

The Wife You Buried Is Back from Hell

Chapter 9

"From now on, please contact Rafferty's father regarding anything about him." Danielle's tone was steady. "I'm not his mother."

The teacher frowned, assuming this was just another spat between parents—one so heated they didn't even want to deal with their child.

"Mrs. Davidson, this is a serious situation. Rafferty needs you right now. Please, set your differences aside and come as soon as possible."

"I'll send you his father's number," Danielle replied, and hung up without another word.

Immediately, she forwarded Alexander's phone number to the teacher.

Gian had already risen from his seat and stepped away when he saw Danielle answering the call, giving her space.

When Danielle looked up, she saw Gian standing by the window, gazing at the rain-drenched street below.

She crossed over to him. "Thank you for today."

"Finished your call?"

She nodded.

Gian met her eyes with genuine warmth. "Danielle, welcome back."

She smiled faintly. "Let's hope my résumé gets through the first round."

The Blackwood Research Institute had high standards, and she hadn't worked in the field for years. There was a real chance her application might not even make the cut.

"If they don't, I'll just hire you as my assistant," Gian teased.

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Alexander arrived at the preschool while torrential rain hammered down from the sky.

Inside, Raffy was a mess of red welts, bawling his eyes out in the nurse's office.

He'd felt itchy all morning, but by lunchtime, his skin was covered in angry hives.

When Niki heard her brother had broken out in a rash, worry gnawed at her. Mom always said Raffy's health was fragile; every night he needed a medicated soak, or else his skin would erupt like this.

She grabbed her tiny umbrella and hurried from her classroom toward the nurse's office. The wind tugged and tossed her umbrella, leaving her soaked halfway through by the time she arrived.

When Raffy caught sight of Niki, his face twisted in anger. "Are you here to laugh at me?"

"Mom says you need your special baths every night, or else you'll get rashes. You should tell the nurse—"

"Mind your own business!" Raffy snapped, cutting her off. He grabbed a nearby plastic cup and hurled it at her. "I don't want to see you! Just leave me alone!"

The teacher rushed to intervene. "Rafferty! Don't throw things at your sister."

"She's not my sister! Everyone says she's got nothing to do with the Davidsons—she's a bastard!"

Niki froze, stunned, her eyes filling with tears. "If you keep acting like this, Mom's really not going to want you anymore!"

"I'm the one who doesn't want Mom. And anyway, Dad and I—we don't want either of you!"

Niki trembled with hurt and fury while the teacher tried desperately to calm them both.

She'd only come to check on her brother, worried for him, but once again, all she got was his resentment. She bit her lip hard, falling silent.

A few minutes later, Alexander strode into the nurse's office.

Niki had already been there for a while, still shivering from her dash through the rain.

Standing in the corner, she lit up when she saw her father. "Da—" she started, before catching herself, remembering that he didn't like her calling him that.

Raffy saw his father walk in and immediately burst into louder sobs, drowning out Niki's voice. He leapt off the cot and flung himself at Alexander, face crumpled in misery. "Dad, I look so ugly right now! And everything hurts and itches!"

His face and body were covered in angry red rashes—if Miss Millie saw him like this, she'd probably never want to sit next to him again.

The teacher explained that Raffy had been running to the bathroom with stomach trouble all day.

Alexander's heart twisted at the sight of his son's suffering.

He bent down and scooped Raffy into his arms, his voice gentle. "It's okay, I'm here now. Let's get you to the hospital."