

After Death 191

Chapter 191

“Michael! Hands off!” Rachel tried to yank me away from Michael.

However, she stopped for fear of accidentally hurting me.

During the ride to the hospital, Rachel kept on berating Michael.

“You’re nothing but trash, just wasting air.

“Michael, why don’t you go die? Didn’t you say you wanted to be buried with Stephie? Just go die.

“You’re such a waste even in death. Change Stephie’s tombstone for me! You’re not even fit to be her husband.

“You’re disgusting.”

Throughout the journey, Rachel kept on talking. She did a great job speaking up for me, cursing with gusto.

Meanwhile, I struggled to wake up. I badly wanted to see Steven.

“Mr. Ford, you’re still out on bail, so I suggest you don’t wander around,” Zion warned

Michael.

Michael remained silent for a while before speaking up, “She’s Stephie, isn’t she...”

Rachel was stunned, and her face darkened. “Michael, what’s gotten into you? Just after Stephie passed away, there were rumors about you going crazy.

“At first, I didn’t believe it. But now, it seems there might be some truth to it.”

“You know... She’s Stephie.” Michael, with reddened eyes, said to Rachel with a questioning lilt in his voice.

Rachel felt somewhat guilty. “I reckon you’re really losing it,” she said.

“Whether she’s Stephie or not, she belongs to me.” Michael said sternly. “I won’t let her get close to that lunatic, Steven.”

“I think Steven seems fine. But you, on the other hand, you look more like a lunatic,” Rachel quipped.

Then, she whispered to Zion, “He was locked up for a few days. How did he come out even crazier? Did you guys brainwash him?”

“Who knows, he went on a hunger strike in there just to get bail,” Zion muttered,

The doctor gave me a thorough checkup and said that there was nothing wrong.

But for some reason, I just couldn't wake up.

My mind was clear, and I desperately tried to open my eyes. But for a moment, it seemed like this body was beyond my control.

Then, I felt a sudden rush of panic as I struggled to open my eyes.

But no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't snap out of it.

It was like I was having sleep paralysis.

"No problems at all? Then why isn't she waking up?" Michael nervously asked the doctor.

"Perhaps she's just exhausted. Let's keep an eye on her a bit longer," the doctor suggested.

"Steve!" I panicked, calling out Steven's name.

Why was I unable to wake up?

"Steve..."

Then, I recalled meeting Steven at the orphanage when I was young.

Steven ended up getting locked up by Mr. Hanks because he stood up for me and fought the boy who was bullying me.

But as for what happened next, I couldn't recall.

My memories were scattered. And among the fragments, the only clear memory I could recall was the first time I met Steven.

Even from the photo at Carol's house, it was clear that Steven and I had met when we were around eight or nine years old, and our bond remained strong throughout adolescence.

Why did I specifically forget about everything related to the orphanage, including Steven and Simeon, after the car crash?

"Steve..." I kept shouting Steven's name.

Then, there was a voice in my mind that said, "Steven has always been waiting for you."

"Steve!" Maybe because I was eager to wake up, I suddenly felt like I broke free from some restraint and opened my eyes wide.

"Stephie..." Michael was the first to rush up, looking panicked as he called my name.

However, I ignored him and tried to bolt from the bed.

Steven was waiting for me.

“Stephie.” Rachel returned with the test results just as I was trying to make a run for it.

“Stephie?” She tried to chase after me.

But in my panic, I simply dashed out of the hospital and hailed a cab back to the Lincoln residence to see Steven.

I wasn't sure why I wanted to see him so badly.

And now that I realized I'd lost some memories, they were gradually coming back to me.

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“She's Stephie, right?” Rachel stood nearby as she watched me hail a cab.

Zion followed her out and let out a sigh of relief. “Forget about it. The doctor said that she and the baby are fine.”

Rachel lowered her gaze as her eyes turned red. “If she truly is Stephie, will she be upset with me for not recognizing her at first?”

Zion sighed and glanced at the deeply troubled Michael. “Man, I swear you two are both going crazy.”

Rachel lowered her head and tightly clenched her hands. “Is there a chance that the science we've been learning can't explain certain things?”

Just then, Zion's phone rang, so he stepped aside to answer it.

“I'll give you a ride,” Michael said hoarsely as he approached me.

I was struggling to hail a cab, but I ignored Michael.

At that moment, all I wanted was to return to the Lincoln residence to meet and apologize to Steven.

It seemed like I had truly forgotten about him. But I was putting in a lot of effort to recall and bring back all our shared memories.

Then, Michael grabbed my wrist as I tried to flee. “Hey, Stephany, calm down!”

“Get lost!” I forcefully pushed away Michael's arm, my eyes filled with disgust and

hatred.

Michael stood frozen in place and stared at me for a long time.

“Stephie...” he called out to me after I finally managed to hail a cab and was about to get

1. in.

“Stephie... Is that you?” Michael hurried over, tapping on the car door.

I gave the driver a cold glance. “Let’s go.”

Michael trailed behind the car for a few steps before desolately standing in place.

He shouted, “Stephanie! Come back, please, I’m begging you.

“Stop it. Who do you think you’re fooling? You seriously think she’s like some character from a novel who gets reincarnated? You’re out of your mind!

“Let me make it clear—Stephanie’s gone, and you’re the one who killed her! And child too.” Rachel continued to provoke him, “Why don’t you just go die?”

Your

“You think I haven’t tried to die?” Michael shouted at Rachel, his voice trembling.

I glanced at them in the rearview mirror until their voices grew distant.

Late affection was worthless. I didn’t care about Michael’s remorse now..

When the cab arrived at the Lincoln residence, I hastily got out of the car and searched everywhere for Steven.

“Steve...” I called.

“Is Steven back yet?” I nervously asked Angel and grabbed her arm.

Angel shook her head. “Mr. Lincoln won’t be back tonight.”

Suddenly, I felt a bit anxious.

Did I upset him by not eating the cupcake today?

“Mr. Bart, where’s Steve? I want to see him.” I called Ewan. He must know.

Ewan remained silent for a moment before speaking up, “Mrs. Lincoln, you should rest early. Let Mr. Lincoln have some time alone today.”

“I want to see him!” I stated firmly. I wanted to see him.

There was always a voice in my mind urging me, saying, “Go see him. He’s been waiting for for so long.”

you

“Okay, I’ll head over to pick you up from the Lincoln residence,” Ewan responded.

After waiting at the door for 20 minutes, Ewan finally showed

Now, I finally understood what it felt like to wait for someone.

1. up.

While waiting, people's emotions would be greatly amplified. And they would feel anxious, panicked, and fearful.

I couldn't stop thinking about the first time I ran into Steve back when we were just kids.

Our connection wasn't so simple. Otherwise, Simeon wouldn't be so insanely jealous of

1. me.

"Hey Ewan, where'd Steve go?" I couldn't wait to find out as soon as I got into the car.

"Mr. Lincoln has his own secret spot. He managed to buy a house with the money he'd been accumulating since he joined the advanced classes scholarships, cash prizes, bonuses from Mr. Andy, and his own earnings.

"He says the Lincoln residence isn't where he belongs and wants to have his own place, It's a promise he made to his sweetheart," Ewan explained. "Did he go there to avoid me?" I felt a bit nervous.

"No..." Ewan hesitated, taking a moment before he continued, "Mr. Lincoln not only has a tendency to self-harm, but also a tendency toward suicide.

"After Ms. Carlson passed away, he attempted suicide multiple times. Later... when you showed up, we all thought you were his chance at improvement, his salvation."

My heart felt like it was being stabbed, and hard at that.

"He mentioned that if he could start anew, he wanted to return to where they first met.

"He's scared that if he hurts himself again, it'll freak you out. So, he's hiding in a spot he thinks is safe."

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Ewan drove to a villa in the city center.

The houses there were really pricey.

Dad mentioned before that it was a fancy neighborhood built by the Lincoln Group. It was a place we couldn't afford even if we worked hard for an extra 20 years.

Even though Steven had been making money from prizes, scholarships, and his jobs since he joined the advanced classes at 14, he still couldn't afford a house here.

And ever since Mr. Andy passed away, the Lincolns didn't seem like they would give

Steven any money.

And even though Steven had recently taken over the Lincoln Group, he didn't have much real power yet and was still being suppressed. He was simply stuck in a passive state.

“How... did he afford to buy a house here?” I asked Ewan in disbelief.

Ewan remained silent for a while, seemingly avoiding my question.

Then, he said, “Mr. Lincoln is just awesome. He’s a genius.”

The car soon came to a stop at a villa in the middle of the lake.

I was stunned by the surroundings.

This place was definitely the priciest spot in Huma.

This house of Steven’s... He couldn’t have bought it himself, right?

As I stepped into the yard, I was stunned.

The yard was filled with my favorite tulips, and the walls were covered in blooming roses.

“Stephie, we’ll have our own place.

“Stephie... I’ll keep you safe. I won’t let anyone hurt you again.”

Suddenly, a wave of dizziness washed over me.

That familiar headache returned, and my memories slowly resurfaced.

Every memory I recalled was related to Steven.

“Steve...” I went into the house and dashed into the living room looking for Steven.

this bedroom was locked, the curtains pulled shut tight, and not a glimmer of light was slipping through.

“Steve! Open the door!” I was getting anxious, afraid that Steven would keep hurting himself.

“Mr. Lincoln isn’t doing too good. I’ll send someone to knock on the door,” Ewan said, sounding a bit worried.

“Hey, Steve, I gotta talk to you,” I whispered. I was really scared now.

“Whether you’re Stephanie or not—save him,” Ewan bowed his head and said in a low

tone.

Ewan’s plea was in the word “save“.

It felt like Steven’s time was running out.

“Steve...” I banged on the door.

“Don’t come in and don’t look at me,” Steven said urgently. He didn’t want me to

witness his distress.

This time, I didn't avoid it. I admitted that I was Stephanie.

“Steve, I remember... the first time we met at the orphanage.”

All of a sudden, the room went quiet.

Then, the door swung open.

Steven stared at me in a panic. His hands were stained with blood, and he trembled as he held my face.

“Stephie... You remember everything?”

What was he so scared of? Was he hoping I'd remember everything, or was he dreading it?

I said, “Steve... I only recall us meeting at the orphanage when we were kids.

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“During the year of our college entrance exam, it felt like I'd asked you to wait for me. What's our relationship, really?” I asked Steven as tears started to well up in my eyes.

Steven's eyes reddened. “You remember me now...” Even though it was only of our past encounter.

“Nothing else matters as long as you remember me.” Steven suddenly hugged me tight, his fingers still dripping blood.

I caught a whiff of the blood emanating from him and suddenly felt a wave of unease.

“Stephie... The bad guys are almost dead,” Steven whispered.

I tightened my grip on Steven's clothes. “Steve, please tell me you didn't do anything wrong... Tell me, you've got nothing to do with the serial murders. You didn't kill

Steven shook his head. “I swear, I'll never leave your side.”

I held Steven's hand and led him back to his room to tend to his wounds.
anyone.

By then, he'd reverted back to that obedient demeanor of his and quietly sat in front of
1. me.

“Can't you last a minute without me?” I chided softly.

“Stephie... Don't go out of my sight,” he pleaded softly. This was a form of moral manipulation.

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Feeling resigned, I simply nodded and pretended to go along with him. "Okay."

"Stephie... I'm not mad at you," Steven suddenly said.

"You forgot about me, but I'm not blaming you," he spoke again.

For some reason, tears welled up in my eyes.

I couldn't hold them back, and I didn't even know why I was crying.

"Stephie... Please don't cry." Steven awkwardly wiped away my tears and pulled me into

his embrace. "Stephie, it's all in the past now. Can you give me another chance?"

"Steven, I'll get to know you again," I whispered.

"Alright," he said, sounding pleased.

It seemed like things were finally getting better. Everything was going to be alright.

"I went to see Carol today. Although she's not as smart as the others, she seems to be involved in some shady business," I whispered.

I wasn't sure if Steven was aware of this or if he would lend a hand. But she was Simeon's sister, after all.

Steven paused for a moment, a flicker of panic crossing his eyes. "You went to see her?"

I nodded.

"Don't trust a word she says. Stay away from her." Steven looked nervous as he held my face. "Stephie, from now on, don't trust anyone but me."

I saw Steven starting to panic, so I quickly nodded. "Okay, I trust you."

Steven finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Just then, my phone rang.

I glanced at it and saw that it was Yasmin calling.

Well, that sure was something.

"Stephany, I'm getting discharged from the hospital," she said.

"Are you crazy? Why are you calling me? You should call Michael if you're getting

discharged," I retorted, I wasn't in the best mood.

"I know you're with Michael."

Now, wasn't she good at figuring things out?

“He’s in the shower. Want me to call him over?” I teased,

Provoked, Yasmin took a deep breath. “Tonight, I’ll be working with the cops to lure out the murderer. Don’t you want to see who the murderer is?”

“Don’t worry, I won’t miss it.” I snorted. “Make sure you don’t die too easily.”

“Stephany, you imitated Stephanie well, but there are some secrets about her that you

don’t know.

“Come see me tonight, and we’ll wait for the murderer together. I’ll spill a secret about Stephanie. Those who know about it have almost ended up dead at the hands of the murderer.”

Yasmin’s words sounded intriguing, as if she was holding onto some incredible secret.

Huh? But what secret could there possibly be that I’m not aware of?

“And even if you’re Stephanie, there are secrets you’re not aware of. Stephanie had amnesia and forgot a lot of things,” Yasmin added.

I frowned and recalled the first time I crossed paths with Yasmin. She’d looked at me nervously and whispered, “Stephanie? Do you... remember me?”

She was probing me.

But back then, I genuinely didn’t remember her.

Considering how Yasmin was also raised in the orphanage, there must have been some connection or encounter between us previously too.

“If you care so much about Stephanie, don’t you wanna know why Michael was so harsh on her? Don’t you wanna know... what I did to make Michael hate Stephanie so much?

“If it was just me accusing Stephanie of pushing me down the stairs, Michael wouldn’t

have hated her so much.”

So, Yasmin knew a lot of secrets Stephanie wasn’t aware of.

I remained silent for quite some time.

I stood by the window and observed Steven.

He was patiently sitting on the bed waiting for me.

He was such a good boy. It felt like he hung on to every word I said.

“I also know about the connection between Stephanie and that lunatic, Steven, and their involvement in the recent serial murder case!

“If you want to know the truth, come see me!” Yasmin’s voice trembled, her will to survive evident.

I knew she was afraid of dying.

She was convinced that Steven was the murderer, so she brought me along. She thought that her chances of survival would be greater with me by her side.

After all, Steven would hesitate to hurt me and the baby I was carrying.

I knew Yasmin intended to use me as a hostage when the situation got tough.

Not a word she said could be trusted.

Then, she added, “I’ve always known about the secret underground room in the orphanage. And I know of all the hidden dark secrets of the orphanage too. Don’t you want to know?”

She really got me with that one.

These were the things she wouldn’t spill to the cops, no matter how hard they pressed her.

But today, out of fear, she might just spill it all to me.

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“Stephie...” I’d barely hung up the phone when Steven started his act.

“Ow, it hurts.” Steven raised his hand to show me the wound on his wrist.

I suspected that he’d caught wind of my chat with Yasmin and was now scheming to stop me from leaving.

“Didn’t the doctor take care of it?” I held Steven’s wrist and glanced at it. “Why would hurt yourself when you know it’s painful?”

With a hint of sadness in his eyes, Steven whispered, “Stephie, how about we move out and live somewhere else?”

He didn’t want me to stay at the Lincoln residence any longer and preferred to leave Ignatius there to fend for himself.

“We’ve got a place.” He gazed at me with determination, wanting to convey to me that

this was our home.

I took a moment to gather my thoughts and glanced around.

Not only were the flowers in the yard ones I loved, but even the room decorations were tailored to my preferences.

It appeared that he had truly been making continuous efforts all this while to create a

home with me.

“Steve... This villa is expensive. Did you buy it or rent it?” I asked suspiciously.

Steven’s eyes shifted slightly. “I rented it...”

I nodded in agreement. “If you don’t want to go back to the Lincoln residence, we’ll stay here.”

Steven was the heir of the Lincoln family. Of course, he could easily afford the rent with the monthly trust payment.

Finally happy, Steven didn’t seem to be feeling any pain from his wound anymore.

“Your foot and calf injuries haven’t fully healed yet. If you keep hurting yourself, I’ll leave you.” I tried to make him heed my warning by threatening to leave.

Sure enough, Steven was terrified.

He nervously glanced at me and the leave...”

“Then stop hurting yourself.”

puned

Steven remained silent and simply held me tight, unwilling to loosen his grip.

“I’m going out tonight. Just stay home and get some rest. I’ll come straight here to be with you when I get back,” I whispered, trying to reassure him.

I hadn’t yet remembered much about my time with Steven, but the memories of our childhood meeting felt like they were deeply affecting me.

If Steven and the orphanage were really that significant to me, why did I specifically forget about them?

Yasmin was also from the orphanage.

And in my memories, the girl who admired my dress must have been the late Mandy.

Yasmin, on the other hand, was the girl who always followed Mandy. She’d looked weak, but she’d coldly watch and even find joy in others’ misfortune.

Ever since she was a child, Yasmin always had a mean streak in her.

On our way back, I questioned Howard about the time when Stephanie was bullied by some boys for wearing a red dress.

Based on my recollection, Howard wasn’t part of the event and didn’t initiate the tearing of my clothes.

Howard responded, “Back then, Stephanie’s father was in talks with Mr. Hanks about funding the orphanage while his own daughter was getting bullied there.

“Later, Mr. Hanks punished Steven and those who bullied Stephanie, but Yasmin was the only one who wasn’t implicated.”

This indicated that Yasmin had always been a clever person who was skilled at stirring up

trouble from a young age.

“Stephie! I’m in so much pain.” Steven suddenly gripped my hand tighter.
“Stephie, don’t leave. Stay with me, please?”

I looked at Steven suspiciously.

Did he overhear my phone call, or did he have a sense of what might happen later?

“Steve, I have to go out.” I wanted to uncover the truth and reclaim my memories. I couldn’t just reacquaint myself with Steven again so naively.

It wouldn’t be fair to Steven, nor to myself.

“Stephie, I’m thirsty.” Steven changed the topic.

So, I could only go and get him some water.

But as soon as I stepped away, Steven’s gaze dropped to my phone screen.

It was showing Michael’s name on the caller ID.

Without hesitation, Steven blocked the call.

Steven’s villa was massive, yet there wasn’t a nanny in sight.

Steven wasn’t fond of having people around, so there was only an old butler named Leo Hart who helped him with the yard work outside.

After fetching him some warm water, I brought it into the room.

That’s when I noticed Steven was having a fever.

He was curled up in bed and couldn’t be bothered to cover himself with a blanket.

I was worried.

How did he survive all these years with such poor self-care skills?

“Stephie...” I wanted to get him a thermometer, but Steven grabbed my wrist and pulled me onto the bed, holding me tight in his arms.

Even though he was sick, he was still very strong.

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It was truly an endless show of his strength.

“I’m scared,” Steven murmured and groaned as he held me tightly in his arms.

This time, he remembered to cover us both with the blanket and even tightly wrapped me up with his long legs, as if he feared I might slip away.

“What’s scaring you so much?” I asked, puzzled.

“I’m afraid of sleeping alone...” He feared that when he woke up, his dreams would fall

apart.

“Stephie, guess which one’s the real deal—dreams or reality?” Steven whispered to me.

“Who knows?” I replied, feeling just as lost.

“Do you ever wonder why when we recall the past, it feels like we’re seeing things from God’s point of view?” Steven asked in a hushed tone.

His question caught me off guard.

Recalling childhood memories did feel as though we were seeing them from God’s point of view.

“Could it be that when we revisit those moments in time, we’re not the same people anymore...” Steven’s voice was low as he tightened his grip on my hand.

I thought about what he said for a while, but I just couldn’t understand it.

Perhaps this was just how a crazy person or a genius thinks—something beyond my understanding as an ordinary person.

“Want some water?” I whispered.

But as I turned to look at him, Steven had already fallen asleep.

It seemed like he could always quickly drift off to sleep whenever he was with me.

His long eyelashes and flawless skin made him look exceptionally handsome.

Actually, it was kind of annoying.

Even though Steven had wandered around and wore clothes that didn’t fit right, his skin still looked amazing. In fact, it looked much better than that of the people who splurged on skincare products every year.

The room had a fresh scent that was reminiscent of sandalwood, the aroma of which could induce drowsiness.

I couldn’t recall how I drifted off to sleep, but with Steven holding me like that, I fell asleep very quickly.

When I woke up, it was already 10 pm.

The sky had turned pitch black, and Steven wasn’t in the room.

My heart sank as I reached for my phone.

Surprisingly, Yasmin hadn’t called me.

However, when I checked my phone, I realized it was on “Do Not Disturb” mode.

It was Steven.

“Where’s Steve?”

The vast villa was quiet and dimly lit. There was also no nanny, and it was just Leo that was still out in the yard weeding.

“Excuse me, where’s Steven?” I anxiously asked.

Leo appeared elderly and possibly had some difficulty hearing because he merely glanced at me before continuing with his weeding.

It was already 10 pm, yet he was still busy weeding away.

Just then, a big dog came out of the bushes and lay down obediently next to my feet.

Its wolf-like ears stood tall, and it had a pair of cute and big eyes that gave it a pitiful look. It didn’t seem fierce at all.

Suddenly, Steven came to my mind for some reason.

“Mr. Hart, where’s Steven?” I asked again.

Leo put down the hoe and gestured to show that he didn’t know.

I couldn’t get what the hand signals meant, so I had to give Ewan a call.

Yasmin had agreed to help the cops lure out the murderer on this night, so I hoped Steven wouldn’t show up there.

Tavan Wildn’t pick up when I called, so I had no choice but to dial Zion’s number.

However, Zion didn’t answer either.

He was probably watching over Yasmin right now. After all, they had to make sure she stayed safe.

Since Yasmin hadn’t died the last time, the murderer hadn’t made any further moves. So, clearly, the murderer was the most desperate and eager for Yasmin’s death more than anyone else.

“Stephanie, why aren’t you here?” I called Yasmin, and she sounded scared on the line. “Stephanie, where are you? He’s after me... Help, please, I don’t want to die!”

I glanced at my phone and suddenly burst out laughing.

What was Yasmin up to?

Was she experiencing the same hopelessness I felt before I died?

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“The cops should be keeping in touch with you, right? If you’re under their watch, nothing bad can happen to you,” I said firmly.

“We... got lost,” Yasmin said nervously, glancing around as if she were really scared. “Stephanie, that lunatic, Steven, only listens to you. If you come to rescue me, I’ll spill everything. Save me, please,”

Who knew that there'd be a day when Yasmin would actually beg me to save her?

"Do you know... how desperate Stephanie was before she died? She'd called Michael, but Michael told her to die.

"What were you guys doing when she called?" I sneered. "Yasmin, this is your karma." Yasmin's voice trembled. "Stephany! You're not Stephanie, why are you acting like her? No matter how you act, you're not Stephanie! Save me...

"Why should I save you? Didn't you tell the cops that the murderer and I were in cahoots? Didn't you say that I'd intentionally made you give me Stephanie's information to imitate her?

"Didn't you say that I was an accomplice in Stephanie's murder?" I chuckled as I spoke again, "Since I'm an accomplice, why would you come to me for help?"

The moment Yasmin asked me to save her, I felt a sudden sense of relief in heart.

my tense

After all, Yasmin wasn't stupid. If she had proof that I was an accomplice in the murder, she wouldn't have come asking me for help.

In fact, I should even be hoping for her death instead.

"Stephany!" Yasmin's voice trembled, growing more frantic. "I know I was wrong. I shouldn't have lied to the cops.

"Someone told me that you've been pretending to be Stephanie just to seduce Michael and that lunatic, Steven."

I had no idea how terrified Yasmin was at that moment.

It took her a while before she spoke again, "Stephanie, please save me... I'm begging you. That lunatic, Steven, won't spare me. He's just a psycho. Once he realizes that you're not

Stephanie, he'll mercilessly kill you too.

"He's here... He's here... Stephany, come save me." Yasmin started to panic.

My chest tightened.

Did she spot Steven?

Now, I was getting a bit scared too. After all, I'd woken up and didn't see Steven.

Just where did he go?

“Shouldn’t you tell me your location when you ask for help? You’re an important hostage, so the cops can’t have lost you. You yourself know what you’ve done,” I said.

I knew Zion was a responsible cop. He wouldn’t let a hostage slip away from his sight.

So, there was only one possibility—either Yasmin arrogantly thought she could escape the murderer by intentionally leaving the cops’ sight. Or... she knew the cops were following her, and she couldn’t lure out the murderer. So, she took a risk.

Some people claimed that the kids from the Double Stars Welfare Home were all bright children. They had two absolute geniuses, and the rest of the children were better than the average child too.

Yasmin was really good in school. She and Michael were classmates, and she was a year ahead of me. She’d also graduated as the top student in her class and placed fourth in her year.

Hence, Yasmin’s foster parents treated her pretty well. They thought that she could make them proud.

Yasmin herself knew she had to work harder to earn more recognition. So, when she became Michael’s first love, I didn’t see her as just a pretty face climbing up the ladder.

And it was also because of how smart Yasmin was that I’d ended up dying.

This was why despite her fear right now, she called me instead of the cops. She knew that if Steven was truly the murderer, I was her only chance at surviving, and the cops couldn’t keep her safe for long.

She was taking a risk.

I believed she had other options besides me, so I wasn’t worried she’d die.

I was more concerned about Steven. I was worried that he was really the one who was going to kill her.

This was the trap Yasmin set for the “murderer“.

My heart skipped a beat, and I began to feel lost.

What was I thinking?

If Steven truly was the killer, I should’ve hated him from the depths of my soul and wished for his swift demise.

Why... was I actually worried about him?

“Stephany, you’re the only one who can stop him now,” Yasmin’s voice trembled as she spoke.

I could hear the sound of metal scraping against the ground through the phone. It sounded like someone dragging an ax or some other tool.

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“I’m at the orphanage,” Yasmin said.

She must have had a death wish going there.

“I bet Michael is lurking around too, right? You love him so much, he’s sure to keep you safe.

“Calling me over, you’re quite the double–checker, huh? You weren’t satisfied with just killing Stephanie, and now you want to kill me too? I’m not as naive as Stephanie,” I said. But I still felt a bit guilty as I spoke.

“You’ll come because you want to uncover Stephanie’s secret,” Yasmin confidently said.

I figured that Michael and Yasmin must have talked it over. They probably planned for me to see first hand that Steven was a murderer.

Michael repeatedly claimed that he’d reveal Steven’s true identity, and both he and Yasmin were convinced that Steven was the culprit.

That’s why Yasmin insisted for me to go.

“He’s here,” Yasmin’s voice trembled even more violently. “Come over right now, and you’ll get to see Steven.”

With that, she ended the call.

If I’d called the cops first in my past life, I wouldn’t have met my tragic end.

But now,

in my second chance at life, even though everyone seemed unreliable, the cops were definitely more trustworthy than Michael and the others.

“Zion, Yasmin went to the orphanage,” I said when Zion finally answered the phone.” She said the murderer targeted her and she’s already there.”

Zion cursed over the phone. He sounded frantic, and everyone seemed to be panicking.

“That woman’s insane! She agreed to meet at Sunset Alley, but then she put the tracking device on the dog and slipped away into the night herself. So, we’ve just been chasing the dog in circles!”

Zion was still running in a hurry, probably leading the team to the orphanage.

“I’m heading there too.”

After hanging up the phone, I made up my mind to head to the orphanage,

Honestly, I was scared that it was really Steven who wanted to kill Yasmin.

As I ran out of the house, the big dog from the yard dashed out too. It wagged its tail as it approaches the person coming in.

There, Steven stood under the streetlight holding a plate of steaming hot fried mushrooms from my favorite chain restaurant.

There was always a long queue there.

Did he go out to buy the fried mushrooms?

For some reason, my heart settled down.

The streetlight cast a shadow over Steven, and it made for a striking image of a person that was between an angel and a demon.

I dashed over, feeling tense. "Steve, you didn't head to the orphanage?"

"You knew I was supposed to go to the orphanage?" Steven asked, looking puzzled.

I was stunned.

"Michael called to mess with me," Steven said, looking upset. "And Yasmin, she said a bunch of crap about you to mess with me.

"She lied, saying that I should find her at the orphanage. But I didn't fall for it and went to get fried mushrooms for you instead."

Steven looked like a well-behaved kid, eager for praise.

My expression darkened when I realized that it was indeed all Michael and Yasmin's scheme.

They wanted to lure Steven there and provoke him. They wanted him to lose control so that the cops would think he was the murderer.

Chapter 199

"Jerk," I muttered.

Michael had really crossed the line.

After all the things he did to me before, now he was targeting Steven too.

I fumed with anger. I wanted to go to the orphanage to unmask Michael's hypocrisy.

However, Steven grabbed me and looked at me with pleading eyes. "Stephie, the fried mushrooms are getting soggy."

After waiting in line for so long to get them, Steven would go crazy if I didn't eat them soon.

I could understand why people often used their wiles to get their way. It was indeed an effective strategy.

As Steven stood under the streetlight, he looked at me with pitiful and pleading eyes.

Could anyone resist? Absolutely not.

So, I took the fried mushrooms and had a couple of bites.

They were crispy and freshly fried.

It was evident that Steven couldn't have been to the orphanage, and these mushrooms were his alibi.

“Stephie, does it taste good?” Steven suddenly leaned in close.

Bathed in the warm glow of the streetlight, my heart skipped a beat. “You... haven't eaten?”

Then, Steven suddenly kissed me and said sincerely, “Tasty.”

My heart was racing.

Whenever Steven flirted, he didn't seem crazy at all. In fact, I often wondered if he was just pretending to be foolish. But I had no proof.

I coughed awkwardly before looking down to continue eating the fried mushrooms.

Then, Steven reached out his hand to me and led me home. “Stephie, I think I'm sick, still running a fever. Can you stay with me?”

He just wouldn't let me leave.

Meanwhile, the big dog was wagging its tail behind us, hoping for a taste of the fried mushrooms in my hand.

I gave it a piece and whispered, “Steve, is this your dog?”

“Yeah... It was just a little pup abandoned by the roadside when I found it. I rescued it and named it Buddy. It's been by my side ever since,” Steven introduced Buddy to me as he patted Buddy's head.

“Sometimes... dogs are more loyal than people,” he added.

I gave Buddy another piece of fried mushroom, “Buddy's really gentle.”

Steven looked at me in surprise before smiling. “Dogs have a way of understanding humans. They see through the things we can't see and choose their master,”

I didn't think too much about Steven's words.

Whenever Buddy was around me, it was gentle and obedient and would keep wagging its tail. But I always thought that perhaps it was just a docile, non-aggressive dog,

“Stephie... My hand really hurts, and I can't get it wet.” Steven suddenly brought up his dilemma when we were about to sleep.

He stretched out both of his bandaged hands and looked at me with a pair of pitiful eyes,

It was obvious that Steven couldn't take a bath himself and wanted me to do it for him.

But was he genuinely clueless, or was he simply playing a deeper game?

My ears turned red, and I murmured, “No need to wash up, let’s just sleep...”

“Nope. Got to keep clean,” Steven seriously countered.

I smirked.

Was he seriously talking about hygiene after having been a wandering hobo for a while now?

But regardless, I wouldn’t call him out on this. After all, people have their dignity.

“Stephie, it’s legal,” Steven suddenly reminded me.

I looked up at him.

Then, I saw that he had already stripped off his shirt to reveal his... well-defined physique.

I couldn’t be blamed for thinking like this. He simply wanted to seduce me with his seductive physique.

Steven preferred loose-fitting clothes, and it made him appear tall and slender. But once he took them off, his attractive physique was on full display,

“Stephie, look at me. All legal,” he said, now particularly mindful of the law.

I just hoped that he would strictly adhere to the laws and regulations regarding murder.

I hoped that he had nothing to do with the serial murder case.

“Stephie, my body’s dirty. Can you help me wash up?” Steven asked, reaching for his

pants.

I quickly grabbed him. “Don’t take off your pants.”

“How can I wash without taking them off?” Steven seriously looked at me.

I took a deep breath.

“Then wash with your pants on,” I said.

“No.” He lowered his head, looking unwilling.

I chuckled at his antics. “Alright, wait here. I’ll go fill the bathtub.”

Steven nodded obediently, but his expression darkened as soon as I looked away.

Chapter 200

When I came out to call Steven in for a bath, I thought I caught him messing with my phone.

“Stephie, my hands hurt.”

Just as I was about to grab my phone, he mentioned that his hand was hurting,

Indeed, the white bandage was now soaked in blood.

I rushed to find the first aid kit and changed his bandage. Then, I convinced him to take a bath and blow-dried his hair after.

Steven was obedient and quietly let me help him.

Then, he grinned and wrapped me in his embrace. "Stephie, time for bed," he said.

However, I couldn't shake the feeling that he had some kind of scheme going on.

But I was also completely worn out. And as I lay in Steven's arms, drowsiness washed over me.

Steven's room always carried a faint scent of sandalwood, and it was a scent that was very comforting and conducive for sleeping peacefully,

Soon, I fell asleep.

Since Yasmin and Michael were up to something sketchy anyway, I figured that I didn't need to go.

Besides, I'd also already called the cops, and Zion going would be more helpful than if I were to go.

And if Michael and Yasmin had just planned an elaborate ploy, Zion would be giving them a piece of his mind.

But if they hadn't planned anything, well, I hoped Zion could catch the murderer:

That night, I had a dream.

Michael was standing before me covered in blood.

He smiled wickedly as he said, "Stephie, I'm here for you."

I stepped back in disgust, but he kept moving closer.

He said, "Stephie... I'm sorry. How about we all be together—you, me, and the child?"

I yelled at him, "No, stay away! You're messing with my reincarnation."

Michael then looked at me with reddened eyes. "Stephie, I'm sorry. I don't know how to love other people, I just want you to love me."

I yelled at him, "Get lost!"

Perhaps due to my intense struggle, it seemed like I kicked something.

Then, I jolted awake and breathed heavily as sweat beaded on my forehead.

Sunlight streamed in through the window, and as I slowly turned around, I saw Steven sitting on the floor.

His furry head was peeking out, and his eyes looked innocent as he stared at me.

“What...” What did I do to him?

“Stephie... You kicked me,” Steven said plaintively. Then, he climbed back onto the bed and grabbed my hand. “Rub it. It hurts.”

Steven was wearing only boxers. Yet, he placed my hand on his groin.

My face flushed.

Who was he trying to seduce so early in the morning?

“It’s swollen,” he said and looked at me pitifully, implying I was the cause of it.

Sometimes, I really felt like calling the cops.

Was he just acting dumb to be sneaky, or was he actually this foolish?

“You...” I warned and pointed at him, refusing to be fooled by his

Suddenly, Steven bit my finger.

I was speechless, but I ignored him.

Then, I reached out for my phone, wanting to check it.

games.

“Stephie, I’m hungry,” Steven said before pinning me down and planting a kiss on me.

I thought he might be intentionally delaying me from checking my phone, but I couldn’t prove it.

He always got upset at the slightest thing. What could I do?

“Stephie...” Steven also always liked to call my name when he was emotional.

The sun shone through the curtains and warmed the room.

It made everything feel like a dream, yet the burning sensation in my cheeks and the tingling nerves were all too real.

Perhaps... I was truly losing my mind.

Just then, my phone kept buzzing.

I reached out to grab it, puzzled.

Steven wanted to hug me, but I pushed him away in annoyance.

When did I put my phone on silent mode?

It was an unknown number calling.

“Stephie, where are you? It’s Rachel. Why aren’t you picking up my and Zion’s calls? Something bad happened to Michael!”

