

The Wife You Buried Is Back from Hell

Chapter 7

Alexander didn't even blink. "Got it," he replied, his voice flat.

He didn't seem to care at all about Danielle's mood or temper.

Julia kept her thoughts to herself. There had been times like this before—heated arguments, icy silences—but in the end, Mrs. Davidson always came back to make peace with her husband.

Meanwhile, Raffy was sulking in his room, upset that he didn't get the perfect milk bath he'd demanded. It wasn't until Millie came by, coaxing him with promises of a trip to the National Defense Tech Expo that weekend, that he finally stopped pouting.

His mother had never let him do anything exciting. She wouldn't even take him to amusement parks, always insisting it was too dangerous.

He figured it was just because she was poor, not like Miss Millie, who seemed to have money for everything.

His birthdays proved it—cheap fountain pens and homemade cakes that looked awful. But Miss Millie? She was taking him to see real airplanes and fighter jets!

The next morning, Raffy woke up bright and early, practically bouncing out of bed for breakfast.

He'd asked Julia the night before to make seafood porridge for him—something his mom never allowed. When she was around, she'd fuss over every little thing he ate.

But now he could eat whatever he wanted.

Danielle was up early as well, preparing a healthy breakfast for Niki before walking her to school.

No sooner had Danielle left than Raffy hopped out of the family's Mercedes.

"Miss Millie's taking me to see real fighter jets this weekend!" he bragged to Niki. "She even bought me a ton of Play-Doh, enough for all the kids."

He puffed out his chest proudly. "Way better than those stupid building blocks you gave me! If you want to play, you'll have to ask me—and maybe Miss Millie will bring you along too."

"How about it? Without Miss Millie and Dad, Mom would never let you see a real airshow in your whole life!"

Niki's eyes stung, her nose prickling. She'd made those toys herself. Uncle always favored her brother, and she'd hoped that if she could win Raffy's approval, maybe Uncle would finally let her call him Dad.

She glared at Raffy. "Fine if you don't like my toys, but how could you talk about Mom like that?"

"Mom's just a total loser. Only someone like you would care about her! You and Mom should just leave—the Davidsons don't want you here! I'm even getting a new mom! Miss Millie tucked me in last night, not her!"

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After dropping Niki off at school, Danielle noticed the sky had grown heavy with clouds. Rain was coming.

She glanced up at the bus stop across the street, where an enormous poster caught her eye: "Aurelian Airshow—Welcome!"

She froze, memories washing over her. Around this time in her previous life, the Northridge City National Defense Tech Expo was about to kick off.

The Northridge Airshow was one of the top five in the world, held every two years; that weekend would be the fifteenth show. Planes, missiles, drones, satellites—air, land, sea, space, cyber, and more. The highlight: massive aerial performances by the world's most advanced fighter jets.

Danielle stared at the poster, lost in thought.

If she hadn't given up—if she hadn't traded her career for marriage and motherhood—maybe one of her own aircraft designs would be on display this year.

Maybe she'd even be up there, explaining her creative process and the challenges she'd overcome.

Nothing compared to the honor of contributing to her country's technological progress.

Snapping out of it, Danielle pulled out her phone and checked the airshow's official website. Every ticket had sold out.

She had barely put her phone away when the rain came down in torrents.

Morning school drop-off had gridlocked the streets. Cabs were impossible to find.

With a sigh, Danielle ducked into the nearest coffee shop, just as a gust of wind nearly pulled the door from her hand. As she pushed inside, she collided with a man on his way out. Hot coffee spilled across his crisp white shirt, leaving a glaring brown stain.

"I'm so sorry—let me pay for your cleaning," Danielle blurted, looking up.

Gian Atwood blinked in surprise, then broke into a grin. "Danielle! Last time you spilled chemicals on me in the aerospace simulation lab, now it's coffee. I see nothing's changed."

Danielle stared, caught off guard to run into him here.

Gian had been her senior in grad school—same doctoral advisor.

Mr. Hawthorne, their mentor, was now the head of Blackwood Research Institute, a giant in Aurelia's aerospace world. Everyone dreamed of working under him.

Danielle glanced at Gian's ruined shirt. "You haven't changed, either. Still as smooth-talking as ever."

She hesitated, then added, "That shirt's probably ruined. Let me replace it."

Gian just laughed. "Don't worry about it. You know, it's been ages since we've seen each other—ever since you got married. Since fate brought us together, why don't we catch up?"