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## THE AFTERLIFE TRAP PART 22 – THE PLAN

by  
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Alina sat cross-legged on the floor of her tiny apartment, surrounded by stacks of printouts and the glow of her laptop. She hadn't eaten in hours, too lost in the digital labyrinth of rumors and fragmented stories. Her eyes were bloodshot, the clock ticking past midnight. She pressed the refresh button on her screen for the hundredth time, waiting for any sign that someone had seen her desperate posts and messages.

Kelsie was gone. She had vanished the day after signing the contract with Carnell, and Alina couldn't get the thought out of her head—that somewhere, in some cold, sterile room, her best friend was being prepped for the transfer. If it wasn't too late already.

She had spent every waking minute digging for information—about Carnell, about the place where the procedures are performed, about the rumors of body trading. Every lead seemed to vanish into a void. No one wanted to speak up, and those who knew anything seemed too terrified to say it out loud.

Her laptop chimed, and Alina jolted upright. A new post on one of the conspiracy forums caught her eye:

## **"Exposé: Illegal Transfers and Resurrection at Redwood Heights"**

By: Dan Reyes

Her pulse quickened as she clicked the link. The article was dense, packed with jargon and half-hidden references, but it all pointed to one thing—body trading happened at someplace called “Redwood Heights”. The most chilling part was the mention of a **"whistleblower"**—someone who had seen the process firsthand and had been leaking information from the inside. The details were vague, but it was the best lead Alina had found in days.

Desperate, she fired off an anonymous message to Dan Reyes, begging for more information. Hours passed. She sent another, and another, each more frantic than the last. She barely noticed as the sky turned gray with dawn, her mind spiraling through fear and hope.

Twelve hours later, just when she was beginning to lose faith, her inbox pinged with a new message.

**From: Unknown**

**Subject: Re: Redwood Heights**

**"Meet me in person at 2 AM, Pier 14. Do not bring a phone."**

Alina’s stomach twisted. It could be a setup. It could be a trap. But she didn’t care anymore. If this was her only chance to save Kelsie, she was willing to risk everything.

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The waterfront was deserted, mist curling off the dark water and swirling around the weathered pier. Alina pulled her jacket tighter against the cold, scanning the shadows for any sign of movement. Her heart pounded in her chest, fear mixing with determination while she

fingered a snub nose .38 special revolver in her pocket. She hoped she wouldn't need to use it but was desperate and scared – something a young woman couldn't afford to be at this time of night, especially in a place like this.

A figure stepped out from behind a rusted metal crate, his face shadowed by a hood. Alina tensed, but he made no move to approach. Instead, he spoke, his voice low and rough.

“You alone?”

“Yes,” Alina whispered. “Are you the Dan Reyes?”

The man hesitated, then pulled his hood down, revealing a worn face and tired eyes. “Name’s Adrian. Dan Reyes told me someone might come asking questions. I didn’t think it’d be someone like you.”

“Someone like me?” Alina asked.

“Someone who looks like they haven’t slept in days,” he replied, glancing around. “Come on. We can’t stay out here.”

They moved to the far end of the pier, where the creaking of wood and the slap of water on the pilings drowned out their voices. Adrian leaned against the railing, his gaze fixed on the water.

“Why are you helping me?” Alina demanded. “What do you have to gain from this?”

Adrian gave a bitter laugh. “Nothing. I’m not doing this to gain anything. I’m doing it because I can’t stand by and watch this nightmare keep happening. I used to work for them—security at Redwood Heights. Didn’t know what I was signing up for at first. Thought it was just another cushy gig. Then I saw what they were doing... and I couldn’t look away.”

Alina's hands clenched. "What did you see?"

His face darkened. "People being wheeled into the back rooms, drugged to the point of catatonia. Wealthy patrons in crisp suits, waiting like vultures for the transfer. Sometimes the transfer failed and they'd just dump the bodies. Didn't matter if they were awake, comatose, or brain-dead—they were treated like trash."

A shudder ran through Alina's spine. "Some people survived... resisted the transfer?"

Adrian grimaced. "Once. A young woman—barely twenty. They'd tried a transfer and failed. She came to halfway through, screaming that she wasn't herself. Kept babbling about being trapped, about remembering two lives at once. They dragged her away. Don't know what they did to her after that."

Alina's throat tightened. "God."

He didn't look at her, eyes distant. "I knew I had to get out. But when I tried to speak up, I got warned. They made it clear that people like me don't get to retire peacefully. I've been lying low since then, but when Reyes reached out... I figured maybe it was time to do something. Maybe make up for standing by too long."

Alina took a deep breath, gathering her thoughts. "If we're going to stop them, we need evidence. Proof of what they're doing. We need to expose it to the world."

Adrian glanced at her. "Easier said than done. Even if we could get in and record it, they'd bury the footage. They own the cops, the courts—hell, probably half the government."

"What if we get it out before they can suppress it?" Alina pressed. "Leak it to the networks, social media, everything at once. Make it too big for them to ignore."

He considered it. “You’re willing to risk your life for this?”

Alina looked away. “Kelsie signed a contract. Carnell bought her body. I don’t know if it’s happened yet, but... I can’t just stand by and do nothing.”

Adrian sighed. “You’re in way over your head, but I get it. People like Carnell thrive on fear and silence. If we’re going to do this, we need to get in, pull the data from their internal servers, and get out fast.”

“What if we’re caught?” Alina asked.

He shook his head. “You won’t be. I’ll take the fall if it comes to that. You just get the data out. Make sure it sees daylight.”

Alina swallowed the lump in her throat. “What’s the plan?”

Adrian pulled out a rough map and spread it on the railing. “There’s a side entrance—staff-only. I still have my credentials. We’ll have to get to the server room on Sublevel B. Security’s lighter down there since they think nobody knows about it. But once we start pulling files, it’ll trigger alarms.”

Alina nodded, memorizing the layout. “We’re really doing this.”

He looked at her, a faint, grim smile tugging at his lips. “Yeah. We’re doing this.”

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They approached Redwood Heights in a nondescript van Adrian had borrowed. Alina’s hands shook as they passed the first security gate. Adrian leaned over, swiping his ID card, and the light flashed green.

As the gate rolled open, Adrian glanced at her, eyes solemn. “Now it’s too late to turn back.”

Alina nodded, adrenaline pounding in her veins. “We’re going to make them pay.”

Adrian tightened his grip on the wheel and drove through the gate, the imposing silhouette of Redwood Heights looming ahead. In the silence that followed, Alina felt fear clawing at her stomach, but she forced it down. She couldn’t afford fear now. Kelsie needed her. And Adrian needed to believe that all this risk wasn’t for nothing.

They were in. No turning back now.

End – Part 14