

After Death 651

Chapter 651

I looked at the woman. She was carrying an adorable boy who was still bawling his eyes out. It was evident that his hair was newly cut.

The woman took out her phone and showed us a photo. "This is a photo of Yannick before this. He has been keeping his hair long even though he's a boy. That's because his cousin has leukemia, and he was growing his hair out to make a wig for her.

"He spent four years growing his hair out without fearing the opinions of others, yet that punk set it on fire with a lighter!"

She got more agitated the more she spoke. "Look at this! I got this surveillance footage from the preschool!" Yannick sniffled before saying, "He bullied and hit me. He even lit my hair up with a lighter."

The police officers' faces paled. "As parents, how have you been raising your child? Hair is highly flammable it might cause disfigurement or even death!"

It was horrifying to think that a good-looking child like Yannick might have gotten his face disfigured.

The bully dared not utter a word and hid behind his parents. With the surveillance footage proving that he was in the wrong, his parents no longer dared to make a fuss.

I watched the surveillance video, finding it shocking that children of five or six could actually do such a thing. "A child's character is determined by their genes. Your child's bad behavior reflects what kind of parents you are," I said with a frown.

"What about your children, then? They even dug a hole to bury my child!" The bully's parents were unconvinced.

I looked at them and smiled coldly. "You're right. The parents' genes determine the genes of their children. My son and daughter only buried him while we would've chopped off your son's hands instead."

The bully's parents were enraged by my words, yet they remained silent as they were intimidated by Steven's presence.

Ashton and Xan quietly hid behind our backs. They were as docile as they could get.

As expected-children were just children. Even if they were trained by Genome Society, they were only children of four to five years of age.

"Since the children of both sides are at fault, just work this out among yourselves." The police officers suggested for us to come to an agreement.

Seeing that their child had done something wrong, the bully's parents no longer argued further. They brought him away after we compensated them with the costs for medical examination and treatment.

Yannick ran toward Ashton and softly said, "Thank you, Ashton."

Ashton was aloof as he eyed me discreetly. He only spoke after seeing that I wasn't mad. "My father said that the strong must protect the weak."

I found it amusing. He was intelligent, yet he took after Steven in terms of emotional intelligence - he wasn't good with words.

Yannick's mother laughed in amusement. "You have my gratitude. Thank you, Ashton and Xandra."

Xan was still lost in her own world with her Rubik's cube. She toyed with it all day long without looking up or talking to anyone. But she was fully cooperative when Ashton asked her to dig a hole, focusing intently on her task.

"My daughter is reserved and a little autistic, so she's often lost in her own world. Don't worry about her," I hurriedly explained when I saw the woman looking awkward.

Yannick's mother nodded in pleasant surprise. "She's surely very smart, then. I've seen how well Xandra plays

with the Rubik's cube. My son can barely stack up his building blocks."

I chuckled. She was indeed smart, but her wits were all she had.

"I really can't thank all of you enough for what happened today. My son's face could've been disfigured if it weren't for Ashton quickly covering my son's head with a wet shirt." The woman sighed before continuing, "Children these days can be so reckless without knowing the consequences."

Inodded.

From the footage, we saw how the bully had picked on Yannick. He took out the lighter he stole from his home and lit up Yannick's hair.

Some kids liked to bully Yannick as he was a boy with long hair.

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It was extremely dangerous. The flames ignited instantly as soon as they touched Yannick's hair.

Ashton was the one who quickly took off his shirt and soaked it in the pool nearby. He then swiftly and expertly covered Yannick's head with it and hugged him securely.

In the video, Yannick looked terrified. He was shaking uncontrollably, and he couldn't even cry.

"He might be a little traumatized. You should bring him for counseling," I comforted the woman.

Yannick's mother nodded and replied, "Alright, thank you."

Once she brought Yannick home, Rachel was still shielding the kids diffidently while stepping back. "You know, the kids were...just doing what's right, Stephanie."

I shot a glare at Ashton. I didn't bother with Xan-she would've been unfazed even if the sky fell down. As such, the idea must have come from Ashton, with Xan being only an obedient participant.

"Come here, Ashton," I called for him while sitting on the bench.

Ashton looked at Steven with pleading eyes.

Steven looked equally innocent. It was as if he was trying to tell Ashton not to drag him into his own mess. No one dared to cross me, after all.

Ashton shot him a disappointed glance before braving himself to walk over to me.

I gave him a spank in the butt. "Haven't I told you to respect life? Were you planning to bury him if it weren't for the teachers finding out?"

Ashton hung his head low without a word. He said after a while, "He's a pest, Mom."

I can't believe he called that boy a pest.

He continued, "There are too many humans on earth, and resources are limited, Mom. Why should we let these pests enjoy such a wonderful planet and resources?"

"Just like what was said in Animal Kingdom-beneficial insects help society, while pests are only a waste of space. It would just be better if they were eliminated," Ashton said, showing no hesitation at all when talking about killing someone."

"I don't care what you're saying about humans and limited resources, Ashton. Humans shouldn't be killing humans. You need to learn to respect life and the law. I felt somewhat upset, wondering how his mindset was shaped.

"Everyone's thoughts are different. Others might think that you're a pest to the human race if you kill someone. What would you do if they wanted to kill you, then?" I asked.

"It's survival of the fittest. I'll kill them," Ashton replied seriously.

He truly did not think that his way of thinking was wrong.

I was taken aback, feeling tightness in my chest. What should I do to make them act like ordinary children? Their way of thinking was just too dangerous.

"You need to learn to think from the perspective of others when you're faced with situations, Ashton. If you can't understand it from your own viewpoint, you should think of how your actions might affect your sister or us-those you care about." Steven crouched in front of Ashton when he saw me panicking.

He continued, "There's a need for rules in this society. Otherwise, there wouldn't be a difference between us and the wild animals on the plains. Since rules exist, everyone must follow them. Those who break the rules are the real troublemakers.

"You need to remember that "existence is rational". Rules and laws exist to confine human morality and baseline within a certain framework. We must adhere to the rule of law in order to maintain balance," Steven said seriously while educating Ashton.

I sat beside watching the conversation between them unfold. Somehow, I felt warmth within me.

Family education was indeed a shared responsibility between a married couple.

Ashton nodded obediently, seemingly understanding Steven's words. "Should I still intervene if I encounter bullying in the future, Dad?"

"You should intervene under the condition that your own safety is ensured," Steven replied, ruffling Ashton's hair.

"Your intention of stopping the bullying was correct, but there are many ways to address these situations. While I can't say which method is the most correct, there certainly are better ways than burying the other person alive, am I right?"

"With how smart you and Xan are, you could definitely come up with a solution that works for everyone," Steven patiently comforted.

I found it amusing to think that he could actually educate the kids so patiently.

I thought that he was someone impatient.

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"Have they been behaving well all this time?" I asked, looking apologetically at Rachel. "I'm sorry for the trouble."

Rachel waved a hand dismissively. "They're extremely well-behaved. I've never seen such obedient children." I could tell that she really liked the kids. It was just that they caused some trouble today.

"You should stop scolding them as well. Even though I think that they did overreact in this matter, they had good intentions just like what Steven said." Rachel smiled as she looked at Ashton.

She then said, "You can't bury someone else alive next time. It's enough to just inform the teachers or scare them, okay?"

Ashton nodded obediently. He then stole a gaze at me, as if worried that I was still angry.

I felt angry and heartbroken as I pulled the kids into my embrace. "I'm not trying to blame both of you. It's just that the way you handled things was really wrong. Every mistake should be met with a balanced punishment. That bully didn't deserve to die, right?"

"Besides, it's up to the law to punish those who make mistakes. There are law enforcers in human society. You don't have the right to administer justice as you wish."

"Can I be a law enforcer, then?" Ashton asked, looking at me seriously.

Chuckling, I replied, "Sure. You should study hard and aim to become a police officer like Zion or Eason, or a coroner like Rachel in the future."

Ashton glanced over at Rachel. "I want to become a coroner."

"Let me tell you, he's really something!" Rachel looked around before whispering to me in shock, "Do you know what he did? There was a case of a husband killing his wife in our department a few days ago."

"I was stumped, but he glimpsed through the practical report and told me that the killer was the victim's husband. He even pointed out the doubtful points and provided evidence. The case was immediately solved, and I even got a small bonus too."

I flashed a smile at Ashton. "That's amazing of you! We should let Rachel treat us to dinner with her bonus, then."

Rachel looked at me disdainfully, muttering. "You're such a cheapskate."

I carried Xan with a smile while Steven took Ashton's hand. We then walked out of the police station together. "What should we have for dinner tonight?" I asked him. "It's on Rach!"

Steven smiled helplessly and said, "I've made reservations. Let's go."

Steven had made a reservation in advance in a high-end and hard-to-book sky restaurant in Huma. I had heard that it had a wonderful ambiance, yet I had never been to the place.

I seemed to recall Michael bringing Yasmin over.

It was Stephanie Carlson's birthday back then, yet Yasmin was the one Michael brought to the restaurant. They were even photographed holding hands by paparazzi.

I wasn't too sure what Michael felt toward Yasmin. Perhaps he had feelings for her. He wouldn't have been so caring otherwise.

But he ultimately thought Stephanie Carlson was the one he loved. What a contradicting person he was.

I only felt pity whenever I thought of Michael now. Even though he was still alive, he was no longer the Michael of the past.

Life could be funny sometimes. One moment, I was feeling pity for him; the next moment, I saw "Michael" as I

was stepping out of the elevator.

He was probably no longer Michael now but Miguel.

He was there with Daisy and even Una.

To be honest, the sight of the three of them together looked peculiar.

They sat by the floor-to-ceiling windows. The waiter walked over and smiled at Daisy, saying, "Your son and daughter-in-law look like a good match, madam."

Daisy's expression evidently fell before tossing the menu to Miguel. He said nothing, simply making his order with the waiter and only speaking to her once the waiter left.

I couldn't hear what they were talking about as I was farther away. Miguel was probably trying to coax Daisy. The entire scene really felt out of place.

Miguel was now occupying Michael's youthful body while Daisy was slowly aging away.

Her bodily functions were gradually deteriorating. Added to the fact that she was a first-generation experimental subject and technology back then wasn't as advanced.

That was why Daisy took Una away from Nancy and kept Una by her side.

I took a sharp breath. Now that I thought about it, the reason Nancy adopted Una as her daughter was probably also to prepare a backup body for herself.

These people were truly terrifying. They all yearned for immortality.

Steven had also seen the peculiar family seated by the windows. His expression fell as he took my hand, wanting to leave.

"Isn't that Michael? He's looking pretty decent now. I wonder if he was threatened by his mother," Rachel said disdainfully when she spotted them.

Her voice was a little too loud. It made Daisy and the others look over.

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Miguel looked at us with unfamiliarity, yet he still said to Daisy, "Those young people..."

Daisy looked at Steven and me with a smile. "What a coincidence."

We wouldn't be able to leave now.

"Indeed," I replied, shielding the kids as I looked at Daisy.

"Let's all have a meal together, then." Daisy gestured for us to join them for dinner.

"No need. It's uncomfortable to eat with strangers," I rejected.

Daisy simply smiled and said nothing else.

I glanced at Una. Her gaze toward me was a complicated one.

I actually couldn't understand something. Una was a smart clone subject, so she should know Daisy's intention for keeping her around.

But why didn't she escape or stay away from Daisy? Why would Una stay by her side despite how dangerous it was?

As we walked past the family of three, they all looked at us with a peculiar gaze.

I could feel a sense of unfamiliarity from Miguel. Perhaps he really was no longer Michael.

"Don't you think the three of them are strange, Stephie? But I can't put a finger to it." Even Rachel realized that they were acting strangely.

I made a shushing motion. We should just focus on eating instead. Who knew if Daisy might go crazy again? Zion and the others weren't back yet, and the mystery of the laboratory in the desolate area remained unsolved. We had to keep a low profile recently.

A waiter came over and said, "The madam over there sent you some wine and dishes."

Before we even made our order, Daisy had someone send over some red wine and steak. The steak was still dripping with red juice, making it seem unappetizing.

"This is prime filet mignon. It's the least exercised part of the cow. As such, it's also the most tender part." Daisy raised her glass at us with a smile.

She seemed to have deliberately mentioned the term "tender". She was warning us that everyone was just like the steak on this plate—waiting to be carved up.

Oh, how arrogant of her.

I said, "Please send a steak over to that madam as well—make it well-done. She has digestive issues since she's older, so she won't be able to digest a medium-rare steak like this. The asparagus has to be tender as well. After all, older people prefer things that are tender."

Daisy's expression evidently darkened as she stared at me begrudgingly.

Miguel had been silent all the while. He glanced over at me, smiling as if he could no longer hold it in. He then comforted Daisy, "She's just returning the favor. You don't have to think too much about it."

Daisy snorted. "Do you think she's only returning the favor?"

Miguel coughed softly. "How about we leave for now, then?"

Daisy looked as if she had expected his words. She dropped her cutlery and said, "I'm not eating anymore. You guys go ahead."

After that, she got up and left on her own. Miguel sighed before getting up to run after her.

Una, however, was calmly eating her steak, even wiping her lips clean when she was done. She glanced over at me as she got up to follow them.

"Why must you follow them around?" I asked, out of concern.

"Surely, someone has to be the steak on the plate," Una mumbled. She then tossed the handkerchief into the trash can and caught up with them.

Unable to understand her words, I frowned and looked at Steven.

He had his head lowered, not unlike Miguel when he said, "Don't overthink it. Order up."

I looked at Steven in suspicion. Somehow, I felt as if he had control of the entire situation.

He was the only person who could conduct the Reincarnation Project. Una still remained by Daisy's side despite knowing her intentions. Besides, Una had followed Steven around before this, and he had kept her alive.

She had said that Steven made a deal with her for her to be my backup body. Could it be that he had also arranged for Una to be with the Fords now?

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After Una left, Steven handed the menu to Rachel as if nothing had happened.

Rachel was shocked when she looked at the menu. "Have you guys become rich? You've already sold Lincoln Group, and a set of steak here costs over a hundred dollars-"

Looking at her, I explained seriously, "He only sold off the shares of Lincoln Group, meaning that there's only money left now. He now has nothing but money."

Rachel belatedly hummed a response and looked at Steven excitedly. "I won't hold myself back, then!"

"It's not that I have nothing. I still have you," he corrected me seriously.

Rachel pursed her lips and mumbled, "Why are you being lovey-dovey in front of me now?"

"You have Xan and me too!" Ashton raised his hand to indicate that the two of them wanted to be included too.

I flashed Steven a smile. "You're right. It's not that you have nothing."

We had the whole world from the moment we met.

"I'll excuse myself to the bathroom." Steven squeezed my hand before getting up to head to the bathroom.

I heard his phone vibrating earlier. He must have gone out to the bathroom to pick up the call.

It probably wasn't just my imagination-Steven seemed to be hiding something from me recently.

I said, "Look after Xan, Ashton. I'll head over to the bathroom as well."

Rachel stopped eating her appetizer and looked up blankly at me. "Why are the both of you going to the bathroom..."

She stopped probing upon seeing something was off from my expression.

Steven did not enter the bathroom but was taking the call behind the partition. I couldn't make out what the other person was saying, yet Steven was just listening.

I walked over and hugged him from the back. He neither resisted nor avoided me, probably realizing my presence a while back.

"Alright, let's leave it at that for now." Steven ended the call before turning to look at me.

"Who's that?" I asked

"It's Dayton." He wasn't trying to hide it from me. I could clearly hear Dayton's voice on the phone.

"Why was he looking for you?" I was curious. Steven wouldn't be hiding things from me if there wasn't anything special.

Besides, Genome Society was almost certain that Dayton was the president of Crowdstar Group now. That meant the actual mastermind behind them might meet up with him.

As long as Dayton met up with that person, our investigation would go on much smoother.

It was absolutely unacceptable for something that violated human ethics like genome editing to be used for personal gain. It wouldn't be a surprise for many to be curious about who the mastermind was when they had orchestrated such a huge ploy.

"Those from Genome Society have found him, but they're very alert. Dayton has yet to meet the mastermind as well," Steven said, seemingly a little disappointed.

I carefully studied his face to see if he was lying or hiding something from me. "Has he really not met the mastermind?"

Steven nodded. "I would definitely tell you if he had met up with them."

"I have a feeling that the mastermind of Genome Society is someone close to us, or at least someone we all know. Why would they go to such lengths to remain mysterious otherwise?" I mumbled.

"Oh right, Jimmy must have gained the favor of the mastermind of Genome Society to be able to get the management position of the laboratory in the desolate area. Has he met that person before, then?" I asked. Jimmy would surely know.

"Do you think that sly fox would tell us the truth?" Steven fumed at the mention of Jimmy. He was probably regretting not beating him enough back in the desolate area before this.

He continued, "He claimed that he hadn't met them directly. They only communicated through an AI virtual figure before he took over. But who knows whether he had actually met them?"

I felt upset as well. Jimmy was truly an untrustworthy person.

"Let's stop thinking about it now. We're here to have dinner with the kids," I comforted Steven while hugging him.

"It might not be a bad thing not to know who the mastermind is for now. At least we're safe for now. Just let the police handle it," I whispered, leaning into his embrace.

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Steven's heart was racing, far from its usual steady rhythm.

To be honest, it was hard for him to hide things from me as I could always sense when things were off. If he refused to tell me what he was hiding from me, I knew that I wouldn't be able to get it out from him by asking. "Alright, let's head back to dinner. Steven took my hand and brought me back to our table.

Rachel and the kids were busy eating. She gave us a disdainful look upon seeing us return hand in hand. "What a show-off!"

"There was this pretty young woman when we went to the desolate area this time. She was so pitiful and delicate, and Zion was really taken with her. She was abducted by some bad guys. Otherwise, Zion would've returned by now," I said, giving Rachel a sly look.

She looked alarmed and immediately took out her phone to text Zion.

Rachel's subconscious actions and subtle expressions were hard to hide, showing that she truly cared for him. At least, her feelings for him were genuine.

Somehow, I felt relieved and took a bite of fruit, trying not to laugh. I'm just joking. Zion is as straight-laced as they come-stubborn and only cares about serving justice."

Zion nodded smugly. "That's true."

"So, where are you two at with your relationship? He's not getting any younger. Has he said anything about getting engaged or married?" I asked.

"My mother... opposes it." Rachel looked down, seemingly unhappy.

"She's just too controlling! She insists that I get married to a wealthy man. Funny how she's not seeing me at my worth," she said sarcastically, clearly unhappy.

I had heard Rachel talking about her extremely controlling mother countless times. Back in high school, I felt sorry for her having to endure the pressure coming from her mother

But I had never seen this mother of hers before.

"Your mother doesn't approve of Zion?" I looked at Rachel in shock. "What kind of man is she looking for, then?"

She discreetly eyed Steven before telling me with a mysterious smile, "She wants me to find a wealthy man like Steven."

I parted my lips, glancing over at Steven before saying, "He's not an option-he's taken."

Rachel was amused by my reaction. "Don't worry, I have principles. I won't steal my bestie's man."

I smiled at her, asking, "What will you do, then? You're already an adult. You can't always listen to her. Zion is a great guy. Although his family isn't well-off, he's a man of integrity."

Rachel contemplated for a moment before shaking her head. "I'm rebelling, but it's going to take some time. Just wait for my good news," she said softly. I could tell that she had a lot on her mind.

I had been suspecting that there was something wrong with her for quite some time now, yet I couldn't pinpoint any issues.

Perhaps I was too reluctant to lose her as a friend.

Besides, every time Rachel spoke about her family and mother, I felt like she wasn't just referring to her "mother" alone.

She said that she was rebelling-was it against gynecocracy, or was there something more she was hinting at? "How about I come over for a meal one day to meet your mother?" I suggested tentatively.

Rachel was horrified. "Don't! You'll be walking right into a trap!"

Upon seeing my silence, she said again, "My mother is the type who can't stand seeing others do well."

I nodded and replied, "Alright then. We'll have the chance to meet someday."

Rachel nodded and mumbled, "Hopefully, you'll never get to meet her. I hope she dies soon..."

I looked at her, clearly taken aback. She instantly put on a smiling face and changed the topic. "The steak bites

with truffle butter are delicious-as expected of a delicacy that's worth over a hundred dollars!"

Chapter 657

"You're already an adult. You should have your own thoughts and not be easily swayed by others. You should also live your own life, so you should learn how to stand for yourself, Steven calmly said, looking at Rachel. She remained silent and continued eating her steak. We said nothing more, and the kids were also quietly eating their own food.

Xan quietly played with her Rubik's cube, her presence often going unnoticed. She seemed to have a knack for quickly transforming it into patterns or even words that she liked.

The tiny squares of the Rubik's cube would have given a headache to most people, but she was always having a great time with it.

Ashton seemed to have a natural instinct to look after and protect Xan since birth. With great effort, he cut the steak and pushed it over to Xan. He then patted her head and urged her to eat first.

Both of them seemed to have an unspoken emotional connection-they knew what the other was trying to say just by sharing a glance.

"Now that I'm looking, both Ashton and Xan took after their father." I glanced at Steven, noticing how his unique mixed-race genes were reflected in the kids. Their deep-set eyes, high nose bridges, long eyelashes, and pale skin were traits of his.

He carefully studied them and said, 'I think they took after their mother instead.'

I simply smiled without replying. After all, they were the products of both of our genes.

We dropped Rachel off at home after dinner.

The entire trip was so peaceful it gave me the illusion that we were just an ordinary family leading a normal life—having dinner with friends and our children, going shopping together, buying things we liked, and enjoying our favorite snacks.

"I want some cotton candy, Steven." We drove around Huma for a bit after leaving Rachel's place. We passed someone selling cotton candy by the roadside, and I suddenly had a craving for it.

Steven parked the car and went down to buy some cotton candy, but he only came back with one serving.

Stunned, I asked, 'Did you not get any for Ashton and Xan?'

Steven eyed Ashton. 'Go buy it yourself if you and Xan want some as well.'

Ashton glanced at him before obediently getting out of the car to go buy some cotton candy.

"You're not very good at this whole fatherhood thing." I laughed amusedly before handing the cotton candy to Xan.

She shook her head and said, "Dad bought it for you, Mom. You can have it."

Astonished, I gave Steven a thumbs-up. Although he wasn't the most reliable father, the kids surely were dependable.

I couldn't help but laugh out loud. Even though the three of us were a family by blood, we still felt like strangers to each other. While Steven and I were relatively familiar with each other, we were just getting to know the kids.

Ashton looked tiny as he stood by the food truck. Other female customers were busy taking photos of him. It was mainly because he was just too adorable and lovable, looking like a doll with his mixed-race features.

Steven's emotional intelligence was much higher than Steven's. He bought four servings in total—one for me, one for Steven, and one each for himself and Xan.

I looked at the two servings in hand, feeling extremely loved by my family.

"Just have one, or you'll end up with rotten teeth." Steven even got jealous of Ashton. He took away one of my

servings and handed it to Ashton. 'You can have two.'

Ashton was at a loss for words as he looked at Steven. Wouldn't he end up with rotten teeth, then?

I held back my laughter and took a bite of my cotton candy. It tasted just like how it was during my childhood, but somehow, it lacked so much of the feelings from back then.

My mind often felt as if it was shrouded in fog. I wasn't exactly clear-headed and couldn't shake the feeling that I'd forgotten something.

Steven drove us home. We then played with Stevie in the courtyard before retiring to bed.

Genome Society had been laying low as of recently. That was why we could live peacefully for now.

Steven eagerly hired a moving company the next day. All of us then moved to his newly bought villa on the mountain. It was a luxurious villa that could easily accommodate ten people without feeling cramped.

I stood at the entrance, holding Ashton and Xan's hands while looking at Steven. "Must we stay in such a huge house on the mountain? It feels a little strange and empty."

Steven brought Stevie to our new home and flashed a smile at me. "The air is fresh, the environment is good, and it's really quiet here."

Leo still remained as our butler, helping us out in tending to the garden and cleanliness.

There was also a new caretaker other than Leo. It turned out to be Ms. Ewing, the previous caretaker from the Ford residence. It was the same person who asked me in secret whether the cherry tree was blossoming.

"Ms. Ewing?" I asked in surprise.

"The Fords have dismissed all their previous household staff and caretakers and hired new ones. I came over since Mr. Lincoln was hiring caretakers," she explained.

Astonished, I looked at Steven. He wasn't someone who would hire strangers out of nowhere.

So why was Ms. Ewing here, then?

Chapter 658

"Ms. Ewing is one of my people. You can trust her," Steven comforted me softly.

I took in a deep breath, suddenly feeling chills running down my back.

Ms. Ewing was one of Steven's people? That disrupted my thoughts-1 wasn't able to think clearly for a

moment.

Did that mean that Ms. Ewing was also a multifaceted spy, and she was just pretending to cooperate in front of Peter?

But what did she mean when she asked me those mysterious questions before?

"Now that Miguel has reincarnated into Michael's body, Daisy is worried that someone might notice the changes in him, causing unnecessary problems.

"That's why she dismissed everyone who was taking care of them previously and hired new people," Steven explained. But that wasn't the explanation I wanted to hear.

I had a feeling that Ms. Ewing wasn't just one of Steven's people. The way she interacted with me seemed like she was trying to verify my identity or confirm my memories.

I looked at Steven for the longest time.

What exactly was he planning to do? Why would we suddenly move to this place?

I felt like Steven was hiding a lot of things from me. It seemed like he was hiding them together with everyone else around me-including Ashton and Xan.

I'd think that something was amiss whenever I looked at them.

"I'll head back to pack up the remaining things. You guys can go get some rest for now." Steven asked Ms. Ewing to bring us to our rooms before driving away on his own.

I stood on the balcony of the master bedroom on the second floor. It had a perfect view of the winding mountain road, with nearly the entire mountain in sight.

The view was beautiful here, and it seemed to be relatively safe.

"Where are all our stuff kept? I want to have a look," I said, wanting to check the basement storage.

When I arrived, I noticed that this villa had a basement as the elevator seemed to go down to three additional floors.

However, Ms. Ewing stopped me and said, "You should have some warm milk and go to bed soon, miss."

I looked at her, alarmed. "Can't I go down to have a look?"

"It's not that. It's just that it's still messy and dirty downstairs, Ms. Ewing explained.

I ignored her and pressed the elevator button down, heading directly to basement level three.

It was very spacious and dusty, filled with some old stuff.

This wasn't a new villa-likely several decades old. The disorganized pile of old stuff belonged to the previous

owner.

I walked over to the desk at the corner and looked at the items covered in dust. As I rummaged through them, I was surprised to find Sarah's photo in one of the photo frames.

Sarah truly looked like me when she was younger-not Stephany Larson, but Stephanie Carlson.

The resemblance was as high as 80% and about 75% similar to my current body.

Was she really a first-generation experimental subject, with Daisy and Nancy being the second-generation, and me being the third generation?

What kind of secrets was Genome Society actually hiding? And how much had Steven been hiding from me?

He told me that Dayton did not manage to meet the mastermind of Genome Society as they were very cautious. So, why was he acting strange recently?

I frowned, quickening my steps wanting to leave.

Perhaps Steven already found out who the mastermind was and was anxious because of that.

Was he scared because he knew he wouldn't be able to fight them? Was that why he was planning to face them on his own?

Someone struck me from behind with a bat as soon as I came out of the basement. I managed to get a glimpse of the person who hit me just before I lost my consciousness. It was Ms. Ewing.

She said, "It's time to get back on track, miss."

Chapter 659

My head was spinning, and my ears rang. I couldn't even hear anything else.

Ms. Ewing wouldn't have dared to strike me if she was just one of Steven's people. Who exactly was she working for? What was she planning to do?

"He messed with your memories, miss. He wanted to make you forget all those things... Hurry up and recover your memories. It's time to get back on track," Ms. Ewing whispered something in my ear, yet I couldn't hear her clearly because of the ringing.

"He found the secret to reincarnation and the key to altering memories, miss. You were right-he's a dangerous person, and he's obstructing your plan.

"It's time for you to recall everything, miss. The plan is still progressing smoothly, so it's time for you to wake up-" she continued to urge impatiently.

Who was Ms. Ewing talking about? Who was the one who was supposed to wake up now? Whose memory had been altered?

I had a severe headache. Something seemed to be emerging from my mind.

Was she talking about me and my memories?

I had always wondered why Steven and everything related to him was the only thing I couldn't remember. Who was the one messing with my memories? My amnesia certainly wasn't only an accident.

Was it Steven? Why would he do that?

I had clearly regained part of my memories, yet there were still many that I couldn't recall-as if they were sealed off.

I struggled in pain.

"Stephie!" I heard Steven's voice amidst my struggle. Worry bled out of his voice.

"As expected, you're really something.' It seemed that he had deliberately left the villa to test Ms. Ewing. "You want her to recall everything, so you're trying to use external force to recover her memories? You're harming her instead!" Steven said, his voice gruff as if scolding her.

I struggled to regain my consciousness, yet I couldn't no matter how much I tried.

"She has her own path to walk on, but you you're the one who's constantly obstructing her! You're the one who messed with her memories after that car accident, turning her into a fool who kept crying over a man! That's not my miss!

"You're the one harming her! If it weren't for you messing with her memories, she wouldn't have been hurt by people like Michael and Yasmin. The one who indirectly caused her death was you!" Ms. Ewing was vehemently accusing Steven.

"What do you even know?" he cried out, almost losing control of his emotions.

"It'll be self-destructive if she continues," he said, his voice hoarse.

"Don't think I don't know what your intentions are. Do you think she'll ever love you even if you mess with her memories? She's heartless and unfeeling-she won't love anyone. The plan was her only focus, and she was willing to pay any price and sacrifice anyone-including you!"

Ms. Ewing's words were sharp.

She continued, "Relationships were never the most important to her. Do you think you'll be able to trap her by your side forever by messing with her memories, ruining her, and changing her body? Do you think she'll become a loyal housewife just for you? Dream on!"

Steven seemed like he couldn't be bothered to explain to Ms. Ewing. Soon, I heard her struggle and the sounds of her being brought away by someone.

I wanted to regain my consciousness to get to the bottom of everything, but I couldn't open my eyes.

"Don't trust anyone, Stephie-not even me," he choked, pulling me into his embrace. I could feel him trembling in anxiousness.

"I want to save you, Stephie. You should live an ordinary life. Hatred shouldn't have ruined you. You shouldn't have to bear those sins. Live your life untainted, Stephie. Leave all the dirty work to me." Steven's voice was choked with emotions, conveying both coldness and determination.

He seemed to be making a vow-professing his love toward Stephanie Carlson and his unwavering determination.

"We don't have much time left, Stephie. I love you, I love you,' Steven repeatedly told me that he loved me while kissing my forehead.

Chapter 660

"Forget about me, Stephie. I want you to live an untainted life, enjoying simple and carefree days under the sun," Steven said in an earnest tone, expressing his hopes for my future.

He told me to forget about him, but I didn't want to.

"Just sleep for now, Stephie. Everything will be alright-it will," he said, voice growing hoarser.

I could feel him hugging me tight. I could also feel the syringe being injected into my body.

Steven continued, "I wanted to be selfish and keep you for myself for longer, Stephie. I had wanted the four of us to settle down in the mountains for a little while, but it's too late now. Jimmy has already shown his hand, and the Rebels have exposed the laboratory in the desolate area through Maya.

"Everything has changed overnight, and now is the crucial time for the Rebels to strike at Genome Society. Everything... will be alright once you regain consciousness. His voice grew fainter and fainter until I could no longer hear him.

My soul felt incredibly heavy, and I couldn't open my eyes. I remained trapped in confusion.

I could feel his endless despair. I wanted to hug him, but I couldn't.

"Have you made up your mind, Dad?" I could vaguely hear Ashton's voice from afar amidst my daze. "Can you... not leave us, Dad?"

"Remember to protect your mom and always stay by her side," Steven instructed.

Suddenly, fear and anxiety struck me hard, and I struggled with all my might. Everything seemed to be coming to an end, but why was I afraid of such a feeling?

I struggled hard, trying to regain consciousness to stop Steven, but I couldn't do anything anymore.

I remained in confusion for the longest time-dazed and unable to distinguish time and space.

My mind was blank, as if I had forgotten many things.

"Stephie?"

I heard someone calling my name in a daze. It was a familiar voice.

"Wake up, Stephanie. Did you forget we're supposed to bring the kids to the beach today?"

I rubbed my aching forehead and tried to open my eyes. The sunlight was blinding, and a tall figure stood by the bedside to block the harsh light.

He was standing against the light, but I could make out his face. For a moment, I felt disoriented and found him unfamiliar.

"What's wrong?" The man seemed worried about me as he touched my forehead. "You don't have a fever, Stephanie. It's time to get up."

I propped myself up with my elbows and looked at him. "How long have I been asleep... Michael?"

He flashed me a smile and replied, "You've been knocked out for 12 hours. You stayed up to play with the kids until 2:00 am and refused to get up in the morning."

I smiled as a memory flashed in my mind.

I was freely running in the field with my two kids and a dog. The weather was perfect, and we played until sunset. We then went into the forest to catch some fireflies and stargaze.

And then... the stars were covered by clouds and disappeared from sight.

"Did it rain last night?" I asked. My memory ended with the starry sky being covered by clouds.