

The Wife You Buried Is Back from Hell

Chapter 12

Danielle's heart skipped a beat. "Don't listen to his nonsense," she said, her voice steely.

Her eyes turned cold. Raffy was just a kid—if he could say things like that, someone must have been whispering in his ear. She'd done everything for the Davidson family, worked herself to the bone, and yet here she was, getting dragged through the mud. It was painfully clear just how miserable and unbearable these past years of marriage and family life had been.

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Niki had spent the night in the hospital. By morning, her fever had broken and she was stable enough to get out of bed. As she wandered into the hallway, she spotted Raffy playing with a remote-controlled airplane.

Niki looked up, eyes wide with curiosity. Was this the cool gift Miss Millie had given her brother? It looked amazing—sleek, fast, and a little bit dangerous.

Raffy saw her standing there in her hospital gown and shot her a look. "Monica, are you copying me now? Even when you're sick, you want to be like me?"

"I'm not!" Niki protested.

Raffy snorted. "Too bad Dad doesn't even come to see you."

With that, he dipped the nose of his plane and sent it swooping straight toward Niki.

Just as the toy was about to crash into her, Danielle rushed over with breakfast, scooping Niki out of the way. The plane hit the floor with a heavy thud.

Niki's heart pounded as she clung to Danielle. "Mom..."

Because Alexander didn't want her to call him Dad—and, in fact, because everyone in the Davidson family reserved their affection for Raffy—Niki had learned to tread carefully, always watching others' moods before daring to speak.

She knew, deep down, that nobody in the Davidson family really liked her except her mother. She also knew she would never be able to compete with Raffy, so she tried to be as well-behaved as possible.

Only now did Danielle realize how much she'd failed her daughter. She'd always thought Niki was just a bit shy, especially since she seemed cheerful enough around her. But now it was clear—her little girl had been walking on eggshells the whole time.

"Niki, listen to me," Danielle said softly. "If anyone bullies you, you stand up for yourself. I've got your back."

Raffy, gripping his remote, shrank a little under his mother's glare. He hated the way she looked at him—so stern, so disapproving. Why did she always have to criticize him, always try to rein him in?

But then he remembered: Dad didn't want Mom and Niki around anymore. Soon, Miss Millie would be the one in charge, and with her support, what did he have to be afraid of?

He squared his shoulders and snapped, "If she breaks the plane Miss Millie made for me, neither of you could ever pay me back!"

Danielle glanced down at the broken toy. It was just a cheap thing—anyone could build one if they had the instructions. She didn't want to argue with a child, but today, she wasn't going to let this slide.

"Fine, don't apologize," she said, turning to Niki. "You do whatever you want to him."

Niki hesitated. Mom had always told her not to hit or yell at others—that it wasn't polite. Still, her fingers itched with the urge to fight back. Would Dad hate her even more if she did?

But then she remembered what her mother had told her last night: Sometimes, you have to be brave enough to let people dislike you.

So she took a step toward Raffy.

Raffy's bravado faltered. He took a nervous step back.

Just then, Millie returned, carrying a jug of hot water. She took in the scene at a glance and immediately stepped in front of Raffy, shielding him with her body. She glared at Danielle. "Why are you being so harsh with Raffy? Is this how you think a mother should act? Scaring the kids like this over a little argument?"

"Honestly, Danielle, kids roughhouse all the time. Isn't this a bit much? You're frightening Raffy."

Alexander walked in just as Millie finished speaking, a bag of breakfast in his hand. He took one look at Raffy trembling behind Millie and his brow furrowed in annoyance.

Danielle gave a cold, mirthless laugh, about to retort, but a chilly voice from behind cut her off—

"There's no need for you to be here at the hospital. Take Niki home."