

# **Out Of The Shadows: Tilda's Brilliant Second Life**

## **Chapter 05**

### Chapter 5 You Actually Believed It? How Ridiculous

When the call ended, the room fell into an uncomfortable silence.

Russell, Blair, and Wade all looked uneasy—because they'd just accused Tilda without proof.

Thinking back on what Stan had said, the flaws in his story were obvious. Still, the moment they found even the flimsiest scrap of evidence, they pounced, convinced Tilda had leaked the news to force them into acknowledging her as the real daughter.

The truth? They never trusted her. Their love for Kyla blinded them completely. The second Kyla shed a tear, all reason went out the window.

"Tilda, I'm so sorry," Kyla finally spoke, breaking the heavy silence. Her eyes were red and watery as she stepped closer. "They jumped to defend me because I looked so upset. This is my fault. If I'd never come into this family, none of this would've happened."

She started to bow, ready to ask for Tilda's forgiveness.

"Kyla! What are you doing?!" Wade, standing closest, quickly grabbed her arm.

But Kyla wouldn't stop. "Don't try to stop me, Wade. This is my fault. If Tilda won't forgive us, I won't get up."

With a dramatic drop, she bent at a perfect ninety degrees, tears spilling down her cheeks, dropped on the floor.

"Kyla, enough! Get up!" Russell and Blair rushed forward, panicked, trying to pull her upright. Her show of devotion moved them deeply.

In that instant, every doubt they'd had about her vanished.

Of course Kyla couldn't be behind anything so cruel—how could a sweet, selfless girl like her ever scheme? It had to be someone else.

"Tilda, we were wrong to accuse you," Russell said firmly. "Don't worry. I'll find out who did this and make sure they pay. Anyone who tries to slander our family is bound to pay!"

His jaw tightened. Nothing enraged him more than someone trying to divide his family. Harmony always came first in his book.

“You’re going to make it right?”

Tilda let out a sharp laugh, like she’d just heard the most absurd joke in the world. It started small but quickly grew louder, her whole body shaking until she had to hold her stomach. Tears slid down her cheeks -not from sadness, but from how unbelievably funny she found it.

Russell scowled. “What’s so funny?”

Tilda’s laughter only grew. She couldn’t help it—it was too absurd.

Russell’s grand promise to make things right had to be the biggest joke she’d ever heard.

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Chapter 5 You Actually Believed It? How Ridiculous

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This was the same man who had accused his daughter without a second thought, defending the adopted one without a shred of proof. The same man who had rallied the whole family against her, terrified that the daughter they had abandoned for years might come back and take even the smallest piece of what they had given Kyla.

They ignored the truth, throwing every ounce of blame at her feet. And now he wanted to make things right?

Maybe the old Tilda would’ve clung to that hope, desperate for their love.

But not this time.

This Tilda wasn’t the same naïve girl who believed their empty promises and chased after them like a fool.

“Mr. Jenson,” she said coolly, “do you honestly think you ever had the slightest intention of setting things right? If you ask me, you’re just an old man past his prime—how are you going to uncover anything?”

Her words were sharp, but she didn't feel an ounce of guilt.

In fact, it felt good.

So good.

She remembered it all—taking a bullet for Russell, lying alone in a hospital bed, choking on smoke as the fire closed in, and that brutal kick that left her gasping. They had left her there to die.

Every memory burned inside her, feeding a dark, seething satisfaction to get her revenge.

And she was nowhere near finished.

No one—absolutely no one—had expected Tilda to speak like this.

Even Wade stared at her like she'd lost her mind. How else could she dare to say something so outrageous?

The meek, eager-to-please girl was gone.

In her place stood someone bold enough to call Russell old and past his prime—right to his face.

"What did you just say?!" Russell barked, his voice shaking with fury. "I'm your father! You dare talk to me like that? I admitted I was wrong to accuse you, and I apologized. But this attitude—what is it?!"

Russell Jenson had never feared anyone in his life—except his wife. Everyone else? Not a chance. All those kids of his knew better than to step out of line but were respectful in front of him?

And Tilda was actually challenging him? How dare she?

"Tilda, no matter what, he's still your father. Apologize to him!" Blair's voice was icy.

Blair had felt a twinge of guilt earlier—but not anymore.

What kind of attitude was this?

To speak so harshly to her father?

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## Chapter 5 You Actually Believed It? How Ridiculous

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She could hardly believe it. Her daughter had spent nineteen years out in the world, only to come back like this. How could someone like her possibly be worthy of being their daughter?

“Father?” Tilda’s lips curled into a cold sneer. “If that’s what a father is, then it disgusts me. I won’t apologize. And your apology? Keep it. I don’t want it.”

Her eyes blazed with clarity and fire. Her voice stayed steady, her tone unflinching—each word sharp, deliberate, and without pause.

It felt like she could finally breathe again, like she was truly alive. At last, she had the courage to speak her truth.

And the surprising part? It wasn’t even hard to say that to their face.

She realized she had been trapped for years by the illusion of love. But now, that illusion was gone, shattered beyond repair. She didn’t want this family. Not anymore.

“Tilda!” Russell trembled with rage.

If Russell hadn’t just accused her of something she didn’t do, he probably would’ve slapped her by now.

How had he ended up with such a bitter, spiteful daughter?

What a disgrace!

“Tilda, I know you’re upset, but please don’t blame Mom and Dad,” Kyla spoke up again. “Blame me. I’ll bow to you, I’ll walk out of this house, and I’ll stay out of your way if that’s what it takes.

“If giving back your place makes you happy, then I’ll give it back. Just stop being angry with them.”

She stepped closer, eyes wide and pitiful, her voice as sweet as syrup.

“Alright then,” Tilda said softly.

She gave Kyla a half-smile. “Fine. Walk out of this house and I’ll drop it. You said it, not me. I didn’t make you.”

Kyla froze.

Had Tilda lost her mind?

She actually agreed?!

Then again, Kyla's heart leapt in secret. This would make everyone angrier at Tilda.

Kyla put on a wounded look, sniffled, and let tears stream down her cheeks. Wiping them away in one swift motion, she choked out, "I- I understand, Tilda. I'll leave now! As long as I'm gone, this family can be at peace. I'm willing to do it!"

She turned and ran upstairs.

Blair quickly grabbed Kyla's arm. "Kyla, don't be upset. Tilda's just talking out of anger. We're here; no one's going to drive you away!"

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Aug 28

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"Mom, just let me go," Kyla choked out. "This house was never mine. Tilda's your real daughter. I'm just the adopted one."

Kyla sobbed in Blair's arms, her voice raw from crying.

Every word she spoke landed like a hammer to the chest.

Everyone could feel her pain—it tore right through them.

Wade's voice thundered, "Tilda! How dare you say that to Kyla?!"

The moment they realized Tilda truly meant to throw Kyla out, the rest of them snapped.

"So this is the real you. You've been waiting for this, haven't you? You just wanted Kyla gone so you could have it all!"

“Well, guess what? Over my dead body! Kyla is a Jensons—she’s my sister!”

Wade didn’t hesitate to take Kyla’s side, glaring at Tilda with nothing but fury.

Looking at Wade’s face—so much like her own—made something twist in Tilda’s gut.

For the first time in her life, she hated her face.

Even the Jensons blood running through her veins disgusted her. The sickness in her stomach rose until she thought she might throw up.

But fate had given her a second chance, and she wasn’t going to waste it.

“You’re right,” she said quietly. “She’s your sister. I—I’m nobody.

“I was nothing more than a way to ease your guilt—a splinter stuck in your hearts for nineteen years. One you barely noticed until it started to fester. And bringing me back was just your way of yanking it out.

“I never mattered.”

Each word cut her own heart open, the pain so sharp it left her numb.

Only then did she finally feel free.

These were truths she’d always known but never dared to say.

Now she yanked them out—raw and hurting—and laid them right in front of everyone. Let them scoff. Let them sneer.

Because she finally saw it: they never saw her as family. And she’d actually believed they did. How foolish.

Russell lifted his hand. “I know you feel wronged and you’re furious right now, but Kyla is innocent! Go back to your room and reflect! Think about how ugly and out of line you just were!”