't wrap my head around it.

She stared at me for a moment before responding, "He found out that they made more than one copy of me. There were multiple imperfect versions that were either discarded or destroyed. Some were also sold for profit or harmed..."

A chill ran down my spine. These people were monsters.

The clones created from genetic modification were born on the cruise. Situated on international waters, the organization was beyond the reach of law.

They were evil and terrifying people.

Among all the children from the labs, only Ashton and Xandra survived through natural selection.

"Do you believe me, Ms. Stephy? I didn't mean to put all of you in harm's way. I just..." Yara lowered her head.

She continued, "In order to keep my identity hidden, my dad had my aunt take me in and claim that I was her child. After what happened to him, Genome Society found me.

"They told me that my father was the leader of the Rebels, and they wanted to get rid of me. Mr. Ewan Bart from the Rebels rescued me. He found an opportunity to get me on the ship as a performer. I've been waiting for you guys since then."

Ewan didn't want so many innocent people to die. He didn't want Steven to die either. His only goal was to expose the evil deeds of the organization.

From the recent incident, I was able to tell that he was at least humane. The masked person, however, was a terrifying murder addict with no regard for human life.

"Your dad gave you to your aunt so that you could live a safe and happy life. He didn't want you to get caught up in all those things..." I explained gently.

Despite that, we all knew that the children from the labs would remain in danger so long as Genome Society remained active.

Hence, my goal aligned with Peter's.

Everything we did was to protect those we loved and cared about.

The moment Ashton and Xan appeared, I understood that my and Steven's happiness didn't matter anymore. If our sacrifice could keep the children safe and happy, it would all be worth it in the end.

Chapter 586

When the cruise finally docked, the group of us who were injured were all sent to a local hospital.

Steven and I were carried in on stretchers with our respective broken legs suspended in the air. Fortunately, everyone in our group was alive. Our injuries were manageable as well.

Eason and Zion both suffered from some external injuries while Joel was unscathed. As she had received emergency treatment from the best doctor onboard the cruise, Rachel had also gotten a lot better.

As for Steven's hand, the doctors at the hospital all marveled at how successful and well-done the surgical procedure had been.

The cruise had the best scientists and doctors from around the world. However, they chose to perform heinous acts instead of using their skills for the greater good.

"Did anyone find Dayton yet? Any news?" I asked Zion as he entered the room.

"The Rebels took him away. The ones who want to locate them the most should be Genome Society. I'm sure there'll be news about it soon." Zion assumed that the organization would do everything in their power to rescue Dayton.

Not to our surprise, Eason soon returned with updates. Remains of a lifeboat were spotted near the Crimson Sea. Dayton had been rescued by local armed forces. They had already made plans to bring him back to the country.

"Did the Rebels just leave him like that after going through all that trouble?" I was slightly skeptical about the whole ordeal. It all seemed too easy.

The Rebels gathered thousands of people onboard a cruise and hosted a large-scale game of death. They orchestrated the entire thing only to kidnap Dayton Sacco a mere president-in the end.

I had a nagging feeling that they were leading Genome Society on. By intentionally letting them rescue him, the organization would put their complete trust in Dayton.

Subsequently, he would have the authority to get in contact with the person in charge of the entire organization.

I was stunned by my own train of thought.

I instinctively looked toward Steven. He was seated on the bed and playing chess with the two children.

The pair were incredibly smart. However, despite working together, they only managed to even out the match against their father. The game had been going on for quite some time, but it was still unclear who would come out on top.

"Playing chess in a trio is disrespectful to the game," Rachel blurted resignedly while munching on an apple.

I stared at Steven in silence.

Was Dayton really the president of Crowdstar Group?

Aside from myself, everyone probably believed that he was including Genome Society.

Even someone as proud as Jimmy believed it.

"I never would've imagined. How did someone as reserved as Dayton bring Crowdstar Group to such heights within a matter of years? There's truly a difference between geniuses and the common folk."

Zion slumped tiredly onto the couch before continuing, "If I were a genius, how many cases do you think I

could solve in a day?"

"If over 20 percent of the population were geniuses, the world would become a very scary place." I looked up at him.

If we let Genome Society continue its activities, biased and prejudiced systems would come into play all around the globe.

Everyone would be sorted into classes. The law wouldn't be fair to all anymore.

Education, medical care, and all other privileges would favor geniuses. They'd take over leadership roles in upper-class societies. Eventually, they'd completely fill up the positions at the top of the hierarchy while common people were stuck below them forever.

Chapter 587

We were finally back in Huma.

Steven and I were home at last, but Ashton and Xandra were detained by the police.

"Ashton and Xan's situation is special, so the police asked to conduct a psychological evaluation. They'll only let us bring them home when everything looks okay." I was slightly worried that they wouldn't pass the examination.

Psychological evaluations in a regular society consisted of ordinary questions like why a rabbit would enjoy a carrot. For Ashton and Xandra, these questions might seem stupid.

"They're going to pass... I think." Steven's confidence faltered for a moment. He coughed sheepishly before heading off to get me some fruits.

Now that Ewan wasn't here anymore, the house seemed kind of empty.

Stevie was still barking rampantly in the yard. I was soothing it before Steven walked out with a bowl of chopped fruits.

"Why do you look so guilty?" I looked at him skeptically.

Walking with a limp didn't seem to impact his good looks at all.

He replied, "I kind of tricked Eason into telling me who the doctor in charge of the evaluation was. Then, I told the kids detailed information about said doctor. They're probably going to pass the test."

Not to our surprise, Eason and Zion soon pulled up with the children in tow. They looked evidently displeased.

As soon as the car door opened up, Ashton and Xandra bolted toward us gleefully.

Stevie was nudging the children affectionately with its tongue sticking out.

"Your children are getting more and more unbelievable by the day," Eason exclaimed.

"Why? Did they fail the examination?" I was slightly worried.

"They turned it around and evaluated the doctor instead." The corner of his lips twitched.

"The doctor asked Ashton why the carrot is a rabbit's favorite food. Do you know what his answer was? Rabbits are herbivores. Their digestive tract is very long in order to accommodate tough fibers.

"A carrot doesn't have nearly enough fiber content, and it would cause the rabbit to fall sick. The rabbit might even die," he continued in disbelief.

"Then, the doctor turned to Xan. He asked what she would do if a kitten fell into a body of water and she couldn't swim." Eason looked at me.

For some reason, I started becoming uneasy. I was eager to know what Xandra said in response.

"She said she'll ask her brother to save it 'cause he knows how to swim."

I let out a breath of relief. That seemed like an answer a normal child would give.

Steven couldn't possibly have taught her that reply.

I looked toward him instinctively. Guilt was plastered all over his face. He did, in fact, teach her that response.

"The doctor also asked her what would happen if Ashton didn't know how to swim either," Eason said again.

He stared straight at me before continuing, "She called her brother stupid for not knowing how to swim."

I couldn't help but laugh. That was exactly how an innocent child was supposed to act.

However, a pang of sadness washed over me as I laughed. Ashton and Xandra's innocence was learned instead of innate.

"You should all get some rest. Dayton is back too. He's receiving treatment in a private hospital. We'll follow the case through," said Zion.

I nodded.

After Zion and Eason departed, I knelt in front of the two kids and asked, "What answers did you actually have for the doctor's questions? If a kitten fell into a body of water and you both didn't know how to swim, would you try to save it?"

The pair glanced at each other. "No."

In a world where it was survival of the fittest, they wouldn't waste their own life to save a cat.

There was nothing wrong with their answer, but I was afraid that they'd have a disregard for life just because they were emotionally indifferent.

"If you knew how to swim, would you save it?"

They nodded. "If we knew how to swim, we would. Dad told us being more capable means that we have an unspoken responsibility to protect the weak.

"It needs to be within our capabilities, though. If we overextend and make meaningless sacrifices, we'll make Mom and Dad worry."

I froze briefly before looking toward Steven.

Chapter 588

In that split moment, I understood the meaning of education.

I had never agreed with the saying that humans were born kind. Some people were just inherently bad apples. However, education was the only way to change everything.

Steven actually felt like a beacon of light. He had been guiding me toward where I needed to go from the very beginning.

"You're a very, very good person, my dear Steven." He'd been a great person since the start of it all.

"Welcome home, you guys." Steven stretched his arms out and pulled Ashton and Xandra into another embrace. Stevie and I were also pulled into the hug.

I couldn't help but smile. This was nice.

We were so blissful, it was enviable.

After a month's rest, we didn't come across any news regarding what happened on the cruise.

The government had probably conducted investigations on everyone involved. It wasn't the time to publicize everything and stir up panic at the moment.

The ship belonged to a millionaire overseas. When Huma's police officers tracked the man down with the aid of the local authorities, the man had already taken his own life in his home.

Their lead seemed to have ended there.

All evidence pointed toward overseas. However, there was absolutely nothing on Genome Society or the people who were part of the lab in Huma.

Even if everyone knew that Michael's mother was one of the people in charge, they had yet to uncover the location of the lab itself.

"Michael is probably locked up by his mother. Since we returned from the ocean, the Fords have not permitted anyone to see him. They're claiming he's gone through too much stress." Rachel had come over together with Zion.

"We need Michael to help with the investigation, but his mother is refusing to cooperate. That's why we suspect that he's being kept there against his will." Zion sighed.

This was Michael Ford's mother they were up against. Without ample evidence, they weren't able to do anything.

"Are you asking us to pay him a visit?" I looked at him.

Steven immediately reached for my hand. He didn't want me to get involved with that family any longer. "We're asking you to try." Rachel took my hand. "You know Michael best, Stephy,"

They wanted me to convince Michael to go against his mother, gather evidence, and then throw her into jail?

I scoffed. "You're overestimating my abilities. You're also thinking too highly of Michael. He's actually a bit of a mama's boy,"

Based on what I know about him, his mother single-handedly turned him into the successful man he was in the present day. He was deprived of affection from his father because the man was never home.

I used to feel sympathetic toward Mrs. Ford and Michael. Now, I realized that there was a reason their circumstances were the way they were.

"As of now, we no longer have a lead, and Dayton is still under observation while he recuperates. We can only turn to Michael for any new information."

We needed to find the next laboratory and rescue the people inside. Maybe they were waiting to be rescued as well.

"I'll make a trip to their house." I nodded.

Steven's grip on my hand tightened. "She's dangerous, Stephy."

He was referring to Mrs. Ford, and he was right. She was able to make Stephanie lose her memories and subsequently turn into a completely different person. She probably had something to do with the accident and Peter Jones' hypnosis too.

This woman felt terrifying to even think about.

"If we're going to get rid of Genome Society, we should destroy each and every one of their laboratories."

With Nancy's lab and the cruise out of the picture, the organization had lost two big experiment labs. Now, we needed to locate the one Mrs. Ford was in charge of.

Chapter 589

I went to the Ford residence alone. I didn't let Steven tag along. We couldn't possibly reach a consensus if he was present.

Leaning against my crutch, I gradually walked toward the household garden.

In the days following the accident, I became incredibly familiar with this garden. From my memory, Stephanie could never gain Michael's trust or approval. Hence, she would constantly end up crying here.

"Ms. Larson." Sally, one of the Fords' maids, was still in the household. She approached me as soon as she saw me.

I was slightly surprised. Michael knew that Sally was potentially working under Peter. Why would he still keep her around?

What was he trying to do?

Was this intentional? Was he using her to spy on his mother?

"I want to see Michael, Sally," I said softly.

She turned and looked toward the living room. "Mrs. Ford has been waiting for you, Ms. Larson."

I frowned and followed her gaze. Mrs. Ford was waiting as though she'd anticipated my arrival.

She seemed to be extremely aware of the police force's activities. She knew that they wanted to use her son in order to further investigate the labs.

"Ms. Larson." As soon as I stepped into the room, she greeted me with a smile before gesturing for me to sit.

Afterward, she said again, "Perhaps I should call you Stephie instead."

I frowned and didn't respond.

"When I found out that you'd reincarnated in a different body, I was extremely ecstatic." She looked at me with a crazed look of excitement.

"When Steven Lincoln first presented his theory on reincarnation, I honestly didn't believe him. But I had hope and an aspiration. I wanted modern science to be able to change our present circumstances. I prayed for advancement," she explained with a smile.

Then, she continued, "When I look at you, Stephanie, I see a perfect miracle. I see hope. Perhaps in the future... souls really can be reincarnated into a cloned body with all their memories intact."

I looked at her with a grim expression. This crazy side of her was new. Prior to this, I had never detected anything that was amiss.

What a brilliant actress.

"None of those idiots believed in that theory. They all thought that Steven's proposition was baseless and impossible. They also thought that Joel was just in on the lie.

"But me, I believed Steven. I believed that Joel was reincarnated. The only thing missing from our experiment was conclusive evidence, but now, we have you."

She started laughing maniacally.

"Steven is a genius. It's just unfortunate that you can't really tell him what to do. Joel was his only argument, and he refused to create a second subject. Since he cared so much about you, I could only try to

force his hand..."

I stared at her in shock. My reincarnation was an experiment that she forced Steven to conduct?

"I believed that he could do it. That was why your death was a necessity." The tone of her voice grew solemn.

"You're a member of Genome Society, but the ones that killed me were from the Rebels..." I frowned in confusion.

"You're still not as smart as Steven is." She laughed. "God shapes the universe with his invisible hands. I don't need to be a Rebel, I just need to use them to get what I want."

She continued, "Everything has fallen into place. You're my most perfect subject."

Mrs. Ford was comparing herself to God. She was actually a madwoman.

"Where's the lab?" I stared at her with a guarded look.

She only laughed in response. There was no way she'd tell me where it was.

Chapter 590

"Nancy, that idiot. All she cared about was preserving the genes. She assumed that genome edited people would produce flawless children.

"As the subjects continued to reproduce for generations to come, the children would eventually become the closest they could get to perfection."

Mrs. Ford changed the topic. She was now talking about Nancy's aspirations.

Every laboratory had its own field of research.

Nancy wanted the subjects to reproduce through natural means and give birth to healthy children. The subject that escaped with a baby was part of the experiment that she wanted to complete.

"How was that profitable? Rich people are all selfish. Those from the upper class want to be immortal. They want to have a younger body before their current one turns old and gray." She turned to look at me. That's why my research is the best."

It was also the most profitable.

Reincarnation practically disposed of the veil between God and the common man.

"Genetics have remained an unsolved scientific mystery for years. Only a handful had managed to crack the code, and they all turned into believers of God. Do you know why?

"Was it really a God that they believed in? No, it was the creator of this world. It was the origin of mankind, the true meaning of genetics, as well as the secrets of a soul and its vessel."

Mrs. Ford spoke as if she was on the brink of madness. Then, she laughed as she showed me the decorations around the living room. I didn't think much of them before, but they now appeared eerie and disturbing.

"This frame was constructed from human bones while the canvas of the painting is human skin." She pointed at a display.

If she hadn't pointed it out, no one would know that it was such a sadistic piece of artwork.

"When people die, the body is merely a display. Set it to flames and it'll turn into nothing but ashes. What's truly remarkable is the human soul.

"The key lies in the genome. As long as we crack the genetic code, we'll be able to fully achieve reincarnation."

If someone was able to reincarnate as many times as they wanted, they would have technically achieved immortality.

"Breaking the laws of nature often comes with a steep price," I warned grimly.

"For the last thousands of years, has human civilization been adhering to how things naturally were? No! We've been making changes.

"Years ago, not a single person imagined that they could be flying on airplanes, and they were foolish to think so! Modern science requires constant advancement. If you want to see progress in the medical field, you'll have to be willing to take risks and make sacrifices!"

Mrs. Ford exclaimed emotionally as she stared at me.

I didn't offer any rebuttals in response. I had nothing to say.

"All of you are ignorant fools..." After she was done with her heated argument, she'd probably gotten

thirsty. She sat down and continued drinking her tea.

I sat on the opposite of her and scanned my surroundings alertly. If Michael was free to move about, he'd be out here by now. It was clear that he'd been locked up.

"If Nancy's laboratory was used for research on reproduction, what about the cruise? What were they researching in that lab?" I wanted to know.

"Mutants." Her lips curved into a smile. "That ship belonged to a madman from Melovia. He was studying genetic mutation."

"What does mutation mean?" For some reason, I felt a sharp pain in my heart.

Ashton and Xandra.

"Mutants are uncontrollable variables that originate from perfect genomes. They're extremely skilled at pretending. Everything that you see on the surface may be nothing but a guise.

"They can survive even in the worst conditions. Their survival skills and mental capabilities are close to perfection. However, the more 'perfect' something seems, the more flaws it actually has.

"Because they're uncontrollable, no one is able to read their thoughts. The foreign madman was trying to create a weapon of war..."

It was because individuals like that would be near-invincible spies.