

The Wife You Buried Is Back from Hell

Chapter 1

"I'm sorry, Miss Crawford. Your daughter passed away at 1:13 a.m. on February 15th. We weren't able to save her."

Danielle Crawford clutched a worn-out bunny plush, her gaze numb as she stared at the doors to the operating room.

She had come to walk her daughter through her final journey.

Inside, Danielle gently held her daughter's withered little hands, now cold and lifeless.

She smoothed her daughter's hair, her mind replaying the frail voice she'd heard before Niki was wheeled into emergency.

"Mommy, is Uncle not here yet?"

The "Uncle" her daughter spoke of was Alexander Davidson—Niki's biological father. He never let Niki call him Dad, but he allowed the son of his long-lost love to use that word.

Niki's biggest birthday wish was simple: to spend her birthday with her father, and to be allowed, just once, to call him Dad.

But Niki was frail. Last winter, she'd waited out in the cold for Alexander to come home for dinner, caught the flu, and developed pneumonia. Her health had spiraled downhill ever since; she'd been in and out of hospitals for a year.

Today, the dead of winter, Niki had once again waited outside their front door, hoping to have dinner with her father.

After she collapsed, Danielle rushed her to the hospital.

The doctors issued a critical notice.

Danielle begged Alexander to come home for Niki's birthday.

He promised he would. But he broke that promise, just like every other year.

Danielle gathered her daughter's frail body in her arms, whispering softly, "My sweet girl... you're free now."

Free from pain and sickness.

Free from the daily ache of yearning for a father's love that never came, no longer having to endure the cold indifference that left her feeling unwanted.

"Mommy, why won't Uncle let me call him Daddy, when my brother can?"

"Mommy, is it because Miss Fletcher likes my brother that Daddy likes him too?"

Her daughter's innocent questions still echoed in Danielle's ears, over and over.

Niki never understood why her father didn't love her, or why she couldn't call him Dad. She only thought she wasn't as good as her brother—so Dad didn't love her.

Six years ago, an accident with Alexander had left Danielle pregnant. They married for the baby's sake.

During the difficult birth, when Danielle nearly bled out, Alexander was nowhere to be found.

He was at the hospital with his one true love, Millie Fletcher, as she gave birth to her own child. There was no question about who mattered more.

After Millie had her son, she left the baby with Alexander and disappeared overseas.

Danielle, who had loved Alexander for years, tried everything to please him, even agreeing to raise Millie's son as her own. She cared for him as if he were her flesh and blood.

But Alexander never let Niki call him Dad, while he cherished Millie's son as if he were a treasure. That was the difference.

Danielle should have understood, even back then in the delivery room, that a heart made of stone can never be warmed.

Niki was actually born first that morning, but Alexander insisted on making Millie's son the "big brother," giving him the Davidson family's title and status as firstborn.

So it went.

Everyone believed he was Alexander's true son.

And Niki? Just the illegitimate child.

From behind Danielle, a doctor observed her quivering shoulders with pity. "The father... hasn't shown up yet?"

From the moment Monica Davidson was admitted, the man had never shown up.

Danielle's eyes turned cold, her laugh bitter. "The child's father? He's overseas with his beloved son, throwing a birthday party with his real mother."

It was always like this.

And Danielle, the fool, had spent four years raising someone else's child.

Two children, born the same day—yet for Niki, every birthday was just another day of being ignored.

The doctor hesitated, looking at the woman before him, pity welling up inside. There were no words of comfort.

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On the first day after Niki's death, Danielle handled all the paperwork.

The city's cremation forms required signatures from both parents.

Danielle returned to Harbourview Villas to pack up Niki's belongings.

Downstairs, she heard the sound of a car pulling up.

"Dad! When are you going to leave Mom and marry Miss Fletcher? I want Miss Fletcher to be my mom!"

Alexander hung his coat over his arm, bent down, and pinched the boy's cheek. "Raffy, you can call Miss Fletcher Mom."