

## Misplaced Bonds of Blood

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### Chapter 1

"Why didn't you let Calvin go on that study abroad program I set up for him?"

James Carter strolled over, planted a kiss on my cheek, and snagged a slice of bread from the table, popping it into his mouth.

"Sending a kid off by himself to a faraway place? That's enough to make anyone worry. Plus, it's been ages since we've had a family trip. I figured you've been swamped at work and stressed out. We could all use a little downtime, right?"

I slipped off my glasses and shut down my laptop. We exchanged a knowing smile.

"It's a school trip, you know. A little adventure is good for a boy. And hey, I'm still on the hunt for a personal assistant and a bodyguard for him..."

James grabbed my hand, his grin wide. "I get it. You've been grooming Calvin to take over someday. You've done an amazing job with his education. Every time something happens to him, you get all worked up. If that kid ever lets you down, I swear, I'd have a few choice words for him!"

I let out a soft chuckle, my gaze gentle.

"If my own son isn't going to be loyal to me, who will he be loyal to? I'm his mom, after all. It's my job to make sure my hard-earned boy grows up right and is ready to take over what I've built."

James' face lit up at my words.

"With a wife and kid in tow, what more could a guy want?"

Then, he wrapped me up in a warm hug.

"Honey, you're the best wife anyone could ask for. Marrying you was the luckiest break of my life."

He released me and started peeling an egg for me. Then, he poured me a glass of milk. He was every bit the doting husband.

If I had not overheard his chat with Mandy Wood, I would never have guessed that James had been eyeing my fortune all along.

Back when the IVF had just worked and I was eager to share the good news with James, I caught him in an embrace with Mandy instead.

"James, can you imagine the look on her face when she finds out the baby's ours? Gives me a thrill just thinking about it!"

He ran his fingers through her hair, a gesture so tender yet so full of betrayal.

"Remember, this is our little secret. When the child's all grown up, I'm going to give them the grandest present ever. Her fortune will be ours!"

I bit back the rage bubbling inside me and chose to act clueless. Little did they know, I had already pulled a switcheroo on them.

I managed to swap the embryos just in time, and when it came time to give birth, I brought home an orphan from the welfare home.

I promised myself that I would raise this child right.

Thinking back to my time with James, we had a whirlwind romance for a year and a decade of marriage.

We met during a company hiking trip, and when I was parched and exhausted, he offered me an ice-cold Coke he had lugged up from the base of the mountain.

Slowly but surely, his thoughtfulness and gentleness won me over.

Even a powerhouse like me needed a rock to lean on sometimes, and James' constant presence brought out my softer side.

After multiple IVF attempts for him, I finally got pregnant, only to find out that our maid was James' old flame, and they had even swapped their embryo with mine.

There were times I just could not believe that James was actually a heartless monster in disguise.