

Ready to Rule: The Real Heiress Strikes Back

Chapter 1

Fat raindrops splashed against Lydia Smith's skin, a little sharp but cool and refreshing. She glanced up at the sky, now heavy with storm clouds and streaks of lightning, then lowered her head and kept explaining to her viewers. "This one's Burdock Root, a root that helps clear heat, cool the blood, and nourish the body. We usually harvest it in autumn. It's only July right now, so it's not ready yet."

She aimed her camera at a purple-red flower blooming in the tall grass. The video was clear, her voice light and lively. Up in the corner, the viewer count was already over two hundred thousand.

Comments were flying in nonstop.

[I love Chief Lydia so much. I even went to her city for treatment, and she actually cured my tendonitis.]

[Me too! Her herbal medicine is amazing. I felt better after just a few doses.]

[Is it raining over there, Lydia? It looks like a downpour. Quick, take cover.]

Lydia agreed. The rain was coming down harder now, and she had already picked all the herbs she needed. She started walking toward the thick shade of a nearby tree, saying, "It's really coming down here. That's it for today. I'll stream again another "

Before she could finish, her foot caught on something, and she crashed to the ground.

Grass filled her mouth and nose. She spat and muttered a curse, frowning as she pushed herself up. Her fall had already ended the livestream. Setting her phone aside, she caught her breath and turned to see what had tripped her up.

She expected a branch or a root. Instead, she found a man.

He was lying in the thick grass, dressed in a black suit. With the sky so dark and the rain pouring, he almost blended right in.

Lydia stared, taken aback for a moment. The man's features were striking, sharply carved and

handsome, like something out of a magazine. But his eyes were shut tight, his brows drawn in pain. His face was ghostly pale, his lips a deep, unhealthy purple.

Lydia frowned. He was poisoned.

Out here in the mountains, that usually meant a snakebite.

She shifted closer and lifted the fabric on his pant leg. Sure enough, a nasty, swollen black-purple bite marked his left ankle.

He was in real danger.

"Well, looks like you got lucky running into me out here," Lydia muttered, slipping off her bamboo basket and pulling out a small medical kit from the herbs. She always carried medicine and antivenom, just in case.

She grabbed a scalpel and cut open the wound to let the blood flow. Her hands moved fast, not exactly gentle. The man groaned as pain jolted him awake.

Lydia didn't even look up. "Stay still if you want to live."

Connor felt like his left leg didn't belong to him anymore. He couldn't move it at all. His vision was hazy, his mind swimming, but he could feel someone working on his leg. It hurt, but he could handle it.

About fifteen minutes later, Lydia had wrapped up the wound and given him a shot

of antivenom. He was out of immediate danger.

"I've treated the bite. Call your family," she said, her voice brisk. She didn't bother asking what he was doing alone in the woods. That wasn't her problem.

Connor Jefferson's forehead was slick with cold sweat, but the rain had drenched him so thoroughly it was impossible to tell sweat from rain anymore.