

After Death 611

Chapter 611

"That lady is one of us, Mom," Ashton whispered while looking toward Mrs. Ford's direction.

I stiffened momentarily. I then crouched down to Ashton and asked nervously, "One of us? What do you mean?"

Xan softly said, "Una has the same vibes as you do, Mom."

Was the "vibes" Xan talking about genetics? We have the same genes.

"That lady too." Ashton looked at Mrs. Ford.

A chill ran down my spine at that moment. Mrs. Ford and I also had the same genes? What did that mean?

Combining these with what Xandra heard from the abductors about me being the third-generation experimental subject and Nancy being the second-generation... Nancy was the superior of Genome Society's laboratory, and so was Mrs. Ford.

Why would Genome Society trust them so much? Was it because they used to be experimental subjects and were cloned using the same gene sequence?

I chuckled self-deprecatingly. What a scary thought.

"Do you like it?" Mrs. Ford was asking Una if she liked the handbags in the luxury goods store. Una glanced at the handbags indifferently and remained silent.

"We'll take all of these," Mrs. Ford calmly said. She was acting according to her own preference.

The way she was looking at Una was full of joy and admiration. It was overwhelmingly so, making me feel somewhat afraid.

Her gaze was tinged with naked desire, as if admiring a new piece of clothing. Clearly, she was planning something that involved Una.

"This shirt suits you. You'll definitely like it." Mrs. Ford was now picking out clothes for Michael.

He frowned, his face pale as he said, "I don't like it."

Mrs. Ford's smile faded. "I've been picking out clothes for you since you were young, Mike. How can you say that you don't like it?"

Michael's hands were curled into tight fists. I could see the popping veins on the back of his palm.

"It suits you so much." Mrs. Ford picked up a tie and compared it against him. "This tie is also something you'd like..." It was as if she was talking to herself.

I brought Ashton and Xan to hide in a corner to observe that peculiar family. I wasn't the only one who found them scary. Even the salesperson probably thought so and was just forcing a smile.

That family looked handsome and beautiful, but the atmosphere around them seemed strange.

The things Mrs. Ford bought for Una were all based on her own preference.

"Here, let's see if this necklace looks good on my daughter-in-law." She chose the most expensive necklace, which was only accessible to VIPs.

She was rather generous as that jewelry set was worth millions.

"You're so generous toward your daughter-in-law," the salesperson said excitedly, beaming with joy.

"Of course, they'll be registering their marriage tomorrow!" Mrs. Ford seemed to be enjoying herself, yet

Michael and Una were indifferent, as if they didn't know each other at all.

The salesperson glanced awkwardly at the two of them, unsure of what to say. Was this a pre-arranged marriage by the mother-in-law?

I was surprised as well. Were they going to register their marriage tomorrow? Michael's marriage was proceeding quickly now with Yasmin out of the picture.

Yasmin had been scheming so much just to marry into the Ford family back then. It was rather laughable looking back at it now. Mrs. Ford had always treated her as trash, toying with her as if she was just a prey.

Back on the cruise, Mrs. Ford had killed Yasmin without any hesitation. Perhaps she thought that a woman of such class like Yasmin had contaminated her son.

As expected from her terrifying control and possessiveness.

"You can shop on your own. I'll head back with Una first." Michael probably couldn't be bothered to continue pretending any longer. He took Una by her wrist and left.

The smile on Mrs. Ford's face faded, but it was as if she did not care at all. She continued to ask the salesperson to pack up everything she liked. "Send them to the same address as last time."

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Mrs. Ford walked out of the shop over ten minutes later. I secretly followed her out with Ashton and Xan. "Don't follow too closely, Mom. She has bodyguards behind her," Ashton reminded me as he tugged at me.

Only then did I realize that there were bodyguards constantly following Mrs. Ford about ten yards away. It was fortunate that we did not follow her too closely.

"Call a cab, Mom. Don't take your car," Ashton reminded once again.

I gave him a thumbs-up before bringing them into the cab.

"Drive up and go in front of that Maybach, mister," Ashton spoke up assertively.

The cab driver was amused. "I'm surprised you knew what a Maybach is, kid."

Ashton smiled and replied, "I know a lot of things, mister!"

I stared at him dumbly. That boy truly had a dramatic personality. Xan continued to play with her Rubik's cube and only looked up occasionally.

I realized that Ashton loved to perform while Xan was more reserved.

"Slow down at the intersection ahead, mister. Let the Maybach overtake us," Ashton softly instructed.

When following another car, we shouldn't tailgate or start directly behind it. Instead, we should stay in front and get within the chauffeur's initial line of sight. We should only slow down to follow behind the car at the intersection.

It was especially so for cabs. That way, we would be less likely to be noticed by the people in the other car. "Alright." The cab driver only found it amusing as he followed Ashton's instructions.

"Is someone you know there in the Maybach, kid?" the cab driver asked.

"It's my grandmother. I want to give her a surprise. So, you can't let them notice us, mister!"

It was as if Ashton's ability to lie was inherent and as easy as breathing. I took a deep breath and looked at him.

Our cab followed Mrs. Ford throughout her journey. She seemed to be in a good mood, completely forgetting the fact that she might be getting followed.

The car stopped at a high-end sanatorium in Fedora Hills. We stopped the car nearby, and I brought Ashton and Xan to hide among the bushes.

Mrs. Ford got out of the car. She even took out a mirror to reapply her lipstick before entering the sanatorium.

"Do you want to go in, Mom?" Ashton asked, looking at me.

I nodded. However, sanatoriums like this usually had strict security.

He said, "I'll wait at the entrance with Xan when you go in later, Mom. We won't run around. We'll stay with the doorman."

I nodded. Ashton then ruffled Xan's hair.

It was as if Xan instantly understood Ashton's meaning. She got up and ran toward the doorman.

"Mister! Mister! My mom, my brother, and I got lost, but my mom's tummy hurts. Can you let my mom use the washroom inside?"

The doorman seemed to hesitate, but Xan was just too adorable. "Where's your mother?"

I walked out while holding Ashton, clutching my stomach as if I was in pain.

"I'll report it while you register yourselves." The doorman stuck by the protocol, yet our cover would be blown as soon as he reported us.

"My mom won't go anywhere else, mister. We'll wait right here. Please let my mom go. She'll come out quickly," Xan said coquettishly, tugging at the doorman's shirt.

"Do you play Rubik's cube, mister?" she asked again.

The doorman was swayed by Xan's adorable acts. He smiled and said, "Alright, alright. Hurry up and head inside. The children can stay with me for now."

I nodded and slipped in while clutching my stomach.

Following Mrs. Ford's trail, I found her in the garden behind the sanatorium. She was pushing through a wheelchair and smiling sweetly.

She said, "You'll recover from your illness soon, Miguel."

The middle-aged man in the wheelchair with graying temples shook his head with a smile. "There's no need to force it. The end of one's life is not the end of all."

I hid myself nearby. Just as Mrs. Ford turned the wheelchair around, I was frozen in shock.

That white-haired middle-aged man looked exactly like Michael. Other than the fact that he had aged, it was clear that they were modeled from the same mold.

They wouldn't have looked so strikingly alike if they were only father and son.

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That man named Miguel continued to cough. He looked like he was in pain.

Worry flashed through Mrs. Ford's eyes as she hugged him from behind. "Your pain is ending soon. You'll have a healthy body"

Miguel Ford chuckled, his face devoid of color. He reached up to ruffle Mrs. Ford's hair with a tender and affectionate look. "My life and death have been determined, Daisy. I have no more regrets having

journeyed all these years together with you. Don't be too stubborn."

It seemed like Miguel had also noticed that Mrs. Ford's obsession was too strong,

Mrs. Ford bent down in front of him. At that moment, she seemed like a little girl who had found a resting place for herself. "You were the one who named me and gave me my life. How could I go on living without you?"

"You're first and foremost yourself before you became Daisy." Miguel looked at Mrs. Ford before he started coughing even more. He looked as if he might fall apart if the wind blew any harsher on him.

I hid behind the pillar, watching them. The medical staff hurriedly pushed Miguel away only when he started coughing blood.

"Mr. Ford's cancer has spread throughout his body, madam. There's not much time left. It'll only cause him more pain to continue the treatment," the doctor said softly as he walked over to Mrs. Ford.

He continued, "Mr. Ford has been holding onto you all these years. The specialized medication and surgery aren't going to be effective on him now."

It was generally beyond hope of recovering once the cancer started to spread.

Mrs. Ford stood silently for the longest time. "I know he has been suffering for all these years. Perhaps it's time now," she muttered, as if making a decision.

"Take good care of him. Tell him I've gone back for now, and I'll come visit again in a few days' time," Mrs. Ford said solemnly before turning to leave.

She then got into her car and asked for the chauffeur to bring her home. I waited nearby until they left for good before walking into the hospital ward.

Miguel's complexion looked much better in the ward. He was looking out the window in his wheelchair. None of the medical staff were there. I heard from their conversations that he seemed to enjoy his peace without having someone watching him.

"Has she left?" Miguel asked with his back facing me. He probably mistook me for a medical staff.

"She has left," I replied.

He stiffened when he heard an unfamiliar voice before turning back to look at me. "You look familiar, young lady."

Miguel said that I looked familiar. He watched me for a while before smiling and saying, "You look like an old acquaintance of mine."

"Are you Daisy's husband?" I recalled hearing Mrs. Ford's name being Daisy Lane to the public.

"I am. And you are?" Miguel looked at me curiously.

"Do you know that you have a son named Michael together with Daisy?" I asked, wondering if he knew about Michael's existence.

Miguel chuckled as he shook his head. "Daisy couldn't conceive because of her health condition, so we adopted a child instead. His name is indeed Michael."

I frowned. It seemed like Miguel wasn't aware of the truth.

Michael didn't know that he was adopted. Mrs. Ford had also told the public that Michael was her biological son. No one would have suspected Michael and Miguel's biological relationship as they were too much alike.

Miguel started coughing uncontrollably again. Blood covered his handkerchief. I frowned at him as a terrifying thought came to me.

Was the reason why Mrs. Ford was so eager to prove the feasibility of the Reincarnation Project because she wanted to perform a switcheroo?

She cloned her husband's youthful body in advance and was waiting for the perfect timing for him to "reincarnate" into Michael?

Such a thought was too crazy.

Steven once said that the clone subjects were like incomplete shells who inherently had incomplete souls. That was why Michael was the slowest and most foolish when it came to emotions, and his amnesia and suicidal tendencies were also traceable.

The awareness and desire for suicide would peak as the clone subjects aged.

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It wasn't just because Michael was guilty that he wanted to commit suicide. Other reasons like family, life, and work contributed to that thought as well.

Stephany Larson, too, had willingly worked with Steven and offered her body to a stranger's soul. Michael had also repented and thought of dying after losing "Stephanie Carlson".

Mrs. Ford was getting impatient now. On one hand, it was because Michael's suicidal tendencies were getting stronger, and on the other, Miguel's health was failing.

If I was not mistaken, she was going to come after me next to force Steven to complete his experiment.

Panic set in as I turned around, wanting to bring Ashton and Xan away from this place. However, it was too late.

Mrs. Ford, who had left earlier, was now back. She stood smiling in the hallway. Behind her, her bodyguard was carrying Ashton and Xan, who were unconscious, on each arm.

"Don't touch my children!" I glared at her angrily.

My survival instinct kicked in, compelling me to get closer to Miguel to attack him. But before I could even touch him, someone yanked my hair from behind and covered my mouth and nose with a handkerchief.

I frowned and struggled, but my consciousness was beginning to fade. Before passing out, I caught Miguel's expression of shock and disbelief. "What are you doing, Daisy" He started coughing again. He probably never imagined his own wife would turn out to be someone so terrifying.

"I want to save you, Miguel," Mrs. Ford spoke in a choked voice. She smiled with red-rimmed eyes. "There's no one more important to me in this world other than you. Even if... I'm to face eternal damnation in hell for all the wrongs I've committed, I'm willing to do so."

"Oh, Daisy... Do you know why I named you Daisy?" Miguel continued, "It was because I hoped that you would bloom like a daisy under the sun when I brought you out of the laboratory back then."

I could hear Miguel's voice in a daze. He seemed like he was trying to stop Mrs. Ford.

"I won't give up no matter what. You're tired, Miguel. Have a good rest." She probably had someone sedate him before taking me and the children away.

I regret bringing the two children into danger with me. How did they get caught so easily when they were so vigilant?

Perhaps they were just too young. After all, they weren't as experienced as compared to an adult like Mrs. Ford in terms of getting into mischief.

I was unsure how long I had been unconscious. In a daze, I heard Ashton's and Xan's voices.

"Mom hasn't regained her consciousness yet."

"This is the laboratory that Mom has been looking for."

"Shh, keep your voice down! Mom will be upset if she regains consciousness and hears that!"

"But isn't Mom looking for this laboratory?"

I opened my eyes abruptly and checked my surroundings, breathing rapidly. The stark white laboratory environment was suffocating as it was enclosed with glass all around. Ashton, Xan, and I were trapped in a

lab capsule.

This was clearly not Nancy's laboratory but the one under Mrs. Ford's control. It was the place we had been searching for.

I never expected her to willingly bring us over.

"This seems like a laboratory, Mom," Ashton said, carefully looking at me.

I took a deep breath when I realized those two had deliberately got themselves caught with me. They seemed to have anticipated that Mrs. Ford would bring us to the laboratory.

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"This is Mrs. Ford's laboratory." I looked around, astonished to see the countless lab capsules around us.

The Ford family was indeed wealthy. With Mrs. Ford's charitable persona, she probably channeled a lot of money into this laboratory. Her laboratory was more than twice the size of Nancy's.

"The laboratory is empty, Mom," Ashton reminded me.

Only then did I come back to my senses. Other than Ashton, Xan, and I, the other lab capsules were all empty.

It seemed like this lab capsule was used specifically for researching soul reincarnation. They conducted many experiments, ultimately proving that their experiments would not succeed without Steven.

In Steven's words, there was a mechanism for reincarnation. Genes were the most crucial link that captured and bound a soul with the same genes. But a medium was also required for a reincarnation to succeed-it was something like a key.

At that moment, only Steven knew what that key was as he was the only person who had succeeded in completing the Reincarnation Project.

"There's a butterfly and a kitten over there, Mommy." Xan was sitting on the ground with her Rubik's cube in hand. She was just like a naturally autistic child who enjoyed being immersed in her own world. Sometimes, she would say a few words that would hit the mark.

I looked over to that side of the laboratory. There were indeed animal specimens inside the glass enclosure some were alive, some were dead, and some were just born. They were likely all genetic clones.

"They're also using animals to test whether the Reincarnation Project will succeed," I whispered.

"They're not as smart as Dad," Ashton quipped.

I did not refute him. Indeed, Steven's intelligence went beyond mere genome editing. He would have been a natural genius even without the genome editing.

He was basically unstoppable with his natural talents enhanced by genome editing.

As far as I remember, Steven was particularly sensitive to numbers. His mathematical talents surpassed others since he was eight. It was as if he had suddenly grasped the mysteries and charm of mathematics overnight.

He used to tell me excitedly that he could accurately calculate locations and even determine the exact location of an asteroid. It was a completely unfathomable world to me.

Indeed, mathematics required talent. It was just like how Steven was constantly calculating the value of pi. He said that everything could start anew as long as he calculated it to the end.

The so-called genetic sequence code was probably an inspiration Steven took from his calculation formula of pi.

I leaned against the glass and looked at the animals inside the lab capsules. Mrs. Ford must have devoted all her energy to reincarnation and combating cancer cells all these years.

"This laboratory feels quite spacious, doesn't it?" The door to the lab capsule opened, and Mrs. Ford walked in.

She said, "Initially, this lab capsule was dedicated to my investments and research in combating cancer cells. I, too, once hoped that the medical field would be able to save my husband. I was naive in thinking that we could grow old and spend the rest of our lives together."

Mrs. Ford chuckled coldly before continuing, "Unfortunately, cancer cells are immortal as they divide and regenerate endlessly while humans cannot.

"Why can't humans do so? Why can't the human body be like cancer cells-dividing and regenerating endlessly, even reproducing infinitely outside of the human body?"

She looked almost crazed as she stood outside the glass enclosure, watching me intently. "Have you heard of the immortal HeLa cells? The biological research today, including the cloning technology, is closely related to HeLa cells."

I frowned, keeping an alert watch on Mrs. Ford.

"Do you know why gods are immortal?" she asked, placing her hands on the glass enclosure. She was observing me as if admiring a work of art similar to the way she had looked at Una at the luxury goods store.

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Mrs. Ford continued, "Gods are immortal because they can divide and regenerate endlessly. In other words are gods just like cancer cells, in the sense that they could be continuously replicated through their genome?"

I felt chills running up my spine as I watched her. Was the Godmaker Project actually an attempt for humans to create a god?

Humans destroyed humans, and God created humans. Humans destroyed God, and they created another god with their own hands. It sounded like a mad legend, yet it seemed to have come full circle with a symbolic meaning at this moment.

Who knew what kind of monstrosities we would end up creating if humans were to continue to delve into their crazed research into genetics and immortality?

She said, "The emergence of cancer cells is essentially a genetic mutation process in the human body. They double every 24 hours, yet they need to constantly compete for nutrients with the human body, treating it as a battlefield.

"That's why cancer cells would replicate endlessly and spread viciously when someone has cancer. The human body is too fragile to withstand such overwhelming destructive force.

"The reason why Miguel is suffering currently is precisely because the cancer cells within him keep multiplying and metastasizing uncontrollably, isn't it?"

I looked at Mrs. Ford, wanting to make her stop. But it was impossible as she was already on the brink of madness.

"I'm creating a god. I'm changing this world. My research will bring hope and a glimmer of light to patients and families affected by cancer," Mrs. Ford said in a crazed manner. Her arms were outstretched.

"You're not me. That's why you can't understand why I'm this mad trying to do this." She looked at me, as if mocking my ignorance from her own perspective.

She continued, "What would you do if Steven had cancer and the cancer cells couldn't be destroyed, yet they were slowly devouring him? You'd be even crazier than I am right now. That's because you're Stephanie Carlson-you'd only go to even greater lengths."

I was stunned. Suddenly, I could understand her intentions.

Her motivation was her love for Miguel. She wanted to combat cancer for his sake.

"At first, I only wanted to combat cancer cells and find a way to completely kill these immortal cells. But later on, I accepted the reality that they couldn't be killed. The cost of killing them is just too high. I couldn't possibly... sacrifice my loved ones in order to kill those damned cancer cells-"

Mrs. Ford's voice turned hoarse.

"That's why I gave up on researching how to kill the cancer cells. I turned to researching symbiosis instead." Her lips curled upward.

"Steven never told this to you, right? The medium for rebirth, which is the key, is based on the original gene chain. It involves a mutation that uses the uterus as a new source of nutrients and simulates the division of cancer cells using cloning techniques. All this is done just to achieve immortality of the soul." Steven found his inspiration from mathematical formulas. He discovered the genetic code while building on the foundation of immortal cell division. And then... the laboratory found the medium for reincarnation. That was how the reincarnation of souls was achieved.

I stood in shock, unable to react for the longest time.

Mrs. Ford asked, "Do you know why Steven didn't kill Una but kept her around? That's because he's keeping a backup body for you. He's worried that something might happen to you."

She had a sardonic smile. "You see, Steven is even more unhinged than I am when he loses control. In a way, you're the first person to achieve immortality, Stephanie. That's because your genome was already spread worldwide through the Genome Society's laboratories.

"There are countless vectors with the same genome as yours in this world. You can be endlessly replicated and reincarnated under Steven's manipulation just like HeLa cells."

The reason Steven was keeping Una around was really to be a blood bank and backup for me. No wonder Una was so jealous of me.

Mrs. Ford was mocking Steven, calling him an unhinged madman. That was because he was more unhinged than anyone else and had done too many crazy things in trying to resurrect "Stephanie Carlson". "Now that you three are with me, I won't hurt you as long as Steven successfully reincarnates Miguel's soul." Her smile faded. "After all, I don't want to offend a madman who can create gods."

"If that's the case, doesn't it mean that the soul of every clone subject could be reincarnated?" I looked at Mrs. Ford questioningly.

She smiled and shook her head. "That's what I'm curious about too. How did he reincarnate you so precisely? But only Steven knows the answer to this secret because he's the only one that holds the key to reincarnation and the creation of gods--"

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"I want to meet Steven." I looked at Daisy.

I wanted to tell Steven that he shouldn't help her with her experiment by all means.

Michael wasn't a good man in a traditional sense. He had done many wrong things to Stephanie Carlson

after all. But he hadn't necessarily done anything wrong if we considered the fact that his mind was unstable.

Besides, he wasn't entirely a bad person at his core.

Michael had been trying his best to become a complete personality. It would be just too cruel to wipe him off from this world and have someone else to occupy his body.

"I'll never let you meet him before the experiment succeeds." Daisy chuckled coldly.

She was too smart to let me interfere with Steven's choice and experiment. She had to make sure the experiment went on smoothly.

"Do you think Miguel really loves you? Do you think a normal person would fall in love with a clone subject? You're so pathetic!" I pounded on the glass, staring angrily at Daisy.

I needed to do something to stop their experiment. What should I do? I didn't know what to do.

Perhaps my words truly hit a sore spot. Daisy glared at me darkly and said in a low voice, "I suggest you know your place, Stephanie. Or I won't be merciful to you."

I clenched my fists tightly. Worried that she might harm my two children, I could only hold myself back from provoking her for now.

But judging from Daisy's reaction and attitude, it seemed that Miguel might not really love her at all.

How pathetic. Even clones couldn't escape from being swayed by emotions.

No wonder Una often said that love was a person's Achilles' heel. No wonder those fiction novels talked about abandoning one's emotions in order to truly achieve success.

I pounded angrily on the glass door as I watched Daisy leave. With us in her hands, Steven would surely agree to help her with her experiment.

Was there really no hope for Michael now?

I slid down onto the ground listlessly, looking down with a complex feeling.

In my memories, right until the end of my life, I had always hated myself and never truly hated Michael. There was no true hatred when true love never existed.

I clearly knew that my love for Michael was merely dependency, gratitude, and an illusion. It was Steven whom I truly loved.

But even without loving Michael, I still felt a sense of regret. Michael was a smart person. He just didn't know how to love-it didn't warrant his death.

"Don't be afraid, Mom. Dad will come to our rescue." Ashton thought that I was afraid. He threw himself into my embrace to comfort me.

Xan also handed her Rubik's cube to me in hopes of distracting me.

But I wasn't even worried about the dangers of being trapped here.

A sense of helplessness washed over me. The three of us could only wait in ignorance for Steven to come and get us.

After some time, the door to the lab capsule opened up, and the glass slid aside. I shielded the children behind me as I stared warily at the entrance.

Daisy's assistant walked in. I remembered him his name was Joshua Young.

"Please come with me," Joshua said indifferently, asking for us to follow him.

I eyed him warily and frowned, following him. "Where are we going?"

Joshua remained silent, as if he were an obedient robot.

I remembered him as an obedient, puppet-like assistant. He only listened to Daisy's commands, not unlike a loyal dog.

"At least tell us where we're going!" I grabbed at Joshua's arm angrily.

He frowned, as if he had severe germaphobia. He stared disdainfully at my hand and indicated for me to let go.

Once I let go of my grip, he took out a disinfectant spray to spray on the spot I had grabbed him.

I was speechless. He truly was crazy!

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Even Eason, with his germaphobia, wasn't as annoying as Joshua.

As expected, it wouldn't look as bad without any comparison. I used to find Eason's germaphobia irritating before meeting Joshua. But now, I found Eason much more tolerable.

"The surgery has ended. Mrs. Ford asked for you," Joshua said reluctantly.

I frowned, following behind him.

The surgery Joshua mentioned was probably the Reincarnation Project. Had their experiment ended? What about Michael, then?

I clenched my fists nervously as I hurriedly caught up behind Joshua, eager to know the answer and result. As expected, my heart sank upon entering the experiment area.

"Heartbeat has stopped." The medical equipment emitted a deafening buzz, indicating that the patient's heart had ceased to beat.

The person declared dead was Miguel.

Daisy was evidently anxious. She was biting on her fingers as she paced around.

She was still harboring a glimmer of hope for Miguel to wake up in the youthful body on the operating table on the other side.

There were two operating tables in the entire laboratory. Miguel and Michael were occupying each table. Daisy was too anxious to pay any attention to us. She was waiting outside for Michael's body to wake up. There were something similar to electrodes attached on both Miguel's and Michael's heads.

I wasn't sure what they were probably something Steven used for the soul reincarnation project. "You're crazy! He's the son you raised for over 20 years. Do you not have any feelings toward him at all?" I lost my composure as I questioned Daisy,

Yet she coldly replied, "Would a farmer not put the livestock they raised on the table simply because they've grown attached to them? I raised and created him all for this very day where he would give back to me, didn't I?"

I looked at Daisy with a frown. She truly was crazy. That was someone's life we were talking about!

Were clone subjects not considered lives in the eyes of these humans? Were humans allowed to trample and destroy them at will?

Would humans in the future start mass-producing clone armies and send them to the battlefield? After all, no one would care or be heartbroken if they died.

The glass door to the operating room opened up, and Steven walked out.

His gaze averted when he looked at me. He was probably worried that I might blame him.

He softly called out my name, "Stephie, I'm sorry. I had no choice."

I stood helplessly outside of the laboratory. I felt conflicted at that very moment.

Steven clearly had no choice in order to save me, Ashton, and Xan. But this experiment was just too cold and unhinged.

Daisy anxiously rushed into the operating room to wait for Michael to wake up.

She first walked over to Miguel and gently caressed his face. "You've done your best, Miguel."

She then walked over to Michael and smiled. "Sleep well. I'll be waiting for you."

I knew that Daisy would not let us leave before Michael woke up. She wanted us to witness the grand moment together.

"Did the experiment succeed?" I asked Steven softly.

He whispered, "I'm not sure. The success rate of the experiment is extremely low."

I asked, "How would she know that the person waking up is her husband and not Michael, then?"

What I meant was, what if Michael was the one who woke up yet he had planned ahead and disguised himself as Miguel?

"Daisy told Miguel a secret code that only both of them knew before he entered the operating room. So she'll know whether the person who wakes up is Miguel just by asking for the secret code," Steven replied, his voice low.

I took a deep breath. Judging by how unhinged Daisy was, we would probably be disposed of if the experiment failed.

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"Hello, Dad." Ashton looked up at Steven.

Steven held Ashton's hand and gave it a playful shake, and Ashton blinked in return. They were seemingly engaged in a silent conversation.

I looked from Steven to Ashton, sensing that two were definitely keeping something from me. But it wasn't the right time to ask now. As such, I could only hold onto Xan while standing behind Steven.

He had always subconsciously shielded me behind him. It was as if I felt a sense of security when he stood there.

"Stephie, regardless whether Miguel would wake up or not, I'll do my best to convince that crazy bitch to let all of you go later. Listen to me and don't hesitate," Steven reminded me softly.

Clearly, he wasn't sure if the experiment would succeed as well. There were many factors that would affect the success rate of the experiment.

"Why was mine successful?" I asked.

"Firstly, both parties involved for the reincarnation would have to be on the brink of death. Back then, when the serial killer took you away, he did not kill you immediately but kept you hanging on. That gave me enough time to track and pinpoint the location of your soul." Steven looked at me.

His gaze was intense and unwavering when he said, "I knew that you were right by my side during that time."

I looked at Steven in surprise. I had indeed stayed by his side after I died and turned into a soul.

"I couldn't touch nor see you, but I could feel you," he mumbled.

I smiled, the corners of my eyes reddening slightly. He said that he felt my presence.

"What about Simeon? He was dead at that point." I was curious. Simeon would have died instantly in the fire.

"He had a deep obsession. His reincarnation wasn't part of my experiment. I only used it as a demonstration for Genome Society. My only accomplishment was with you." Steven looked at me before continuing, "He reincarnated on his own and came looking for me after that."

I looked at Steven, astonished. I almost forgot that Simeon was also a genius. In fact, he was just as impressive as Steven.

"One of the most important mediums for reincarnation is that the soul must have a strong will to live. The experiment wouldn't succeed without it." He looked at me and smiled bitterly. "Do you know how many times I've failed?"

Back then, Steven had gone to the extreme using every means at his disposal, yet he couldn't get Stephanie Carlson back. That was because Stephanie had no will to live in the first place.

He said, "I knew you were around, and I knew you could see Yasmin and Michael. That was why I hoped that you would hate them no matter the reason as long as it spurred your will to live."

Yasmin's uncooperativeness and lies, as well as Michael's foolishness and indifference, continued to provoke Stephanie, leading her to develop hatred and anger. This, in turn, sparked her will to live.

The reason why she could reincarnate was because she had a strong will to live in the first place. Simeon had already possessed a strong will to live during the fire. That was why he could reincarnate into

his own clone subject.

I looked at Steven in shock as I processed everything. As expected, my reincarnation was entirely orchestrated by him.

Without him, I wouldn't have been able to observe everything from a soul's perspective. I wouldn't have experienced hatred, anger, and despair, which fueled my intense desire to live.

And now, my reason and belief in staying alive had only gotten stronger after going through so much.

I have a lover, children, friends, and family—no matter how hard it was, I have to keep on living.

The door to the laboratory opened, and Daisy walked out. She had a pale look on her face. "Why hasn't he woke up yet?"

"The anesthesia hasn't worn off yet. The host body has to be on the brink of death and physically weak in order to allow someone else to reincarnate. That'll take time," Steven replied indifferently.

Daisy looked visibly upset, yet she couldn't refute it.

Suddenly, the medical equipment by Michael's side started going off.

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The doctors inside began performing emergency procedures and ran out in a hurry. "He's awake, Mrs. Ford!"

Daisy's expression changed. She was anxious to rush in, yet she halted her steps outside the operating room. She was probably afraid that the person who woke up wasn't Miguel.

"Steven." I subconsciously tightened my grip on Steven's hand.

I hoped that Michael would be the one who had woken up. But at the same time, I knew that Daisy would go mad if that were the case.

"Don't be afraid." Steven held my hand tight and pulled me into his embrace. I nodded while waiting for the outcome.

It was just like opening a blind box-nobody knew if the original body now had a different soul.

Daisy eventually mustered the courage to walk in and stand by the bed.

The person lying on the bed still looked weak. He opened his eyes a few times before closing them again, as if his eyelids were too heavy.

Daisy stood by the bed with her breath held. Her overwhelming love was truly suffocating.

She had raised a clone subject of her own husband right by her side, wholeheartedly wanting him to take over the clone's body.

I thought Michael was rather pitiful. His mother never loved him and only wanted his body and life. He had spent all his life being manipulated and was unable to have his love reciprocated.

"You" Daisy nervously started as soon as the doctor took away the oxygen mask. She didn't know who was the one who had woken up.

The man on the bed glanced over at her somewhat helplessly. He then let out a soft sigh before closing his eyes.

Daisy nervously straightened up. That gaze evidently belonged to Miguel.

Did they actually succeed?

"Miguel-" she called out anxiously.

"This body is still tired, Mrs. Ford. You should take it slow," the doctor softly comforted her.

Daisy nodded before wiping her tears and straightening up once again. "You should get some rest ___"

Just as she was about to leave, the man on the bed suddenly extended his arm and weakly linked his pinky with hers. It was as if they had a promise only both of them knew.

Daisy stiffened, the corners of her eyes reddening rapidly. She turned back to look at the man, trembling slightly.

"Shouldn't... have done it," the man said hoarsely. He was telling her that they shouldn't have done that. "It's against nature" He slowly closed his eyes as tears slipped out from the corners of his eyes. He was probably mourning for Michael, who was gone for good.

I stiffly stood behind Steven, unconsciously tightening my grip on his arm.

Did Michael end up disappearing anyway?

Michael had no will to live, and Miguel didn't want to die. Was that why the experiment had succeeded?

Miguel propped up his youthful body and cast a weak glance at his "other" body beside him. His gaze was beyond conflicted.

"Do you still remember what I told you before you entered the operating room, Miguel?" Daisy was a wary person. Although she could confirm that the man was indeed Miguel just by his gaze, his expression, and the way he spoke, she still asked him cautiously.

She had told Miguel a secret code before he lost consciousness. Only by answering it correctly could he prove to be the real Miguel.

Steven and I were also paying closer attention as we alertly watched the man on the bed.