

After Death 641

Chapter 641

"We sort out the goods in the desolate area. Those selected will be sent to the next village. Genome Society has a laboratory within that village," Quinton replied.

He then looked at us and gritted his teeth. 'But I'll advise you not to go. The entire village benefited from Genome Society's laboratory, and it has formed a chain of interest. Many abducted young women would also be sent there, and they would receive a handsome reward if chosen.

"As such, the villagers would choose to protect Genome Society. You won't be able to make it out if you rush in."

Education and legal awareness among the villagers of such rural areas were already scarce. Coupled with the entrenched influence of Genome Society, any outsiders coming to investigate would be viewed as obstructing their source of income. The villagers would surely rise up in resistance.

Quinton was right. It would be dangerous to rush in.

"Why don't you bring us in, then?' I smiled.

Quinton snorted. "I would never do that. I'll be dead either way-they'll kill me for crossing them."

Eason leaned against the door of the car. "You might be able to earn significant credit for your case if you help us out."

Quinton frowned. He was indeed afraid to die. The bunch of them were just a bunch of lunatics who enjoyed the thrill of killing, but they turned into cowards once the tables turned against them and they were now the prey.

"Think about it carefully," I threatened him once again.

Quinton remained silent while the others carefully watched him. They were all waiting to see his stance. "Help! Lyla is now in shock!" Several women were crying out for help on the other side. The woman with the leg injury had gone into shock from excessive bleeding.

Frowning, I swiftly made my way over.

There was a doctor in Zion's team who administered a shot to her. However, the on-site medical conditions were just too limited.

"We need to send her to the hospital, Officer Landon.' The doctor looked at Eason and Zion nervously.

"Go to the hospital now, and bring the women with you. Don't settle for the village clinics nearby - just head back." Zion urged them to get into the car.

Taking advantage of our confusion, Quinton and the others exchanged glances and shoved the officers guarding them away. They then swiftly helped the injured people into the car and sped away.

Zion cursed and was about to go after them when I stopped him.

"They haven't been pushed to the brink yet." I looked around at the darkening sky. "The car they got into reeks of blood, and the wolves have now caught up with them after trailing for the entire day."

We could see that the wolf pack had indeed caught up with them from a distance.

I said, "They need gas for their car, but they won't be able to make it to the next gas station."

I had burned through quite some gas by driving wildly earlier. They wouldn't be able to go even the extra mile if they were to go according to their schedule.

Zion instructed the three other police cars to escort the other women back first.

I looked at Maya and asked, "Are you willing to come with us? We're going to find out the transaction location of those demons and rescue more of their victims."

Maya's face was pale in terror. She nervously asked, "Can you guarantee my safety?"

I fell silent. We couldn't guarantee her safety after all.

Zion kept quiet for a bit before saying, "Just let her leave."

Maya nervously turned to leave, but she stopped just as she was near the car. She then turned around and came back. "I'll go with all of you."

I looked at her. 'Aren't you afraid? It'll be equally dangerous at the scattered villages beyond the desolate area.' They might block our path, demand money, or even resort to violence. There were too many hidden dangers out there, not to mention the fact that we were going to look for Genome Society.

"I want to help you in saving the others," Maya replied seriously.

I looked at Zion, letting him make the final decision

"You need to consider it carefully. It'll be dangerous," Zion reminded her again.

Maya said, "I'm aware that it's dangerous. My mom used to tell me that there's no such thing as a free lunch. No one would help us out and give us pocket money without any reason."

"Not only did they invite us out to play and give us money to spend, but they even sent gifts during our livestreams. I knew they had ulterior motives. I just didn't expect that they wanted to kill us."

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Maya lowered her head, gripping her hands tight. "But I need money. Can you give me some if I help you to save the others?"

"How much do you need?" Joel asked.

"One million-" Maya muttered with her head lowered.

She did not say why she needed the money, but she needed it desperately.

"No problem," Joel agreed easily.

Eason snickered. "Do you even have the money?"

He then grumbled softly, "He hasn't taken his eyes off that beauty at all."

Maya and Joel were about the same age now, in their late teens. She was beautiful with stunning features and

a perfect figure. Not only men, but even I couldn't help but admire her appearance.

Joel awkwardly scratched his head. 'I don't. But Steven has it, right?'

Steven was still carefully inspecting my hands. My fingers were red from all the rubbing while I was unaware. "I'm getting blisters now," I said, gritting my teeth.

Only then did Steven look up and reply, 'Sure, I'll do it.'

He remained completely unmoved while facing a beauty like Maya. It was as if he didn't even see her.

I started to doubt Steven's sense of aesthetics. Even though I was also good-looking, I still wouldn't hold a candle to Maya.

The other women had chosen her before me when they were asked to choose the most beautiful woman in a life-or-death situation. But Steven seemed to only have eyes for me.

"Thank you." Maya looked at him somewhat excitedly.

It was probably the innocent flutter of a young woman's heart. Steven was the most good-looking and richest among everyone else here. Maya's crush on him was rather evident.

Resigned, I held Steven's hand and introduced him to her, "This is my husband."

Maya seemed disappointed, but she quickly nodded and said, "Thank you, Nella."

We got into the car to pursue after Quinton and the others. As there were tire marks along the road, we soon spotted their car after a few miles away.

They were all trapped in the car. None of them dared to get out as they were surrounded by the wolf pack. "Their tire's gone flat," I said, chuckling coldly

They brought it upon themselves. They were the ones hitting the tire while trying to shoot me earlier.

The wolf pack was attacking the car. They no longer had a car, and the wolves refused to leave them either. They would end up dying here if this continued.

I looked at the men trapped inside the car as our car passed theirs. I smiled and asked, "Are you sure you don't want to talk to us?"

Quinton slammed his fist angrily at the steering wheel. Behind him, the others were starting to feel fearful. "We surrender! We'll give up and listen to the police's arrangements!"

Quinton ended up giving up as well. "I'll help you."

There were injured passengers in the car, and those with broken or injured legs needed urgent medical attention. We had no choice but to send them back with two cars.

With that, we were left with less than six of the initial police cars that came.

The fewer people we have with us meant the more dangerous we would be placed in.

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Steven and I sat behind as we watched Quinton drive into one of the remote villages. He'd better not play any tricks.

A man from the sixth car was sitting in the passenger seat. They were all familiar faces in the village.

"Mr. Lambert is here.' The ruffian guarding the village greeted them with a smile.

Quinton nodded and handed him a pack of cigarettes and an envelope full of cash. This was probably the custom here.

The ruffian weighed the envelope before nodding with a smile. He then raised his arms and let them pass. "Without this step, you'd be stopped without even entering the village,' Quinton said gruffly.

Eason warned, "You'd better not be playing any tricks. Our men went back earlier, so if you dare to do anything funny, the Lamberts will immediately be seized in Huma. Your crimes will also be exposed to the public. If you cooperate with us, we'll help you to apply for significant credits for your case.

He eyed Quinton with obvious worry.

The village seemed sparsely populated, looking beyond eerie. There was not a single person in sight even as we drove in, with only one person guarding the entrance of the village.

"Where are the villagers?' I asked from behind.

"They usually don't come out, unless there are outsiders around,' Quinton explained.

I looked back and noticed the cars behind us following through. Zion was using the same method to enter the village with the others.

"They look unfamiliar," the person who came out to check on them said. Their cars were stopped in a small square in the village.

"They're all heirs preparing to take over their family businesses. They've just returned from studying abroad and are now joining us to broaden their horizons and play around for a bit." Quinton got out of the car.

Eason followed him down out of worry.

"This lad is pretty good-looking. A handsome and rich heir shouldn't lack women surrounding him,' the person at the checkpoint said with a smile. 'People like him can get decent goods."

They seemed to be inferring how a rich and handsome heir like Eason could easily attract many innocent victims.

"Did he lash out?" the man asked Quinton.

"It's his first time, so he missed his mark, injuring one of their legs. But there's a wolf pack behind us. They'll finish everything up in no time." Quinton gestured at the car and lit a cigarette. 'There's only two of them left. I've tied them up since the higher-ups wanted two. Do you want to have a look?"

The man hurriedly waved a hand. "Oh, we trust in the quality of your goods. Just go in!"

Quinton nodded before calling the others to get back into the car. The convoy soon continued their drive in. The man at the checkpoint made a call, and a place resembling a truck scale slowly opened downward.

As expected, Genome Society had a laboratory hidden underneath this remote and rural village. It was indeed hard to discover them here.

Moreover, those missing persons were all related to this laboratory, including Sarah from many years ago. "Will Maya be fine?" I asked Steven softly.

She was in Zion's car. I was concerned that she might feel scared and inadvertently expose them.

"Don't worry, I've taken care of it." Steven held my hand.

Inodded and feigned being in a daze. My hands were tied as I lay in his arms. I looked out the window and saw our car passing through a lane. All the cars were gathered as their exterior was disinfected, as if we were at a self-service car wash.

Steven whispered to me, "Some of the infrastructure in this laboratory looks rather outdated. This is probably one of the oldest laboratories of Genome Society."

He had researched some of Genome Society's laboratories within the country. This one here in the desolate area should be among one of the oldest.

"I have to say, Daisy is really bold. She's probably the only one to have set up a laboratory underground at a university within the bustling city center."

She was definitely courageous.

After the cars were disinfected, we drove down to an underground garage. It was extremely clean, to the point of being immaculate.

They got out of the car. Several people in hazmat suits and protective headcovers walked over. "Where are the goods?"

Quinton replied, "They're in the car."

The hazmat workers said, "Bring them to us."

They were asking for the goods which meant Maya and me.

Steven frowned and raised his arms to block them.

"This newbie here is worried that we might not get our rewards after we hand the goods over," Quinton explained with a chuckle.

The hazmat workers glanced at Steven. Fortunately, I had told him to disguise himself beforehand.

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One of the workers said, "You guys can go ahead to meet the boss. We'll bring the goods for examination."

Steven frowned as Eason pushed him away. "It'll be fine--"

Someone yanked me out of the car. I looked around anxiously. "Where are we? Help! Please help us!"

Maya was dragged out as well. She was crying as she hid behind me. "I'm scared, Nella."

"Don't be," I reassured her before looking at the hazmat workers. "Can you please let us go? We can pay you!"

They were trained to be obedient and ignored all of our questions.

We could only be pushed into an isolation cart upon our fruitless pleading.

They sent us into the bathroom for us to clean ourselves thoroughly. We then changed into large gowns similar to surgical attire without any undergarments.

Someone said, "It's time for your medical examination."

There was even a designated place for medical examinations.

"What are we supposed to do?" I pretended to look scared while asking.

The worker replied, "Don't ask so many questions."

I squinted. This was probably a gynecological examination to see if we were virgins.

I definitely wasn't one. I would surely be 'destroyed' since I wasn't qualified. But Maya was still one. She could only rely on herself from now onward.

As expected, female workers came over to conduct physical examinations on us. Maya was labeled as qualified while I was unqualified. Somehow, this felt rather insulting.

I asked, "Where are you bringing me to?"

Maya called out, "Nella!"

Maya and I were forcefully separated.

"Those who are unqualified are to be sent to Lab Capsule No. 2.*

I was forcibly thrown into Lab Capsule No. 2.

There were seven other people who were similarly unqualified inside. They were all cowering in fear in the corner, men and women alike.

That meant Quinton and his lackeys weren't the only ones sending goods over. There were still others, including villagers.

"How were you guys captured?" I asked.

One of them answered, "We passed by here while we were traveling."

Another said, "I'm an influencer. I got captured while I was walking around."

I looked at them, a sense of unease creeping in. "There was a group of people being loaded onto a cargo box by the time we arrived. We're not sure where they've been taken to."

They were probably being destroyed. The prospects of those people weren't looking good.

"Come and get your photos taken one by one!"

A group of workers came in swaggeringly, looking lecherous and behaving less disciplined than the ones before. They brought us out one by one and held up signs while taking our photos. They then uploaded them onto the dark web, openly listing prices.

Genome Society seemed to be involved in a wide range of underground industries. Those who were openly priced were targeted toward wealthy individuals overseas as disposable "pets".

I wondered what they were going to do with Maya, who was deemed qualified.

"This one is pretty. Too bad she isn't a virgin." Someone pinched my cheek teasingly. "Can I keep her for my own perusal?" the man asked one of the workers by the side, grinning lewdly.

The worker replied indifferently, "All of them are to be sent overseas. We can't keep them."

That was their rule, lest any unforeseen complications might happen.

I frowned while looking at the good-looking men and women who were trembling. I sighed. I might not be able to save those who were taken away. I could only do my best to save the ones before me.

One of the workers said, "Line up for injections, pack them up after sedation, and load them onto the cars. Be sure not to make mistakes before we reach the dock!"

They had a systematic industry chain that led right to the dock to send live people out of the country. That was why there were so many missing persons who disappeared without a trace.

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All of us were injected before being loaded onto the vehicle. It was probably some drug meant to induce unconsciousness.

I slowly drifted unconscious, hoping for Steven to intercept us soon.

We couldn't risk anything now-we had to commit fully to this act.

I woke up to the jostling of the vehicle after being unconscious for some time. Everyone around me was still out cold. We were dumped into the vehicle as if we were some cargo.

The vehicle was stopped for inspection. But as the vehicle opened up, we could only hear noises from the outside but not within.

At that moment I realized that there was a hidden compartment in the vehicle. All of us were trapped within the hidden compartment over three feet wide, casually thrown in as if we were discarded bodies.

I took a deep breath and started pounding on the metal compartment, hoping that someone might hear me from the outside.

But it seemed like the person inspecting couldn't hear me. I wasn't sure if it was intentional or not.

The vehicle drove on for some time before stopping once again. I realized that someone must have heard my pounding earlier when someone came to open the compartment door. They were here to deal with me.

I lay on the ground, feigning unconsciousness while listening to the sounds from the outside.

Someone walked in and glanced around at us while holding a syringe.

"Is everyone still unconscious? Why did I hear someone pounding on the compartment earlier, then?" the man muttered.

Just as he was about to leave, I swiftly got up to grab his syringe before stabbing it into his neck. The man fell unconscious soon enough.

I put on the man's jacket before stepping out of the car to check my surroundings. We were still in the desolated area but on a highway.

While the accomplice in the passenger seat was still asleep, I got into the car and took the extra syringe. I then gave him a shot and rendered him unconscious before driving away to the nearest police station.

Zion had left his men there.

Dennis rushed over in a hurry as soon as I arrived at the police station. He handed his phone over to me and urged, "Hurry and take the call, Stephany. Officer Landon said that Steven has gone mad from being unable to locate you!"

I took a sharp breath and quickly took the call. "Steven. I'm here, Steven. I'm fine. I got those men handled. We're now at the police station."

I could hear Steven's anxious voice quietening down from the other end of the call. 'Stephie!'

His voice choked up with a hint of anguish.

I replied, 'I'm at the police station.'

"I'll be there soon," Steven whispered.

They came over soon enough, but Maya wasn't with them.

"Where's Maya?" I asked Steven.

Steven strode over and hugged me tightly without a word.

"The original owner of this laboratory died on the cruise. Genome Society then chose a trustworthy person to take over the new laboratory. Do you know who the new owner is?" Eason said, resigned.

"Who is it?" Who could have passed Genome Society's scrutiny and even gain control of the laboratory?

"It's Jimmy," Eason said with a shrug. His expression was one of bewilderment.

"Jimmy went through a lot of effort in order to gain Genome Society's approval. Now, he wants to work with us. But I feel that he's not trustworthy," Joel whispered in my ear.

"Why would you still leave Maya with him then?" I asked in surprise.

Zion said, "There's no helping it. Even though Jimmy holds control of the laboratory, the entire network and surveillance are still under the high-ups. Since Maya was labeled as qualified, we had to follow the procedure, or we'd risk exposing everyone."

He sighed before continuing, "Jimmy said he could keep Maya safe for now."

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In other words, Jimmy was just a figurehead with no real power.

It seemed like all the laboratory owners were figureheads. In reality, they were all monitored and managed by the higher-ups-even Daisy and Nancy were the same.

"Steven was asking Jimmy to get you out safely earlier. He almost beat Jimmy to death when Jimmy said he had no authority to do that. He would've been dead if it weren't for your timely call," Zion said, resigned.

I looked at Steven. He seemed aggrieved when he snorted and said, "He deserved it."

I smiled and took his hand. 'You're right.'

Steven seemed happy with how I agreed with him. He hugged me and refused to let me go, even flashing a smug smile at Joel and the others.

"What did you find out on your side, Stephany?" Zion asked.

"Basically, they're shipping the defects overseas to be openly priced and sold on the dark web. I checked their computers-most of the buyers on the dark web are pedophiles and have a fetish for Solancian men and women. They'd buy them back as their own toys," I said with a frown.

The police officers had brought away the two drivers who were still in the vehicle. Hopefully, they would be able to get something useful out of them.

"This is a massive organization. It's hard to even try to eradicate them," Zion said with a sigh, seemingly dejected

"But we have to try regardless. Otherwise, others might be in danger in the future. We'll have to do it-" he continued.

Inodded, agreeing with what Zion said.

"Let's head back and organize the evidence we've got, and then we can work with Jimmy to see if we can uncover more evidence," Eason said once again. "Even though Jimmy isn't a great guy, he should be genuine in wanting to take down Genome Society."

Jimmy still couldn't be sure what those experimental subjects were for as he had just taken over the laboratory. He needed time to observe and find out. As such, we could only wait.

"I'm worried about Maya staying there." I frowned, looking at Steven.

He remained silent. Never once was he moved by the fate of others. He only cared for me. He gripped my hands tightly.

"Jimmy promised to keep Maya safe. We can only take our chances for now. Eason sighed, feeling helpless I was pulled into Steven's embrace before I could say anything else. He said, "She'll be fine

"But she's "How could a young woman like her be fine at a place like that? What if Jimmy couldn't protect her?

"I've had her background checked-she's too perfect. A beautiful orphan with no family is exactly the kind of prey that Genome Society's henchmen would be interested in, Steven said, his voice gruff.

"And on top of that, despite being a beauty with an inferior status, she managed to remain untouched and passed through all examinations to become a sacrifice. Don't you think that's too much of a coincidence?" he asked.

An orphan with a perfect background was asking for a million dollars. Who was the money really for?

A typical woman wouldn't have had the mental capacity to ask for money after escaping from attempted murder and pursuit.

"She's not as simple as we thought.' Steven refused to let me go from his embrace.

I was taken aback. Indeed, I did consider the fact that Maya might be a pawn planted by the Rebels. But she

was just so beautiful that she sparked my protective instinct.

"I'm jealous, Stephie" Steven harrumphed, indicating that he was upset

"Do you like her? You care for her so much it's affecting your judgment," he said, looking at me angrily.

I was amused by his questioning. 'I only like you. It seems to be my human instinct to want to protect her- just like how one would protect beautiful and vulnerable individuals of their own kind.'

It seemed like being beautiful did have its advantages.

Steven was relentless. "I'll believe that you only like me if you kiss me now."

I looked around in shock at the others around me. They were also staring back in disbelief.

"How do you manage to see no one but your wife here, man? Are we all invisible to you?" Eason mumbled.

He truly admired the way Steven would only have eyes for me all the time.

"Let's go home. Let them deal with Jimmy for the remaining part, okay?" Steven asked hoarsely, as if pleading. 'Let's go home, Stephie. Ashton and Xan are waiting for us back home. I want to go home.' He really wanted to go home, even hoping that only the four of us could stay there.

Chapter 647

After knowing that Jimmy was now the manager of the laboratory in the desolate area, Steven started pestering me to go home.

He had been acting strange lately. I couldn't put a finger to it, yet I could feel it-he seemed to be clingier and even more anxious about me now.

Not only was he clingy, but he refused to let me leave his sight all the time, regardless of our location.

Logically speaking, I should be a valuable experimental subject to Genome Society. If they wanted to keep me alive and make money off me, they wouldn't be forcibly bringing me back to the laboratory when the police were watching me closely.

But somehow, Steven seemed to be even more anxious than before. He was even saying strange things all the time.

"I bought a mountain-view villa at Celadon Hill, Stephie. It's beautifully surrounded by mountains and lakes. He showed me a photo of his newly bought villa on our way back.

To Steven, a residence was just a safe space-it was sufficient as long as it was secure and private. But he made sure to choose properly this time.

The villa was located on the back mountain of Huma. Although secluded, it had a great environment and was completely safe. Since the villa was perched on the mountain peak, there was a clear view of the road winding up the mountain.

"Are you planning to take me and the kids up to the mountain to live like hermits?" I looked at Steven, amused. "Ashton and Xan need to socialize."

They needed to interact with society and start mingling with other kids their age.

I was well aware of the reason behind placing Stephanie Carlson in a college and society back then. It was a form of socialization for an experimental subject like her. But it was just something that had to be done. Humans could not survive apart from society-society was there wherever humans were. Humans needed to learn to fit in, even if it meant putting up a front.

I no longer cared if Ashton and Xan were good at putting up a front. They were just kids, and I hoped they could develop the skills needed to survive skills where they had to navigate through all sorts of people in life Human society was far more cruel than the laboratory. This was an actual testing ground, where the Earth was like a huge testing zone, and all humans were experimental subjects.

"It's fine even if it's only for a year, six months-or even just for three months. Steven tightened his grip on my hands. "I get so annoyed at how they're constantly interrupting us. I just want to live a life with just the two of us. It's even better if we could just abandon them just like that."

Resigned, I rested my head against his shoulders. "You want to abandon them just like that? You have to be responsible once you take them in. You're the daddy to our children now."

Steven stiffened slightly and let out a grunt. However, he seemed to appreciate what I just called him. "Alright."

He even smiled amusedly after that.

I leaned against him and reached out to touch his face. I found him handsome now that I was looking at him while completely relaxed. It was just like a dream.

Everything felt like a dream from the moment he entered my life.

"I've always wondered about something. According to my recovered memories at this point, Stephanie Carlson felt deeply for you in the past. But why did she forget about you completely all of a sudden? It's as if it was completely erased from her mind like computer data," I mumbled.

This had bothered me for some time. Why was Steven the only one who was completely erased from my

memory?

Stephanie Carlson did not even activate her defense mechanism to erase Michael's existence from her memory, and he was someone who had caused so much pain and fear for Stephanie Carlson.

Even if it was because of the car accident, it shouldn't have caused me to forget Steven alone. This just didn't make sense.

He stiffened as he looked down at me. "The human brain is just like a sophisticated computer. Memories can be altered or erased."

Frowning, I asked, "Is Genome Society advanced enough to erase one's memories?" "They should be able to do that." Steven cast his gaze downward, holding my hands tight.

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"Memories are encoded and stored by a group of engram cells in the brain. I heard that one can precisely erase memories by editing the genome of specific engram cells," Steven whispered.

Chills ran down my back as I felt an inexplicable sense of fear. "Is it possible that my memories were deliberately erased? Perhaps through specific electrical stimulation to selectively weaken or erase them..." Steven looked at me. After a while, he said, 'Stephie, if I ever disappear, I hope you'll live a good life and forget me.'

I frowned as I subconsciously held his hands tight. I looked at him and said, "Don't say such nonsense. We'll be alright."

Steven nodded obediently after being reprimanded by me.

I felt strangely uneasy throughout the entire journey. I had so many questions for him, but I didn't know where to start

We made multiple stops while driving through the inhabited desert in the west. We finally made it back to Huma after half a month.

We were exhausted and covered in dust by the time we were home. The first thing I did was rush into the bathroom for a proper shower.

"Go take a proper shower. We're both so dirty now." I caught Steven, who was trying to take a quick shower, and forced him into the bathtub full of water.

"Stay with me." He submerged himself in the tub and left his head out, looking at me with his wide eyes.

What else could I do but to spoil him?

"I feel like my skin is about to dry out from the wind in the desolate area." I kicked him while soaking in the water. "Do you really think Maya will be alright? Is she really someone from the Rebels? What if we were wrong and she just needed money?"

Steven pressed me down sulkily before I could even finish my sentence. "You just like her," he said angrily I was speechless. "Why would I like her? She's a woman."

"There's something wrong with her," Steven replied firmly.

"Huh?" I was somewhat surprised.

"She has a unique charisma different from ordinary people. She was more prone to catch the attention of the people around her, drawing more sympathy and protective instincts from them. Not just normal humans- even Xan or small animals are naturally drawn to her," Steven said seriously.

His hostility toward Maya was evident.

I looked at Steven in skepticism. 'You're telling me that she has a natural charm?'

"It's not necessarily natural." He snorted before biting on my neck somewhat punitively.

"Haven't you noticed even Joel's gaze was unconsciously drawn to her?" Steven believed that something was clearly wrong with Maya if even someone like Joel, who wasn't a typical man, was attracted to her.

"What about you?" I smiled, reaching out to wrap my arms around his neck.

His ears turned red as he stared at me intently. "I'm immune."

"I see. "It seemed like I should be praising Steven for it, then.

Upon staring at his face, I realized that I couldn't help myself but to want to kiss him.

If there were really people born with natural allure, surely, Steven was on a higher level than Maya—that was because he drew me in even more.

"Steven!" I was startled when he suddenly lifted me and carried me out of the tub.

"What are you trying to do?" I stared warily at him. "It's cold in the bathroom. Steven! Go to the bedroom!"

I was at a loss for words. I knew that I could never take a bath with him. Something would surely happen.

However, he always seemed to emit some kind of hormones that attracted me and disrupted my thoughts. It was impossible for me not to respond to him eagerly.

"Steven, it's cold—"My back was pressed against the ceramic tiles of the bathroom. I could only instinctively hide in his embrace, just as he wanted.

It was as if he couldn't understand words when it came to this matter. The more I struggled, the more excited he became

"I want to lock you up so that you'll only look at me, Stephie," Steven whispered with an urgent tone, seemingly serious in his words.

I sighed, letting him be.

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Steven only turned the shower on and carried me for a rinse after fooling around for over an hour in the bathroom.

I thought he was finally letting me off. I never expected his stamina to be more than what an ordinary person could imagine.

"We still have to pick Xan and Ashton up. Can't you be more reliable as a father-ah!" I was tossed onto the bed. Just as I was about to sneak away, he caught my ankle and dragged me back.

Steven was habitually quiet in bed. He believed in talking less and doing more.

I said, 'Let's talk it out, Steven. My waist and the rest of my body hurt-hey!'

My words couldn't even reach him. I knew I would be completely drained if he were to lock me at home.

"Your stamina is weak, Stephie. Steven was now half-jokingly complaining about my weak stamina.

I glared at him angrily. The corners of his eyes were red, as if he was the one aggrieved. 'I can't bear to exert more force on you, Stephie.'

I was speechless. I was almost dizzy from his forceful movements.

"I'm about to fall apart, bro—"I slumped on the bed listlessly.

Steven leaned over and linked our fingers. 'I like you so much, Stephie. I like staying by your side. I want to stay with you forever. That's the only way I can feel that you're mine.'

"You lunatic!" I cursed, gritting my teeth. He indeed was a lunatic.

"Stephie." Steven was calling my name.

I always felt a deep resonance whenever he called my name. It always brought a sense of sadness for some

reason

"I don't want to be a passerby in your life, Stephie," he said hoarsely, but I had no energy to listen to what he was trying to say.

Suddenly, Steven bit down on me at the back of my neck, making me scream. It wasn't a playful bite between a couple in love; it was a forceful one.

Pain shot through my spine to my tailbone and brain at that moment. I was instantly jolted awake from his bite.

I endured the pain and reached over to wipe the back of my neck. I was certainly bleeding from the bite. Furious, I tried pushing Steven away, but I couldn't. He was hugging me tightly while apologizing softly. "What the hell is wrong with you, Steven?" I scolded him angrily.

He gently kissed my neck and licked my wound. My breathing quickened from my anger. It took me a while to elevate the pain.

What was wrong with Steven again now? Was he trying to leave a mark everywhere like some mad dog?

He had to forcefully end whatever that went on afterward. I refused to talk to him out of annoyance.

Steven also knew that he was at fault and started his pitiful act again. He always used this on me.

Whenever I got angry, I couldn't help but feel that I had spoiled him too much.

Steven took a towel to wipe my body. He then crouched by the bed pitifully, wanting to talk to me. I turned my back on him and ignored him.

My neck hurt from where he bit me.

His fingers gently touched my neck, as if he was checking out where he bit me.

"That's a bite from me, Stephie," Steven mumbled, carefully touching it. 'I have to leave a mark to show that I

was here."

I turned back to look at him. At that moment, I did not think much of it and assumed that he was just insecure as always. Steven had always been an insecure person since he was young, thinking that he shouldn't have existed.

That was until he met me.

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I thought that he would stop thinking that he didn't deserve to exist after he found me and we got together.

It seemed that I overestimated both love and myself.

After I calmed down, I got up sulkily to apply medicine before going to pick up Ashton and Xan.

The kids had been staying with Xandra and Rachel all this while. I hoped they didn't cause them any trouble. "Rach, are the kids with you, or..." I called Rachel to ask who Ashton and Xan were with

Before Steven and I left, we entrusted the kids to both Rachel and Xandra so that they could take care of them whenever they were free.

Before I could even finish my sentence, Rachel asked in surprise, 'Are you guys back now?'

"Yeah. We just arrived home and forgot to call you in advance," I said, glaring at Steven angrily.

It was all his fault. We should have called her in advance, yet he insisted on doing other things. Steven coughed diffidently

"Are the kids with you now?" I asked again.

Rachel started stammering, "Uh, how about you guys come pick them up tomorrow instead?"

"Huh?" I had a bad feeling.

Steven clearly became alert and glanced over at me. Did something happen to the kids?

I said, 'I'm already on the way to your place. We'

Before I could even finish my sentence, Rachel interrupted me again, "Well, both of you haven't eaten, right, Stephie? How about you guys go grab some food for now? I'm still out playing with the kids now."

I frowned and looked at Steven. He was already checking their location. Ashton and Xan's location showed that they were in the police station at Bridgeview Road.

"Are you playing in the police station?" I asked softly.

Rachel took in a sharp breath and replied diffidently, "Xandra and I figured that the kids ought to go to school, so we signed them up for preschool. Something happened today, but it's not a big deal, so I can handle it." "You wouldn't be keeping things from me if you could handle it. I'll go over now." I glared at Steven angrily after ending the call. "It's all your fault for wasting time!"

He looked aggrieved. "It's not my fault they got into trouble. They're a result of both our genes, so we should share the responsibility."

I couldn't believe he was dividing things up so clearly now.

We rushed to Bridgeview Road and ran into the police station.

Upon entering, Ashton and Xan were sitting on the bench, obediently listening to the scoldings of the police officers. Rachel was also nodding meekly at them.

The parents of another child were standing by the side, screaming at Rachel. "How can they be this terrifying when they're just children? Our child would've been buried by them if it weren't for the teachers noticing it!"

"That's so terrifying!" one of the parents yelled angrily.

"What's going on?" I hurriedly asked as I walked over with Steven. "We're their parents. You can talk to us if there's anything you want to discuss."

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The father of the child was a ferocious man. He glared at me and said, "Are you their parents? Your children

are unbelievable! You have to apologize to my son, otherwise-"

Ashton glared at the man and said, 'I'll bury him again if you yell at my mom!'"

The man huffed as he started rolling up his sleeves to hit Ashton

Steven shielded Ashton indifferently and stopped the man. "We should talk things out slowly. It's not right for an adult like you to fight a child. You'd be better off fighting me."

The man frowned and backed off slightly, surprised by Steven's attitude.

"Your children dug a hole over three feet deep in the school's playground. They definitely dug it based on my child's height, and they buried my child there! He was already buried up to the neck when the teachers found out about it.'

I was stunned, looking at the kids in shock. What was going on?

"Did your child not struggle or scream?" I carefully asked, trying my best not to agitate the father further

"Are your children abductors in the making? They tied my son's hands and legs up and stuffed his mouth. How was he supposed to scream and struggle?" The man was clearly agitated. "They were trying to bury him alive!"

I looked at Ashton with a frown. I said, "Come over and explain yourself."

Ashton hung his head low, looking aggrieved. He dared not look at me.

At that moment, another woman walked over carrying a crying yet pretty boy. "Your child deserves it! Let me tell you, if it weren't for me finding out about this late, I would've buried your child to let off my steam too! "He's being such a school bully at such a young age. Ashton was just standing up for what's right!"