Swapping a Broken Heart for a New Start

Chapter 1

On the day of Grandma Smith's funeral, Camila Davis—eldest granddaughter-in-law—was supposed to step forward with her husband, Jordan Smith, to pay their respects. Instead, Jordan barely spared her or their daughter, Lillian, a single glance. He was too busy hovering around his high school sweetheart, Sandra Taylor, acting as if they were hosting a wedding reception, not saying goodbye to the family matriarch.

The church was packed. Politicians, business leaders, and a swarm of reporters filled the pews. Camera flashes popped like fireworks.

Camila tried to hold herself together, but grief kept pulling her under. When Grandma Smith was alive, she'd doted on Camila. During her pregnancy, Grandma would make her chicken noodle soup from scratch, insisting she rest and eat well. Whenever Camila caught a cold, Grandma fussed over her, wrapping her in blankets and checking her temperature.

Even Lillian, their daughter with autism, was never treated differently. If anything, Grandma spoiled her rotten, buying her picture books and handmade teddy bears. She'd once said she wanted to give Lillian the whole world.

Now Grandma was gone, and Camila could hardly stop crying.

That's when Barbara Jones, her mother-in-law, shooed her aside. Camila was ushered from the family pews to the back of the church, with Barbara's sharp words trailing after her: "Just look after Lillian. We don't need you for anything else."

And so, Camila found herself standing by the heavy church doors, clutching Lillian's hand as the real drama unfolded.

Jordan stood at the front, tall and stiff in a black suit and wool overcoat, his handsome face unreadable—except for a flicker of sadness in his eyes.

But then Sandra Taylor arrived, and everything changed.

Jordan walked with Sandra and her little boy to the casket, his icy expression melting into something almost gentle.

Not far away, a couple of reporters whispered, "Wait, is that Mrs. Smith? She and Mr. Smith look perfect together, and their son's adorable."

“Mrs. Smith rarely appears in public. People say she’s not much to look at, but that’s nonsense. He’s just hiding her away! Look at the way they’re gazing at each other. That’s real love.”

“Get more pictures—this is front-page stuff! The perfect family!”

Shutters snapped in rapid-fire bursts.

Just then, a guest from the local country club leaned in and muttered, “That’s not Mrs. Smith. The real one’s by the door.”

“What? Why isn’t she standing with Mr. Smith? Who’s the other woman?”

“They say she’s Mr. Smith’s first love. She lived abroad for years, started her own business, just came back to town.”

“I heard the real Mrs. Smith only married him because the elder Mrs. Smith insisted—broke up the real couple. Poor Ms. Taylor was heartbroken and married some other guy out of spite.”

“No wonder she got pushed out. Homewrecker!”

A ripple of snickers and sidelong glances spread through the crowd, all settling on Camila.

She heard every word but didn’t bother to argue. The truth was, her marriage had been orchestrated by Grandma Smith.

A few years ago, after Jordan’s car accident left him in a wheelchair and a deep depression, Grandma Smith had hired Camila as his physical therapist. She’d poured her heart into his recovery, coaxing him back to life.

The night he finally stood on his own, the Smiths threw a big dinner at their mansion, complete with roast turkey and apple pie. Jordan got drunk, clung to Camila, and kept calling her name. She fell for him, hopelessly.

When she found out she was pregnant, Grandma Smith insisted they marry.

Now Lillian was three, and for the first time, Camila learned about Sandra Taylor—the legendary first love.

Had Jordan really been calling Camila’s name that night, or was it Sandra’s?

The gossip must have reached the front of the church. Jordan finally glanced her way, his face icy.

He strode over, towering above her. “There are a lot of reporters here. Keep an eye on Lillian. I don’t want anything ruining Grandma’s funeral.”

It was half warning, half dismissal.

He didn’t care that everyone thought Camila was the interloper. His wife, pushed to the sidelines, was just another casualty in the Smith family’s carefully curated image.

And just like that, the warmth in Jordan’s eyes was gone, replaced by that familiar, chilly indifference.