

After Death 591

Chapter 591

"These children were able to change their personalities according to their surroundings. They're like chameleons, and the decisions they make vary." Mrs. Ford was giving me a reminder.

She was telling me how scary the pair of children could become.

"If I were you, Stephanie, I wouldn't bring a subject from a lab back home in such a casual manner."

Looking at me, she said again, "Never underestimate anyone from the organization. If you were able to take people with you, you must've been intentionally allowed to do so."

I frowned and shot her a cautious glance. Were the members of the organization divided as well?

She wore a face of contempt while talking about Nancy. She didn't agree with another scientist's theories, and she even reminded me that someone might be intentionally keeping the kids around me.

"They're my and Steven's children. I won't give them up," I declared solemnly.

"Only your biological children can be called your own. You won't understand the feeling of carrying a child. During that time, the mother is one with the baby. The baby is a part of your body. It also shares your organs, oxygen, and nutrition."

Mrs. Ford leaned against the couch before continuing, "You're only able to realize the importance of life through your own pregnancy. Even after childbirth, when your child becomes an individual of their own, you'd still think they should be a part of you."

"You need to protect them, love them, and plan their future for them. You need to be united with them. At the very least, a child from my womb must not become an obstacle that's keeping me from succeeding."

I looked at her before casting a glance toward Michael's room. "So, you think Michael has now become an obstacle. He won't agree with your ideals."

"Killing Yasmin has caused a rift in your relationship. The pair of you aren't able to communicate with each other anymore."

She smiled. "That is correct."

"You were waiting for me. You knew I was going to come. You also think I'm the only one that can convince him otherwise at this point in time?" I questioned.

Then, I continued, "I'm afraid you've got the wrong person. The person you should be waiting for is Nancy's adopted daughter, Una-not me. She's a more fitting Stephanie than I'll ever be." I stared at her. I didn't think I was her best option.

"No, it can only be you. That Una girl is nothing but an experimental subject. She has no complete or independent soul. She's just a hollow shell." Mrs. Ford didn't think very highly of Una. She even looked disgusted.

"You're my most perfect subject. At my suggestion, your mother carried you to term and birthed you herself. From the moment she gave you life and a name, she started becoming attached to you."

"It was a peculiar yet powerful force. That force drove her to change her ideals and beliefs. She became more than willing to betray the organization for you."

Mrs. Ford had a knowing smile plastered on her face. It was like everything was under her control—including the death of Stephanie's parents.

"The Rebels killed you, Stephanie. You'll never become one of them. I trust in you and your intelligence. I believe that you'll understand my ideas and the contributions I've made to further the biological field of science."

It seemed like she was persuading me to join her. Then, she'd have me do the same to Michael.

"I don't agree with your views," I disagreed. "The evolution of mankind is entirely dependent on Mother Nature. We should abide by her laws as long as we live on this earth. If not, we'll face dire consequences." Her composure remained calm.

"You're too young. As you gradually grow older, you'll soon realize that the days ahead will be much more limited than they currently are. You'll watch helplessly as your loved ones die, and you'll feel like you're all alone."

I frowned and didn't respond.

Our morals didn't align. There was no way we could ever work together.

"I know you adore Michael, but you seem to be exerting too much control over him," I stated.

From my memory, Mrs. Ford would periodically travel abroad to see her husband. That aside, the rest of her time would mostly be spent on keeping Michael in check.

I used to think she just harbored high expectations for him, but I soon realized that something didn't feel quite right.

She was too controlling.

A normal, loving mother would want her children to be safe and healthy. Hence, I told her about Stephanie's pregnancy under the assumption that she'd be delighted.

I thought she'd try to inform Michael about it and that she'd keep the unborn baby safe. Instead, she chose

to hide it. She connived in Michael's cruelty toward Stephanie, which led to the death of the child.

"You probably played a big part in the way Michael treated Stephanie, didn't you?" I looked at her. "You're probably a far better psychiatrist than Peter ever was. I'm guessing you specialized in psychology?"

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For the last few years, she was probably the one who instilled his hatred against Stephanie. She brainwashed him into fearing her.

If not for the constant, repeated conditioning and instilled thoughts from someone around him, he wouldn't have developed such a strong aversion toward her.

I was sure that was what she had done.

Mrs. Ford only smiled in response.

She was acknowledging my claims.

She was the one who intentionally caused Michael and Stephanie's misunderstanding. She wanted him to despise her and subsequently hurt her. She even went to such lengths in order to make that happen.

Why?

Was it purely to collect data? But what good was that type of data for?

I couldn't comprehend it. I had a nagging feeling that the pair's relationship was far more complicated than it seemed. My instincts were telling me that this woman was dangerous.

She was just as Steven described her to be-dangerous and terrifying. She was smart and skilled at deception and pretending.

"What did you do to Michael?" I asked carefully. "Can I see him?"

"Of course. It's not like I locked him up or anything." Her smile looked natural, but I found it eerie.

She gestured for me to walk around as I saw fit. I got up and looked around. This was a place I had called home for some years, yet it felt oddly foreign and creepy.

Lois Ford didn't just ruin Stephanie, she also ruined Michael in the process. If she really loved her son, how could she murder Yasmin right in front of him? It made no sense.

When she killed her, I even caught a glimpse of jealousy among other complex emotions in her eyes.

Was she attached to Michael in ways that were beyond a mother-and-son relationship?

There were rumors that Mrs. Ford adored her husband and would give her life for him if needed. Were those rumors false? Was she just sick to the core?

"Michael?" I went upstairs and tried knocking on his door.

There was no response.

"Michael?" I raised my voice.

Suddenly, the door flew open. Michael stood glaring at me with a look of pure hatred.

"What do you want?" he snapped.

I furrowed my brows. He felt foreign. Something was wrong.

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"You kind of disappeared recently. Everyone is worried about you." I frowned and eyed him cautiously.

"I'm fine. I don't need anyone's concern. You can leave now." He dismissed me.

"Michael!" I immediately reached out to hold the door before he could close it. "Are you sure you don't have anything to say to me?"

His expression was grim. He shot me a cold stare before saying, "I have nothing to say to any of you guys. You can go now."

My expression soured as well. I tried to force the door open to figure out what was going on. To my dismay, Michael had no intention of backing down.

We were stuck in an impasse.

I stared at him, trying to look for some sort of message behind his gaze.

He only stared back at me. There was a trace of desperation in his eyes. He looked like he was pleading for me to leave.

I loosened my grip. He slammed the door shut before I turned to head back downstairs.

Downstairs, Mrs. Ford was still calmly sipping on her tea.

She flashed me a light smile. "He's not willing to talk to you?"

I nodded. "What did you do to him?"

She laughed. "He's my son. I gave birth to him. What do you think I'd do to him? I love him so much I would give anything for his future."

I looked at her warily. She was getting more and more sinister by the minute.

How terrifying.

"My parents would've escaped with Steven and Stephanie if Peter's plan had gone through. Instead, they were killed by the organization. Did you betray them?"

From my parents' lab diary, I could tell that their plan didn't alert the organization. They had submitted a new experiment plan to their superiors. It depicted their plans to bring the children to a remote area so that they could do more research.

The proposal was approved. They could've brought Steven and Stephanie out of Huma without any additional burden. Subsequently, they could've gone on their escape route.

Everything could've worked out perfectly, but a premeditated car accident killed them off along with Andy Lincoln's family.

"I couldn't allow them to leave with our experimental subjects." Mrs. Ford was admitting it. She had admitted that she betrayed Stephanie's parents.

"My mother considered you her best friend. You were like a sister to her." I clenched my fists and stared at Mrs. Ford with teary eyes.

Did it not hurt her conscience?

"Every obstacle that stands in my way must be rid of. Andy was no exception..." she muttered.

Andy had offended Genome Society and was their biggest enemy. Naturally, Mrs. Ford had to jump on the

opportunity. She used the organization to her advantage and killed all of them off in one go. How cruel.

"You're so cruel," I spat bitterly. My voice was trembling.

"Modern technology will never advance if you aren't cut-throat enough. Otherwise, mankind will become stagnant. If you want to adapt or change your natural surroundings, you'll have to strive to evolve.

"For the last couple of millennia, biologists have been searching for the origin of mankind. Why do you think that is? Do you think they have nothing better to do?" she questioned me with rage.

I clenched my fists and didn't respond.

She continued. "Do you know why some scientists think our ancestors evolved from fish? That's because for millions and millions of years, the human race has been constantly evolving,

"Our brains are getting more and more complex. Even if the process of evolution seemed slow, we're still constantly adapting to change."

She then pointed at the fish inside a tank. "The process of evolution is a cycle. There's no guarantee that millions of years later, the ocean won't swallow the earth and the human race won't evolve back into fish-like creatures."

I rubbed my temples. She felt a bit deranged to me.

"None of this is a concern for our generation. That's something only future generations need to worry about." I thought she had too many excessive worries.

The average human life only spanned for a couple of decades. There was no need to think about events that might take place millions of years later.

"That's why you'll never understand. You can't comprehend why so many people in power seek immortality. Everyone wants to witness history.

"Everyone wants to witness the advancement of human civilization! I've achieved something no one has ever done before! This is what we call progress!" she exclaimed emotionally.

It was clear to me now-her primary goal was to achieve immortality.

As of now, modern medicine was not able to stop the body from deteriorating. They could only slow down the process of aging as well as cure or prevent illnesses. There was no science that could go against the inevitable process that was decay.

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Since they were unable to overcome this barrier, they had to find an alternative method to locate a fresh, youthful "host" for life. This led to the development of the concept of reincarnation, involving the transfer of soul and memory.

It was similar to when a computer broke down, its useful information was transferred to a new computer using a hard drive. This allowed the information to be permanently stored and updated.

Hence, Mrs. Ford deeply valued Steven's experimental project and was incredibly eager to discover if reincarnation truly existed. That was why she orchestrated and organized this big plan, eliminating anyone who got in her way.

"You're out of your mind." I took a step back and turned around. I briskly walked away, almost breaking into a run.

I realized that Mrs. Ford was absolutely insane. Her mind seemed on the edge of madness. However, I could tell she was in a good mood. She was thrilled and joyful. The more I resembled Stephanie, the happier she was.

She believed the experiment had finally succeeded, filling her with a sense of hope. But what was her true end goal? It was impossible that she was doing it for the future of mankind. After all, everyone was selfish. She undoubtedly had her own personal motives.

"Mrs. Ford, everything is going as planned," Mrs. Ford's assistant approached her and said.

I ran out of the living room and glanced back at Mrs. Ford and her assistant. That eerie sensation sent a chill running down my spine. She looked at me like I was a rabbit in a lab. It seemed like I couldn't get away from her control, but when a rabbit was anxious, it would bite.

When I left the Ford residence, I glanced back toward Michael's room. He stood by the window, locking eyes with me in a gaze that was both intense and complex.

I could sense the turmoil raging within his soul. It was as if he was silently pleading for help but was trapped by invisible chains. He appeared utterly suffocated.

He raised his hand and touched the glass as if trying to reach something in the air. We exchanged glances. His eyes were bloodshot, and he suddenly smiled at me, saying quietly, "Stephie, run run away."

He asked me to escape. After leaving the Ford residence, I limped into Zion's car.

Zion, Eason, and Rachel all looked at me, eager to hear what Michael had said and whether it would benefit the case. Only Steven kept his head down, squeezing my hand tightly. His concern was solely for my safety, and it seemed like nothing else mattered to him.

"Michael doesn't want to see me, which is odd. I don't know what Mrs. Ford told him. He's very resistant now." I shook my head to show that I had no clue.

Rachel sighed and looked at us with disappointment as she lay on the passenger seat. "It looks like it's going to take some time to locate the lab under Mrs. Ford's control. I wonder how many people are suffering there and need us to help them?"

I was stunned for a moment, feeling a little uneasy. "I believe Michael will go back to the Ford Group sooner or later. I'll find another opportunity to meet him. Perhaps Mrs. Ford is there, and he's hiding something."

Zion reassured, "Don't worry, we'll explore other angles of investigation too."

I nodded, reflecting on Michael's final glance at me.

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"I feel like there's something wrong with Mrs. Ford's feelings for Michael," I whispered to Steven.

Steven looked at me. "You've been living in the Ford residence for so long. Have you ever met Michael's father?"

I was taken aback for a moment and pondered over it thoughtfully. In my recollection... "I overheard the domestic staff mention that Mr. Ford had come back several times, but I've never met him."

It could be argued that he was insignificant.

"They said that he was in poor health and had been living in the nursing home in Georgeke." Mrs. Ford also frequently visited Georgeke.

"I asked Eason to verify her itinerary. She simply instructed her assistant to purchase a ticket to Georgeke, but she never actually boarded the plane," Steven said seriously.

This proved that Mrs. Ford's claim of visiting Georgeke was always just an excuse, a cover-up. She never actually went to Georgeke.

"So... she was frequently absent from home for a long time, but it wasn't to visit her husband at the nursing home. She intentionally made up this excuse to conceal the fact that she was going to the lab?" I gazed at Steven in utter astonishment.

"It's possible." Steven nodded.

Zion glanced at me and then turned to Steven. "I think I have a clear direction for the investigation now. I'll take you home first."

After arriving at Steven's place, Steven and I stepped out of the car, bidding farewell to Zion and Rachel. Rachel waved goodbye to me and left with Zion.

"In my memory, Rachel was always carefree and outspoken, but she was actually very timid," I commented in a low voice.

Steven glanced at me. "Are you suspecting Rachel?"

I shook my head, hoping that my suspicions were wrong. Up to this point, I had not come across any clues that confirmed my doubt.

"What did Mrs. Ford tell you?" Steven was slightly concerned.

"My parents and your father were all killed by her. She purposely betrayed my parents to Genome Society," I uttered in a hushed tone. My parents probably never knew that the person who betrayed them was their most trusted friend and closest partner.

"Human minds are hard to predict. In this world, the most challenging thing to understand is always how others think," whispered Steven.

At the door, Ashton and Xandra were playing with Stevie. When they saw us return, they obediently stood still. They displayed such obedience and showed no intention of causing any trouble.

I glanced at the two children and said softly, "Steven, Mrs. Ford mentioned that those two kids are mutants who excel at disguising themselves."

Similar to chameleons, these two children possessed personalities that would swiftly adapt and were remarkably skilled at acting. No one would know their true thoughts.

"She said that the true owner of the cruise ship lab deliberately allowed us to find them and bring them back. It should be a part of the experiment itself."

I was worried that the two children were being trained as weapons by those individuals and that their apparent obedience was merely a facade. Moreover, I didn't trust Yara fully, who led us to discover them. Steven gazed at the two children and shook his head. "We don't expect anything in

return, and we're not bothered by being plotted against. They've made their choice, so we'll simply do what is right and maintain a clear conscience."

I was stunned as I gazed at Steven. I never imagined that even after experiencing death, my mind would not be as composed as Steven's. I reached out and gently grasped Steven's fingers. I smiled at him." Indeed, you're absolutely right."

Not everyone was naturally meant to be a parent, and adjusting to having children could take some time. "We bought fries, fried chicken, burgers, and Coke for you." I gestured for the children to come over.

I passed by a fast food restaurant and bought some food. Even though eating too much of it was not healthy, these snacks should be a childhood delight for children.

When I was a child, I didn't grasp the concept of love, so I never paid much attention to food. However, I wanted these kids to experience love and pursue their desires. Only then could their lives become truly meaningful.

"It's burgers and fried chicken!" Ashton exclaimed happily, his eyes filled with surprise. However, I couldn't shake the feeling that he was pretending.

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Ashton and Xandra were just pretending to be what we wanted them to be.

"Have you guys eaten before?" I asked tentatively.

Ashton handed the fried chicken to Xandra first, then turned to me and shook his head. "I've seen it on TV, but I've never tried it. The maid claims it's junk food, lacking in nutrition. It could impact our intellectual development."

I nodded and gently rubbed the heads of the two children with a heavy heart.

"Dad, Mom, they're monitoring us," Ashton exclaimed as he entered the house.

I cautiously scanned my surroundings, my senses on high alert. Was Genome Society keeping a close eye on us? Steven also looked around carefully.

Ashton sprinted to the TV, climbed up, and removed an extremely well-hidden surveillance camera from the ornaments above. I gazed at the camera in disbelief, then turned to Steven and asked, "When was this installed?"

This was Steven's own house. It couldn't have been placed there by the Lincoln family. It seemed clear that someone had been monitoring Steven for a long time. As anticipated, it felt like every move we made was under surveillance.

"And here too." Ashton hurried to the kitchen again, scanning the house from various angles in search of any hidden cameras. Steven's complexion didn't look very well, and his expression seemed strange,

I was a bit mad. "These people are really everywhere."

I controlled my frustration and carried Ashton in my arms. "How did you find these cameras?"

"They need to connect it to the home network," Ashton said in a low voice.

"Are there any other places?" I inquired. Ashton looked around and wanted to rush to Steven's and my bedroom.

"There's none in the bedroom!" Steven exclaimed. He gritted his teeth as he lifted Ashton. Ashton looked at Steven and asked innocently, "Dad, was it you who installed the cameras?"

Steven raised his hand in despair and rubbed his forehead. "Not all of them."

I narrowed my eyes and glared at Steven. "Did you also install a hidden camera? What are you trying to do?"

Steven lowered his head guiltily. "I just... want to look at you."

If he were not at home, he would want to know what Stephanie was doing. I gritted my teeth and stepped hard on his foot. He dared not utter a word and could only gaze at me with a pitiful expression.

Steven followed me into the bedroom and secretly stared at Ashton with anger. "Am I truly your biological father? Why did you harm me..."

Ashton replied sternly, "In biological terms, you're my biological father."

Xandra snickered as she licked her greasy fingers. "Ashton, you've caused Daddy so much trouble."

As soon as I entered the bedroom, Steven grabbed my wrist and pressed me against the wall. He held me in his arms, acting coquettishly. "Stephie..."

I rolled my eyes. "Stop acting coquettishly."

"Steven!" Just as Steven was about to kiss me, a sharp shout from Joel echoed through the yard.

Steven gritted his teeth and clenched his fists. "He'd better have something important to say."

"News and videos from the cruise ship have been leaked, sparking a massive public outcry. The public is demanding the truth, and the families of the victims are also seeking explanations. The truth about Genome Society's organ donation has been fully revealed to the public." Joel ran in, visibly excited.

However, Steven didn't consider this a cause for celebration. Instead, he believed it would not undermine Genome Society's foundation but rather make them more vigilant.

"Dayton's back, but Xandra, the actress, is missing," Joel added.

Steven and I were immediately on high alert. Someone had kidnapped Xandra. Did they believe they could take control of Dayton in that way?

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Steven and I followed Eason to visit Dayton at the Sacco family's private hospital in Huma. The news of Dayton being the president of Crowdstar Group had spread like wildfire, leaving everyone in awe. Those who had once underestimated Dayton were now flattering the Sacco family.

"Look at you. You've always looked down on our son. He has become far more successful in starting his own business than you ever have, but he chose to keep it from you."

"Hmph! Don't feel arrogant just because you started a business secretly and achieved success. I'm your father and will always be your father." As we approached the ward, Steven and I were immediately met with the sound of a middle-aged man scolding Dayton. Dayton remained silent and seemed displeased.

We had heard that Dayton had a strained relationship with his parents. Due to his autistic traits, his family never truly gave him the attention he deserved. Instead, they focused all their efforts on nurturing his older brothers. As a result, Dayton's childhood was far from perfect.

"That's enough. Let him have a good rest. Even though you're his father, please be kind when requesting cooperation with Crowdstar Group," Sophia Allen, Dayton's mother, said with a smile. Her eyes were full of concern as she looked at Dayton at that moment.

"I never imagined Dayton to be the most promising among our three children. If we had provided him with proper guidance, he would've achieved even greater success." Sophia could barely contain her pride.

Oliver Sacco, Dayton's father, snorted. "Hmph! Why did you keep it from the family for so long? Last month, we sought cooperation with Crowdstar Group for so long, and you actually turned it down. Why aren't you supporting your own family? Are you planning to help outsiders?"

Oliver was clearly blaming Dayton and was still angry, but he couldn't confront Dayton directly due to his current status.

Sophia swiftly interrupted Oliver, "Come on! What are you saying? Let's discuss it when Dayton is discharged from the hospital and he's back home. His injuries have not healed completely. He was kidnapped, and he's in shock."

Oliver snorted and remained silent. Dayton kept his head down, leaning against the bed. He waited until Oliver had finished speaking before he asked, "Someone has kidnapped Xandra. Dad, could you help with that?"

Oliver was clearly upset. "A mere celebrity? Why would you want to involve yourself with someone of such low standing? This is none of your concern."

Dayton clenched his hands tightly and said nothing more.

"Excuse me. I'm a police officer here to investigate the situation." Eason knocked on the door.

Oliver noticed the approaching outsiders, and his expression turned grim as he stood up to leave with Sophia. Steven and I exchanged a glance before following Eason into the ward.

Eason asked, "Dayton, how are you feeling? They've finally approved my visitation rights. It's truly difficult to see you now."

Dayton lowered his head, his expression filled with distress.

"As the president of Crowdstar Group- the youngest, richest man in Huma and also a genius-do you still have any troubles?" Eason asked with a smile.

Dayton unconsciously glanced at Steven and replied in a hushed tone, "Xandra has been abducted. It must be because of me."

They believed that if they controlled Xandra, they could manipulate Dayton.

"The police force has already initiated an investigation," Eason assured Dayton.

"The only people aware of my feelings toward Xandra are the ones on the cruise. Aside from that, I've never displayed any unusual emotions toward Xandra anywhere else," Dayton murmured. He was anxious about Xandra being mistreated because of him.

"Have the kidnappers contacted you?" I asked tentatively.

"My dad took away my phone." Dayton was slightly mad. Oliver had a strong control over Dayton.

"Don't worry, they'll find a way to contact you." I looked around. As the president of Crowdstar Group, I knew there were probably numerous surveillance cameras in his ward.

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"We should've brought Ashton and Xan here. They could've found the cameras," I muttered. Upon hearing that, Steven coughed awkwardly.

"Hi, is this Mr. Sacco? Someone has sent you a bouquet of flowers." A nurse entered the ward with a magnificent bouquet of flowers and placed it on Dayton's bedside table.

Steven reached out and picked up the card from the bouquet. Indeed, he discovered a contact number.

"If they're unable to reach you, they'll request that you contact them," Steven said as he handed the card to Dayton.

Dayton felt a slight sense of unease. "Is she going to be fine?"

"If a victim is kidnapped, the longer they are in the hands of the kidnapper, the greater the danger they'll face." Eason urged Dayton to take his phone and make the call.

"This is a public phone number. Even if we monitor and locate it, it'll be pointless." Steven signaled Eason not to alert the police.

"Then, what should I do now?" Dayton always subconsciously looked at Steven when he was scared.

"Call first to find out their demands and ensure the safety of the hostage," I replied on behalf of Steven.

Dayton agreed and promptly took Eason's phone to dial the number. After the first attempt went unanswered, he tried again. Fortunately, the second call was answered.

"Hello," Dayton said anxiously.

I felt utterly powerless. Dayton was truly a naive man. He actually greeted the kidnappers.

"Is Xandra with you?" Dayton asked nervously, getting straight to the point.

"Thirty million. Tomorrow at 5:00 pm, you must come alone and place the money in the tenth trash can on the southwest side of Leffers Street. No tricks, or else she'll die." The man's low voice on the phone delivered the threat before hanging up abruptly.

Dayton looked at Steven anxiously. "What should I do? They want 30 million."

"The market value of Crowdstar Group is currently very high. As the youngest, richest man in Huma, can't you come up with 30 million? Pay the ransom to buy some time first. We'll set a trap there to arrest them. Eason urged Dayton to prepare for the ransom first.

Dayton was deeply concerned about Xandra. He hesitated, fearful to voice his thoughts. "What if they have accomplices and discover police involvement, leading them to kill the hostage?"

"Tomorrow, bring a large suitcase that can hold 30 million dollars. If one suitcase is not enough, use two. Take it to the trash can. You must use real money." The kidnappers wanted to verify Dayton's financial status.

"But I..." Dayton hesitated to speak, appearing to be in a dilemma.

"It's alright. Just make sure you have the funds ready," Steven reassured.

Dayton finally breathed a sigh of relief before turning to me and asking, "If the police catch them, won't they kill the hostage?"

"No, their objective is to assess your financial capabilities and use your identity as the president of Crowdstar Group to manipulate you in the future. Xandra should be safe for the time being." It seemed likely that the individual who kidnapped Xandra was affiliated with Genome Society.

Genome Society still harbored doubts about Dayton's identity as the president of Crowdstar Group. Therefore, they wanted to double-check it.

"These cunning scoundrels," I murmured under my breath, pondering whether Xandra's abduction had any connection to Mrs. Ford.

"It's truly dangerous to be the president of Crowdstar Group. No wonder he has to hide his identity," Eason muttered.

I noticed Dayton gazing at Steven with a mixture of grievance and pity. I also cast a suspicious gaze toward Steven. If Steven were the president of Crowdstar, I couldn't help but wonder whether it would be me or the two kids who would get kidnapped.

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Xandra's kidnapping was kept hush-hush, and the media barely covered it. Her manager stated that Xandra had sustained injuries while taking a break. She was unable to participate in any shows, requiring time at home to recuperate.

As a public figure, widespread news of the kidnapping would surely have sparked panic, so very few individuals were aware of the situation. Nonetheless, the police promptly intervened and secured the location stated by the kidnapper.

I was completely lost in thought after leaving the hospital.

"Stephie..." Steven pretended to look pitiful. Perhaps he was concerned that I would be upset about him installing cameras at home.

"Stephie, I didn't mean to install cameras to monitor you. I'm just worried that when I'm not around..." Steven admitted, feeling a twinge of nervousness.

His insecurities had left him feeling unsettled, prompting him to install cameras at home, near me, and in areas he couldn't easily access. However, he was extremely nervous and afraid that I would be mad.

I also thought I would be furious. I disliked being watched, living under surveillance, and being constantly scrutinized.

However, I found this inexplicably reasonable since Steven was the one who did that. He did it out of love and concern for me. Hence, he installed the cameras.

"Stephie, please don't ignore me." Steven seemed to be truly insecure. He gently clasped my hand, hesitant to even embrace me.

This behavior was too familiar. He was consistently calm and composed when around others, effortlessly navigating any treacherous situations that came his way. However, he was always the most insecure man in my presence.

I held Steven's hand and asked, "Why do you think I would be angry?"

He lowered his head. He hesitated for a while and then confessed, "I spied on Stephie previously too, and it made her angry."

I was stunned for a moment. Indeed, Steven's possessiveness was disturbing back in the day. His love was almost pathological.

He would place recording equipment near me and hide a camera in my teddy bear. This invasion of privacy was unsettling,

I felt a little helpless but couldn't help but smile. "I was angry before because you crossed a line. Even partners need their own space and privacy."

Steven acknowledged his mistake with a nod.

"But now, I'm not angry. I understand you're concerned about me, so I won't be angry with you." I realized that with the cameras and the ability to track my location at all times, Steven could feel secure.

As long as Steven felt secure, he could do whatever he wanted. With a blank stare, Steven pulled me into his arms and held me for quite some time.

I leaned against him and raised my hands to feel the sunlight streaming in from the window. "Steven, Xandra is going to be okay, right?"

I never realized when exactly I started experiencing empathy and guilt, emotions that were once foreign to

me. My intuition strongly suggested that the situation with Dayton being the president of Crowdstar Group was not as straightforward as it seemed.

Furthermore, Xandra appeared to be innocently implicated in the matter.

"She'll be fine," Steven replied firmly.

I nodded in relief. If he said she would be okay, then she would be. I didn't want any more innocent people to be involved.

"Stan suffers from a mental illness. He doesn't have any guardians. He'll remain in an asylum for the rest of his life, never to cause harm again." Steven suddenly thought of Stan.

As a serial killer, death was not a source of torture or fear for him. The thought of losing his freedom forever and being unable to kill at will was the most agonizing punishment imaginable. He might have to endure his mental torment every single day from now onward.

"He deserves it," I murmured.

Stan was a lunatic. He was a mentally unstable lunatic. In moments of madness, his thoughts were consumed by a desire to kill others. All his victims were innocent.

"Have you figured out the identity of the masked woman leading the Rebels?" I inquired softly.

Steven's reaction on the cruise was rather peculiar. I found myself flooded with questions, yearning for answers from him. "Did you truly not realize that Ewan's a member of the Rebels?"

Steven glanced at me and carefully wrote a few words on my palm. I looked at Steven in surprise and fell silent.

Chapter 600

Ewan was actually Steven's accomplice. Steven deliberately placed him in the Rebels. This explanation cleared up everything.

But what about the masked woman? What was her true identity? She harbored deep hatred toward me, treated Steven differently, and displayed a murderous and bloodthirsty nature.

"She created the killing game in the ruined building. She also managed to manipulate the social divide on the cruise ship, leading thousands of people to kill each other. She must be a genius," I analyzed softly.

In my impression, I had never encountered any genius women around me. Despite a few geniuses in the orphanage, they were all men.

Was I mistaken? Could it have been a petite man instead of a woman? That didn't seem accurate either. "Someone is following us," said Eason as he drove, checking the rearview mirror vigilantly.

"I'm now the most valuable experimental subject to Genome Society. They'll protect me instead of killing me," I whispered.

Everything depended on whether the person following showed aggression. If he did, it would mean he was supported by the Rebels.

The moment I finished speaking, the car behind crashed into ours.

However, he couldn't escape this time because Zion's car was following closely behind. When we were in danger, Zion swiftly drove his car toward us, effectively trapping the other car in the middle.

"Get out of the car!" Zion stepped out and vigilantly aimed his gun at the person inside.

The person in the car looked confused. "What's going on? I only hit the car. I won't get shot for that, right?"

"Get out!" Zion exclaimed furiously.

The man got out of the car with his hands up and smiled at Zion. "Don't be so nervous, my friend."

Steven, Eason, and I also stepped out of the car, looking at the man.

The man spotted Steven and exclaimed in astonishment, "Oh, what a coincidence! It's me, Steven!"

Steven remained silent with a frown.

Eason kicked him directly. "Shut up."

The man sneered when he saw Eason. "Ah! Mr. Grant, the genius! You've achieved so much now. You've become a policeman and started kicking others. When you were being attacked and didn't dare to speak up, you weren't that tough."

Eason was upset. I could tell he was trembling, probably seething with anger. Back in the day, bullying was rampant in the advanced class. After Simeon's accident, Eason lost all his protection.

He was young when he joined the advanced class. He later pursued a master's degree and a doctorate among classmates much older than himself. Being young and thin, he found himself a target for bullying. As a result, Eason developed a strong resentment toward Simeon.

At first, Simeon was the only classmate who bullied him. Simeon's domineering nature only permitted him to target Eason. No one else dared to do so. Back then, Eason was stunted, petite, and skinny, resembling a little girl. But later, Simeon was gone.

"He's a classmate from the advanced class," Steven explained to me.

I nodded. I had roughly figured it out. But being hit by a car driven by a classmate from the advanced class at this time was clearly not a coincidence.