

## After Death 321

Chapter 321

“She’s not leaving with you...”

Wearing the hospital gown, Steven stood by the door and spoke in a hoarse voice. His chest heaved, and he stared intently at me. It was as if he was begging me not to leave with Michael.

Michael gazed warningly at Steven.

“Steven Lincoln, I’ll see how long you can keep up with this act!”

I pushed Michael away, then said firmly, “Mr. Ford, my well-being has nothing to do with you. It never did, and it will not now.

re won’t be

“I’m not Stephanie Carlson, and you don’t have to project your guilt onto me. I hope there anything between us in the future.”

My firm attitude had seemingly hurt Michael.

He looked at me with a conflicted gaze, then smiled bitterly.

“Is this how it feels to be not trusted? Stephie, you’re getting back at me, aren’t you?” Michael wondered if

I was doing this to make him experience everything that Stephanie had experienced before.

“You’re overthinking.” I frowned. Michael was being annoying.

Perhaps, it was only natural that humans would develop biases.

In the past, Michael refused to trust me regardless of what I had done. Now, no matter what Michael said

I would not trust him.

“Stephie...” Michael looked anxious. “When will you finally see his true colors? He’s a devil. He’s been pretending. What must I say for you to believe me?”

Michael gazed at me as if he would do anything if he could prove his sincerity.

“Do you think he’s been homeless all these years? Why would Ewan help him, and why did the Lincolns end up like this? If he was mentally disabled or homeless, the Lincolns wouldn’t be what they are today. He’s behind the deaths of James Lincoln and Ignatius Lincoln...”

Michael pointed at Steven, trying his best to make me believe that everything about Steven was a lie.

I looked at Steven, who seemed to panic a little as he lowered his head.

“Michael, I said you should mind your own business,” I warned Michael so that he’d stop staring at Steven.

ever

“Why do you trust him so much? Have you thought of why you’ve forgotten all about him? Have you never questioned that?”

“Haven’t you questioned why you escaped and why you would fall in love with me... if you really loved him?”

Michael’s voice was hoarse. He held my shoulders and tried to make me believe in him.

\*Stephie... You shouldn’t think that I’m lying just because I’ve hurt you before. I was just feeling confused.

about my feelings.

“I never wanted to hurt you or to take advantage of you. I’ve always been... just running away. I was worried that you only fell in love with me because you had amnesia. I was afraid that you would find your

memories...”

Michael claimed that his past avoidance was a sign of respect for me.

“Stephie, I won’t harm you,” he explained.

I stood at the same place and stared at Michael.

I didn’t trust him, but I knew him very well.

He wasn’t lying, but that did not mean what he said was the truth.

It was as if even though one plus one equaled two, he believed strongly that it equaled three.

He wasn’t lying, but his answer was not the truth.

I glanced at Steven, who looked at me in a panic. Because he had run over anxiously, he stood there barefoot, looking like an abandoned doll.

He was afraid that I would abandon him.

But Martin was right about one thing—why did I completely forget about Steven?

Forgetting equaled abandonment.

Why did the past me choose to abandon Steven?

With reddened eyes, Steven shook his head at me.

He would not threaten me like how Martin did. He would support my decision, even if it made him sad and heartbroken.

“If I leave, will you stop me?” I asked Steven.

Steven lowered his head and tightened his fists. After some time, he shook his head.

He wouldn’t.

He would respect my decision.

How would somebody like this confine me, just as Michael had said?

I refused to believe that.

“You won’t stop me no matter what I do, right?” I asked softly.

Chapter 322

Steven looked at me, then shook his head again.

“Don’t die...”

He wouldn’t stop me from doing anything unless I wanted to die.

“If I leave, will you be sad?” I asked.

He was silent, but he looked heartbroken.

“If you’re sad, you should tell me to stay.”

Choked up, I opened my arms toward Steven.

I wondered why he was always so unconfident. If he had asked, I would’ve stayed.

Steven looked at me and said nothing. Instead, he hugged me tight, then gazed icily at Michael.

Michael’s expression was grim.

“Steven Lincoln, how long can you keep this act up?”

At this point, Michael finally understood why Stephanie hated Yasmin.

Because no matter what Stephanie had done, Michael always chose to believe in Yasmin first.

Not that the roles were reversed, he couldn’t accept it.

“In the past... Stephe had also begged for your trust.” Steven warned Michael.

“But you chose to believe in Yasmin and left Stephe with no way out, didn’t you?”

Steven pushed my head into his embrace, refusing to let me look at Michael.

His voice was hoarse, deep, and intimidating.

“You’re right... I’m not mentally disabled. I put up a disguise to survive. If I weren’t mentally disabled, I wouldn’t have lived past 20 years old.

“This is my life. It’s not up to somebody like you to criticize...”

Michael frowned. It was evident that he was intimidated by Steven.

Zion, Eason, and Rachel also stared at Steven in shock.

They were surprised to find that he had been pretending.

“Starting from now, I’ll protect her in my own way. She’s mine, and I won’t give her away.”

Steven continued to tighten his grip around me. He was exerting his dominance.

“You?” Michael sneered. “If Martin were an easy opponent, you wouldn’t have had to act dumb for years. Do you think you’re all–powerful now?”

“Even the baby was a part of your scheme against Martin. Since the very beginning, you never intended for Stephany Carlson to bear a child. This was all part of your plan.”

Michael took out his phone. “In the Lincoln family feud, Martin caused you to lose your baby. Now, the public opinion is favoring you. How can we believe that you aren’t behind all this?”

“You arranged for the journalists! It’s so that Martin can no longer attack you under all that spotlight!”

Steven was silent, and he didn’t explain himself.

I looked up at him.

Unsurprisingly, he was not mentally disabled..

I wondered if everything that Michael had said was true. Was everything a part of his plan? Including me and the baby?

I wondered if he had really schemed for a long time to gain power over the Lincoln family.

My eyes started to tear up. I took a step back out of reflex.

I felt lost. I felt lost about death, I felt lost about being reborn, and at this moment, I felt lost about who I

could trust.

Because I had lost too many memories, I struggled to even trust myself.

“I knew he wasn’t mentally disabled. That’s cool!” Rachel had a different perspective from the rest of us; she got excited.

“Does that mean you can protect Stephie..

But as Rachel noticed the awkward atmosphere between Steven and me, her voice began to soften.

Zion tugged Rachel and signaled her to stop talking.

Michael sighed in relief when he saw that I was suspicious of Steven.

“I said I would never lie to you. I’ll allow you to do anything on the condition that you’re safe. When you realize that things aren’t right... You can come home. I’ll always be waiting for you.”

Michael walked to me and said, “Take the time to read your parents’ diary.”

When Steven heard about the diary, he looked up in fear, as if he was afraid of something.

“Stephie...” Steven looked at me nervously. “Don’t read it. Don’t believe in it.”

Michael gazed icily at Steven. “Why? Are you scared?”

## Chapter 323

Steven shook his head, trembling.

“Don’t read it...”

He didn’t want me to read it as if there was something that he didn’t want me to recall.

“Leave,” I said to Michael. I didn’t want to see him now.

Michael lowered his gaze and said softly, “When you’re done reading it, you’ll understand... I’ll wait for you,

Stephie.”

He shot a warning glare at Steven before leaving.

It was as if Michael had come just to expose the fact that Steven was not mentally disabled.

Everything that happened to the Lincolns was a part of Steven’s plans.

“Did you plan everything ?” I asked grimly. “Did you scheme against the Lincolns? Including me and the baby?”

Public opinion on the internet had suddenly begun to favor Steven one-sidedly. That was a hard blow to

Martin.

Furthermore, Dax was a criminal suspect, which inevitably got Martin involved and exposed him to criticism.

If Steven returned to take over the Lincoln Group, there was a high chance that he could take full authority over the company.

After all, nobody would assume him as somebody who schemed against his wife and baby.

“He thinks you’re Stephanie Carlson. Why would he scheme against your baby? He’s been dreaming of becoming a father since he was 19 years old...” Eason mumbled as he put an ice pack against his cheek.

“Yes....” Steven admitted.

I began to tear up. I wished he would try to explain himself.

“I was pretending to be mentally disabled. Everything was part of my plan.

“The state that the Lincolns are in today—Martin and Ignatius’ feud, Dax’s attack on James, Martin hiring

men to kill Ignatius...

“I admit that my plans contributed to all of that... I also arranged for the journalists,” Steven said softly, at a loss and in a panic.

Rachel was in shock and covered Zion's ears in reflex. "Can you even listen to this when you're a police

officer? Don't listen."

Zion was baffled. "But I'm a traffic police..."

Rachel sighed in relief.

"Oh, fine then. There's no evidence anyway. It's like a butterfly effect. The Lincolns deserve it."

Zion raised his chin and pointed at the police officer in the ward.

Rachel glared at Eason. "You're deaf, right? You didn't hear anything, right?"

Eason opened his mouth, but he lowered his head when he saw Rachel's tightened fists. "You're right. The stronger fighter decides."

"I wasn't expecting you and the baby..." Tearing up, Steven continued to say woefully, "I didn't scheme. against you and the baby..

"If you were Stephany Larson.... This child would never come to exist. I really... wanted the child to be born.

Steven choked up. He was sad about losing the baby.

He just didn't know how to express or describe his emotions.

He even restrained his sexual drives to not harm the baby...

Steven really... wanted the child.

He was crying. I felt heartbroken and helpless when I saw his tears.

Zion couldn't stand to watch it. It seemed like I was bullying Steven.

"Hey, about the diary that Michael gave you, can we look at it?"

I wiped my tears away.

If Steven would explain himself... I was willing to believe in him.

"Why did you stop pretending, then?" I asked, my eyes red.

Steven simply stared at me with a heated gaze. "I'm sorry... I couldn't protect you and the baby... I'm sorry.

I want to do this in another way..."

Steven stopped caring about his own survival. He finally had a weak spot, so there was no need for him to protect himself by pretending to be mentally disabled.

Steven wanted to protect Stephanie:

“I’ll trust you this time. Don’t let me down... If I find out... that you were lying, I won’t forgive you,” I whispered.

Just like how I would not forgive Michael.

The truth was after being reborn, I had no plans to trust anybody anymore.

But Steven... was an exception.

Chapter 324

Steven always found his way to become my exception.

He cried even harder. He didn’t say anything and continued to cry.

Eason began to feel annoyed, but he didn’t dare to say it out loud.

He softly grumbled, “So pretentious... When your wife wasn’t awake, you were like a reaper. Even the doctors were scared of you... Now, you’re crying like you’ve been wronged.”

Steven didn’t say anything. He continued to cry, but he didn’t wipe his tears. His head hung low, and his

tears stained his clothes...

one who saw him would think that they were at fault.

Anyone

His large, endearing eyes were teary... I almost apologized.

But after thinking about it, it was not my fault. It was he who had been lying to me.

“Stop crying!” I threatened.

Steven looked up at me and said in a choked-up voice, “Stephie... Don’t be so fierce.”

Rachel, Eason, and Zion all turned to look at me, silently berating me for lecturing Steven.

Poor Steven...

Unsurprisingly, things would be different if we had swapped genders.

If Steven had been a woman, he would’ve been called a bitch. Even Yasmin would have nothing against

him!

Right now, he was just crying, but he got everyone to be on his side.

I looked away and took my phone out of my pocket. After logging in with my parents’ ID, I handed the

diary to Zion.

Zion took a closer look and became confused.

“I understand parents love their children, and they would record their child’s growth from day one. But your parents... started to record from the first day of pregnancy...”

Zion scratched his head.

“That’s understandable, but why do the entries look so weird?”

I looked at Zion. Since he was a police officer, he must have seen through the abnormality of the diary,

“Do you mean that this is a fake diary account?”

Zion shook his head.

“It’s not fake, but the data is too complete. Look, starting from day one, every entry was made at a similar

hopte

time, and it’s written by the year, month, date, minute, and second...”

It was very accurate.

Eason paused for a moment, then he took a look at it.

“You’re right... This doesn’t look like they were recording a child’s growth but data from a laboratory

experiment.”

Rachel was handing me a mug, but it fell to the ground and made a crashing sound.

Breathing rapidly, I looked at Eason. At the same time, Steven covered my ears.

“Don’t listen to them and don’t read it... Stephie, you don’t have to think about it if you can’t recall... I’m

here.”

I was almost certain that Steven knew of many secrets, but he had no plans to tell me about them or even

let me know... He would rather I misunderstood him than tell me the truth.

Could I understand his behavior... as a form of protection?

“As expected of the expert... Zion came to a realization. “I knew that something was off about the diary. It does look like experiment records.”

Eason enjoyed the compliment. He proudly raised his chin.

“Well, it’s me, after all. When I conducted drug experiments with lab rats, I’d make similar records daily. I’d record the rat’s reaction today and its condition at the same time tomorrow.

“I would observe for months. Some chronic medications would require at least a year of testing.”

My fingers were numb. Out of reflex, I hid in Steven’s embrace.

What was I afraid of?

“Her parents may have just habitually recorded it that way. Stephanie’s father was a medical professor who studied abroad, and her mother was a professor at Alpha University. So, they must have such habits,”

explained Rachel.

“I’ve heard from Stephe that her father started his own business after leaving Highest Pharma. He was in the medical equipment and medical construction industry.

“Later on, he almost went bankrupt because of the delayed payment from a new construction project for Grace Hospital...”

Zion and Eason nodded.

“That’s very possible.”

Suddenly, Eason’s phone buzzed. He picked it up.

“Officer Grant, something has happened to Yasmin!”

The serial murder case had progressed again....

And Yasmin was the catalyst.

Chapter 325

Eason suddenly stood up and looked at Steven.

– still

“According to our plan, the culprit will take action when the police announce that the victim is receiving emergency medical treatment.

“But if the serial murder cases and this mutilation case were done by different people, why would something happen to Yasmin?”

Eason walked around.

“Say, the killer was going to reveal himself. But now, the killer of the serial murder cases has appeared.

Do you still think both cases were not done by the same person?”

Steven remained silent for a while before speaking.

“No... Something’s not right with the timing of Yasmin’s disappearance. Somebody did that on purpose.”

Somebody had taken advantage of Yasmin to confuse us.

“Everyone is trying to connect the mutilation cases to the serial murder cases because the perpetrators are victims too. All the cases have many similarities, but they just look like deliberate imitations.”

Zion shook his head because something still didn't feel right.

“Yasmin's disappearance may have just been a coincidence that occurred with the serial murder cases and mutilation cases.”

Rachel, too, shook her head.

“There's one key thing about the serial murders. Back in the orphanage days, the killers abandoned the bodies at locations that were related to water sources.

“Huma has an ancient tradition whereby after evil doers die, they will be tossed into the water to cleanse their sins.

“The killer of the mutilation case didn't hide or destroy the evidence but took advantage of stray dogs to destroy the bodies and the scene, leaving the police with no trace of clue,” I added my analysis.

“Even if the police did find anything, the killer was also a victim who was left with no choice. In the end, they would choose to commit suicide anyway, and the clue would end there.”

Both cases must have been executed by different people.

“The culprits behind both cases are having a silent duel,” said Eason solemnly.

The killer of the mutilation case wanted to mislead the public, shifting all the blame onto the culprit behind the serial murder cases.

The more skilled one would emerge as the winner.

“I'm leaving. Don't look for me.” Eason walked to the door, then turned around to look at Steven. “Hey...

You can calculate, right? Why don't you try to figure out where Yaamin is?”

“The murderer always leaves clues at the scene of the last crime. I calculated Yasmin's whereabouts once, and the clue disappeared. If the murderer is taking action again, that means she's just unlucky,”

Steven said.

This time, Steven had no plans to rescue Yasmin.

In truth, he could not calculate it anymore.

Since the murderer's plan had been disrupted, he might have decided to kill at random.

If Steven could calculate even random occurrences, he would be extremely dangerous to society. In fact, he should just focus on trying to win the lottery for a living.

Eason grudgingly replied, "Fine, I'll search on my own!"

Steven remained silent.

After Eason left, Steven looked at Zion. "Somebody is trying to lure the police away. Yasmin may be an accomplice or bait to lure the investigation team away.

"I'm guessing that the killer of the second mutilation case may come to the hospital to destroy the evidence."

Zion paused, then exclaimed in realization, "You're right! I'll head over now in case Phil needs an extra hand."

As Zion left, Rachel left with him.

Steven looked at me with red eyes and hung his head low.

He carefully drew closer and tugged on my sleeve.

"Stephie..."

When I looked at him, his tears began to fall and landed on the back of my hand.

I wondered if he was a crybaby.

"So.. you suspect Martin is related to the mutilation case, which was why you agreed to Eason's suggestion to be admitted into the asylum.

"Then, you helped Eason lure the murderer?"

I felt angry and frustrated as I wondered how much he had been hiding me.

"Stephie... I'm not suspicious of Martin. Martin and Dax are just good tools to take advantage of..."

Steven leaned on my shoulder as he sobbed. "I suspect Peter."

I paused.

Truth was, I could guess Steven's suspicions—because I was suspicious of Peter, too.

But after all, it was no pain, no gain.

Steven wouldn't allow me to approach Peter.

I wondered if Steven volunteered to be admitted into the asylum so that he could find clues. “Did you find anything?” I asked softly.

Chapter 326

“He’s good at brainwashing. He’s talented. He’s skilled in psychology, hypnosis, and using chemicals,”

Steven whispered.

I gasped and grabbed Steven’s wrist in fear.

“You shouldn’t have messed with him...”

He continued in my ear, “But I found his weakness. His daughter...”

I glanced at Steven. “His daughter?”

“During my time in the asylum, I observed that Peter, despite being obsessed with studying his patients, disrupted the consultation sessions three times because of a phone call.

“Every time, he’d smile. The caller ID was ‘Sweetheart, and judging from the voice, it was a little girl who should be under 13 years old. She would call him ‘Daddy,” Steven whispered, his voice gradually turning cold.

“Stephie... I’ve investigated Peter. His ex-wife gave birth to his eldest daughter two years before you were born. She was born with a serious genetic mutation and was a special child.

“After a few years, there was no news about her. Rumor has it that she died.

“Meanwhile, his youngest daughter was born after he married his current wife. She should be 13 years old

now.”

Steven stood up straight and looked down at me. “Stephie, something’s off about Peter.”

I looked up at Steven for a long time before saying, “Before I lost my memories, was there something that I came to find out? Did I tell you about it?”

Steven avoided my eyes and looked downward.

“Peter may be related to the mutilation case. I suspect he’s trying to kill the witnesses.”

He was trying to get someone else to do the dirty work.

Thus, Steven had been tracing the clues.

“When did you begin suspecting Peter?” I asked as I looked at Steven warily.

It seemed like Steven's understanding of Peter was built over time. It was as if he had planned to be admitted into the asylum as an opportunity to investigate Peter.

Meanwhile, Peter's interest in Steven seemed to also be part of the plan.

Steven lowered his head in a panic. He kept avoiding my questions.

I wondered if he was worried that I'd find out or if I would be upset.

"Steven, there are some things that I must find out. Not remembering and not knowing may not be beneficial to me. It may put me in further danger."

I believed I deserved to know the truth unless Steven did not trust me.

"After your parents died from the accident, I've been investigating... I Investigated Peter and who was related to him..." Steven finally came clean that he had targeted Peter since long ago.

everyone

Under the guise of being homeless, he had been secretly observing and investigating. He kept putting clues together in the process.

We returned to Steven's villa after leaving the hospital.

Ewan summoned the family doctor for our daily treatment and IV drips.

After everyone had left, Steven brought me to the basement.

As the motion-sensor lights came on in the basement, the microcement interiors were almost speckless.

On both sides of the three-foot-wide walkway were glass display cabinets that had been embedded into the walls. Inside, countless butterfly specimens were on display..

As I looked at the butterflies, my fingers felt numb.

The specimens... looked so alive. It was as if they would come to life at any time.

"Do you like specimens?" I asked warily.

I suddenly recalled how Eason said Steven was crazy.

When I died, my body was made into a specimen, after all.

I felt a fear that came from deep within.

Chapter 327

"They were a gift... from you.

Steven touched the bottom-right corner of the specimen display. It showed a black signature that said 'SC

the acronym for Stephanie Carlson.

I looked at Steven in shock and felt my heart drop.

“It was me? I gave these to you?”

I wonder if he was referring to all the specimens.

“You said that the beauty of shooting stars was their fleetingness. Only a short-lived beauty would amaze

everyone...

Steven leaned over to look at me, his voice still hoarse as usual. He sounded lonely, sad, and guilty.

“Life is fleeting. This is the only way to preserve them forever..”

I started the wall of butterfly specimens in shock. At that moment, it felt like they had all come alive.

“I didn’t know that I would like these things...” I said in surprise.

Steven held my hand and brought me into the room deeper in the basement.

A password was needed to enter the room. The door looked sturdy, almost like a bank vault. As the door opened, I followed Steven inside. When the lights came on, I was in so much shock that my body went

numb.

I wondered if Steven was finally opening up to me.

In some sense, he had finally decided to trust me completely. He had shown me all of his secrets and

scars.

On the walls were investigation data that Steven had obtained about Peter, me, my parents, people from the orphanage, and some people I didn’t know about. It also included data about the serial murder case.

It felt like Steven had been monitoring everyone like he was God, controlling everything behind the scenes.

I looked at Steven in fear. I wondered if he was actually the culprit.

Steven brought me to the wall of photos and pointed toward the bottom-left direction.

“This isn’t the first case of serial murders. Three years ago, after leaving the asylum, a series of murders happened between the doctors of the asylum too.

“Several psychiatrists died from falling, accidents, drowning, and fire. Essentially, their deaths seem unrelated but somehow closely related.”

\*Are you guessing that the culprit behind those incidents is also the culprit of the serial murder cases?” I asked softly.

Steven nodded.

“They have one thing in common, which is that they don’t kill innocent people.”

Steven pointed at the psychiatrist who reported on the asylum’s unethical practices.

“His name is Quentin Long, and he was one of the rare psychiatrists who was kind. He was the one who exposed the dark secrets of the asylum, rescuing me from it.”

He was also the doctor whom Michael brought along to provoke Steven.

“I’m at the center of all their deaths...” Steven whispered.

All the doctors who died were people who once hurt or tortured Steven.

“That’s why more attention will be put on me while the true murderer will be overlooked,” Steven continued softly.

“If you knew that something didn’t add up, why didn’t you report these clues to the police?” I looked at

Steven anxiously.

Red-eyed, Steven looked hesitant.

“Steve... You’ll tell me everything, won’t you?” I felt my stomach drop as I looked at Steven, wondering if he was hiding anything else.

He looked away. “Everything I have is here... Peter is a dangerous man. I suspect... that your parents and Andy’s deaths... are related to Peter.”

Steven was talking about his father.

My breath quickened as I looked at the wall full of clues. When had Peter begun to target the Lincoln family? It began after Peter won an award in the medical field and proposed the Godmaker Project.

“My dad, Biology and genetic studies... Genome-edited babies? What does that mean...” My breath quickened and my fingers trembled as I stretched my hands toward the documents.

Genome editing in the so-called Godmaker Project was simply about helping descendants of rich people

win the rat race.

If society came to accept such a project that violated human nature and morals, it would overturn the current societal state of affairs. The elite would remain superior, and the secret to wealth would be kept in the hands of only a handful of people.

Meanwhile, such people would be immune to various diseases from birth. They would be known as the Left Hand of God—prodigies.

“The project was first proposed to research AIDS, rare diseases, genetic mutations, cerebral palsy, and other relevant fields. When the people from the medical field lacked funds, they would request support from the financial sectors,” said Steven as he pointed at a photo of Michael.

Chapter 328

“As the most outstanding business prodigy of the Lincoln family and also Ignatius’ favorite heir, Andy learned about children with rare diseases with your father’s help.

“Andy set up a charity fund and invested in medical facilities, providing sufficient funds for them to explore and research...

“Peter and your parents, along with Andy and other people of the noble class, became close friends. They went from celebrating good times to being on the verge of collapsing.

“Somebody planned the accident to happen. I’m guessing that Andy and your parents must know of a terrible secret that can’t be told.”

The people dying now were people who knew of the secret.

Somebody was killing the witnesses.

\*Five years ago, a new psychoactive drug appeared in the Verdentia Isles region. The creator was unknown, but once it was released into the market, it broke countless families.

“It spread diseases, fear, violence... It was the result of raging dopamine and endorphins...”

the top right

Steven pointed toward the top right corner.

“Stephie, the serial murder cases are not the only scary thing. Behind that is another wide, deep net

which its full coverage can’t be seen.

“I hid it from you because... I didn’t want you to get involved. I wanted you to live a normal life,” Steven

said with a trembling voice.

I looked at the central position of the wall of photos. It was a photo of Stephanie Carlson.

Steven had taken countless photos of me after the accident. It was like... he had never left. He had been

protecting me.

Warm tears streamed down my face as I fixed my eyes on a photo of myself from high school.

I could remember how on that day, the bullies who bothered me suddenly disappeared. In an alley nearby, somebody screamed for help...

I heard that a teenager got stabbed during a brawl.

That must have been Steven. He had been protecting me the whole time.

"After I lost my memories, you didn't choose for me to recall my memories about you. Instead, you silently protected me... It was because you wanted me to live a normal life and escape this net, right?" I asked in a choked-up voice.

Steven didn't answer me,

He had tried many ways to protect me. But in the end, he failed to escape with me.

"But we're like insects stuck on the web... If we don't burn it, how can we escape?" I said softly but firmly.

Since Steven had decided to confess to me, it was also time for us to face the situation and Investigatel together. We should find the culprit and reveal the truth, along with all the darkness and dirt, under the

sun.

"Stephie... You're right. We tried to escape, but we failed. Instead of surrendering like helpless insects, we should fight back..."

Steven held me tight in his arms. His body was trembling.

"This time... I swear I'll protect you. I definitely will," he whispered.

"Steven, you can guess who's the culprit behind the serial murder cases and the deaths of the psychiatrists at the asylum, right?" I gazed at Steven.

After all the years of observation and investigation, I guessed Steven must've discovered the culprit. However, he probably did not hold actual evidence.

Steven looked away, clearly avoiding my question.

I wonder who the culprit would be that it was so difficult for him to confess.

I glanced over the wall of photos and evidence.

I couldn't help but suspect... that Steven was trying to cover for the culprit behind the serial murders.

"After Mandy died, you calculated the next victim before the second victim died. But you didn't report

that to the police....

“Steven, do you hate them, or are you trying to cover for the murderer? What was it... that made you decide to help the police? Was it because of my death?”

I started to get emotional.

I wondered if Steven had not expected Stephanie to fall prey to the murderer. Was that why he blamed himself, felt guilty, and went crazy?

Steven remained silent as he tightened his fists.

After a long time, he finally said, “Stephie... that doesn’t matter. Please stop asking.”

“It doesn’t matter? I frowned at Steven. All of a sudden, I felt disappointed.

I couldn’t understand why my murderer would not matter. The key figure on this wall of clues would be

Peter.

Steven wanted to expose Peter, but was my death simply a tiny unexpected accident that didn’t matter?

Chapter 329

“Stephie...”

Steven panicked, trying to explain. But he still seemed hesitant.

Frustrated, I turned around to find somewhere to be alone.

Just then, Steven’s phone rang. It was a call from Eason. “Yasmin’s missing. There are no clues. Just as you said, it was a bait. Something happened at the hospital, and Zion got injured. Thankfully, the culprit.

was arrested.

“You should come. Michael is causing a scene at the police station, demanding that we locate Yasmin. Come help me locate her.”

Steven hung up on Eason, clearly having no intentions to comply. He was focused on explaining the situation to me.

I looked at him, waiting for his explanation.

“Stephie...” As he began, his phone rang again. It was Eason.

Steven hung up his phone angrily and was about to block Eason, but I stopped him. “Answer the call. You took such a great risk to approach Peter in the asylum. Don’t let your efforts go to waste.”

Silent, Steven picked up the call.

“Steven Lincoln! Are you burning bridges on me now?” Eason yelled over the phone. It sounded noisy the background.

I could hear Michael’s angry voice, condemning the police for their lack of effort. Michael was angry about how Yasmin, despite being under police protection, had gotten kidnapped!

“I’m burning you,” Steven replied before hanging up again.

It took me a while to realize that Steven was cursing Eason. Eason said Steven was burning bridges, and

Steven said he was burning Eason instead. I reckoned Eason would need some time to react too.

“Stephie...” Steven said, but his phone rang again.

This time, he turned his phone off.

“Stephie... I’m not saying that the murderer doesn’t matter. I’m investigating it. Everything is connected.

I’m just not sure. My assumptions may not be accurate...” Steven hurriedly explained.

But it seemed that he was a bad liar.

Though Steven’s assumptions may not be correct, he must have a key suspect. Yet, he was hiding that from me...

I was not sure of the reason that he was hiding it from me. But looking at the chain of evidence, it seemed like he was... trying to “protect” the murderer.

I said after a long silence. “Steven, my death feels like a dream to me. Before I died, I thought you were the murderer because you were so suspicious...”

Taking into account everything on the wall of evidence, I could conclude that Steven was not the murderer. However, he was hiding something.

“Now, I trust that you’re not the murderer, but if you’re covering for the murderer or helping them get away, you’ll be responsible for my death...”

My voice was hoarse but determined. I was warning Steven in case I found out that he was secretly helping the murderer.

Steven panicked and lowered his head, his fists tightening anxiously.

“Stephie...”

“If I can forgive the person who so cruelly murdered me, what does that make me?” I laughed bitterly,

then backed away from the wall of photos and evidence.

I said in a low voice, "Steven, if we ever come to that, let's get a divorce. Let me go."

Now that we had no baby, there was nothing that would keep us together.

I also came to believe that Steven was not the murderer who killed me.

"Stephie, I don't want to get a divorce." Steven shook his head in panic, not wanting a divorce.

"But in my opinion, the murderer matters more to you than I do." I pointed toward the centermost section about the serial murder case. Two pieces of paper had a question mark on them.

That confirmed some assumptions about the outcomes of Steven's investigation.

Two people were involved in the planning of the serial murder case.

One was responsible for strategizing while the other handled the execution.

We could call that person the executor.

Meanwhile, Simon worked under the two, like a chess piece.

Steven chose to take Simon in, even when he clearly knew that Simon was related to the serial murder

case...

I didn't think Steven had done that to investigate the murder.

Chapter 330

It didn't seem like Steven was trying to hide anything.

"Stephie, nothing matters more than you..." said Steven, all choked up. "I'm just guessing that the murderer is intelligent... I lost, Stephie. I lost."

Steven was saying something that I couldn't understand. I guessed he meant that he had lost the game against the murderer when I died.

"You said you love me, but I don't see any hatred toward my murderer." I shook my head. I couldn't help but feel that something had come between Steven and me. It was too obvious—he refused to tell me about what he knew.

He had the key information, but he chose to hide it from me and the police.

Steven's head drooped low, and tears welled up in his eyes. He opened his mouth, but he said nothing.

"I want to know the truth..." I looked at Steven and was getting emotional. "I want to know how I died. I want to know why they hate me so much... I want the murderer arrested!"

In a panic, Steven pulled me into his arms. After a while, as if he finally made a decision, he spoke.

"Okay... Stephie. I'll help you... If it's your wish, I'll fulfill it. I'll help you..."

I sighed in relief. I felt a little guilty for forcing Steven to pick a side between me and the murderer. Right now, it seemed like Steven picked my side.

"Stephie... I'll help you." He tried to console me by repeating his willingness to help me.

"Okay..." I nodded, then slowly closed my eyes as tears welled up. "Steven, we must not run away anymore. It's time to fight back..."

"Okay." Steven nodded hard as if he would obey everything I said. But the murderer was an exception.

I became increasingly curious about who the murderer was. I wondered why Steven, somebody who would sacrifice his life for mine, would be willing to disregard my death to protect the murderer.

"Now, we must find Yasmin. The mutilation case is not over. We can't allow the serial murder case to continue."

I didn't care about Yasmin, but she had to live for the others to survive. I didn't want more people to die.

"As for Peter, he's too powerful and resourceful... We have to take it slow."

I looked at the wall of photos and pointed at Martin. "First, we must protect ourselves. To guarantee our survival, we must get rid of Martin, who's a hidden danger."

Steven nodded. "Okay..."

...

As Ewan stopped the car in front of the police station, Steven tried to hold my hand.

Almost out of reflex, I avoided him and got out of the car.

Steven looked a little hurt, but I avoided his gaze.

The truth revealed in the basement led to disappointment, especially over the attitude that Steven had toward the serial murderer.

"I don't care how, but you must ensure her safety!"

When we walked into the police station, Michael was still mad. Yasmin's disappearance must have triggered him.

"Mr. Ford, didn't you have Yasmin under protection 24/7? How did you allow her to go missing?" I mocked Michael.

Michael paused when he saw that it was me. He looked nervous. "Stephie... I was just worried. The murderer is inhumane, after all."

Ignoring Michael, I walked up to Rachel. "Any clues?"

Rachel shook her head. "Bad guys don't die so easily. I don't think she'll die."