Swapping a Broken Heart for a New Start

Chapter 9

Camila Davis gripped her phone so tightly her knuckles turned white, a bitter laugh caught in her throat.

So this was it. While she'd been busy with work and family, the news had already decided: Jordan Smith and his high school sweetheart were now the city's favorite couple.

Jordan had always been the low-profile type, preferring to keep his private life private. But now, there he was—parading his first love through downtown Chicago, making headlines for all the wrong reasons.

Meanwhile, Camila had spent years managing one of The Smith Group's top research labs, pouring her sweat and soul into her work. Only a handful of people in upper management even knew about her connection to Jordan. The rest of the company? He kept her in the dark, never asking her input, barely even acknowledging her presence outside of work.

She closed out the news app, but the ache in her chest wouldn't go away. By now, she was almost numb to it. Maybe soon she wouldn't feel anything at all.

That evening, Jordan came home from work. He slung his suit jacket and tie over his shoulder, looking every bit the part—two buttons undone on his crisp white shirt, his tailored trousers making his long legs seem even longer. He tossed his jacket onto the arm of the couch, not bothering to look at her.

Camila was close enough to catch a whiff of unfamiliar perfume. Her stomach churned with nausea. She started to move away, but Jordan was already filling a glass of water, his tone detached.

"Lillian's been having a rough time lately. You should clear out your lab. I've got other plans for you—just stay home and take care of her from now on."

Camila froze, stunned into silence.

Before she could reply, Jordan went on, "The Smith Group's struck a deal with the Taylor family. To show our sincerity, I'm putting Sandra in charge of the lab. She's worked at some big European firms—honestly, she's more experienced than you."

He said it like it was a weather report—final, impersonal, not open to discussion. He'd made up his mind. Camila's opinion was just background noise.

Her fingers clenched, every muscle tensed against the raw stab in her chest. It was all she could do to keep her face neutral.

She wasn't some suburban housewife. She'd joined the Smith Group's AI Medical Device Lab for Jordan's sake, giving up her own research ambitions, her own future. She was good at what she did. She used to lead teams, pulling all-nighters to get projects over the finish line. That lab was her life's work—her legacy.

Now he was erasing it, like it was nothing.

How could Jordan be so heartless?

She felt something stuck in her throat, her whole body trembling despite her best efforts to stay calm. The cold shoulder, the indifference, the way he ignored their daughter—she'd swallowed her disappointment for so long. But this? This was the final blow. He was destroying everything she'd ever done for him, everything she'd ever loved.

Her eyes burned with unshed tears.

First, she'd given up her place at the funeral. Then her job. Next, she thought bitterly, it'd probably be her place as Mrs. Smith.

It took Camila a long moment to find her voice. "Jordan, we..."

...should get a divorce.

She didn't even finish. Jordan didn't have the patience for it anyway. He cut her off, his voice cold and clipped.

"Don't give me that wounded look. I've thought this through. You're too distracted with work to take proper care of Lillian. That's why she isn't getting better. You've failed as a mother, Camila. End of story. There's nothing left to talk about."

He brushed past her. "I'm going to take a shower. Try to calm yourself down."

Camila stood there, silent. She couldn't even bring herself to ask for a divorce. What was the point? There was nothing left to fight for.

She couldn't stay in that house another minute, not with the walls closing in and her heart threatening to give out. So she packed up Lillian and took her to the local amusement park.

Lillian might have autism, but to Camila, she was just like any other kid—sweet, curious, and deserving of joy. Places like this, filled with laughter and bright colors, always seemed to bring out the best in her.

And today, it worked. Lillian lit up at the sight of the park's pink fox mascot and the purple bunny, giggling and tugging Camila by the hand, refusing to budge until she'd

hugged them both. For a moment, Camila let herself believe things might be okay. At least here, her daughter could just be a child. And for a little while, Camila could just be a mom.