

Ready to Rule: The Real Heiress Strikes Back

Chapter 7

"Alright, Kylie," Cameron said softly. "Let's have Lydia go inside and change into something clean. We'll talk with her properly after that."

Kylie quickly wiped her tears and nodded, her heart aching. "Yes, of course. I can't believe I forgot. Lydia, come on, let's get you inside."

Weren't the Smiths supposed to be the richest family in Lakeview Town? Their lifestyle shouldn't be so shabby. How could they let her precious daughter end up like this? Kylie couldn't help but wonder if the Smiths were really as wealthy as everyone said, or if they ever truly cared about her child.

Lydia walked between Cameron and Kylie as they led her through the huge villa gates. The grounds stretched out in every direction, with a fountain playing soft music, a garden bursting with exotic flowers, a sparkling pool, and even a helipad. It was almost too much to take in.

Servants stood in two neat lines on either side of the main entrance. As Lydia walked in, they all bowed low. "Welcome home, Miss Norwood."

Cameron rested a warm hand on Lydia's shoulder. "This is your home now, Lydia."

Kylie smiled through her tears. "Yes, Lydia. We're home."

Inside, a long hallway stretched ahead, with rooms branching off to either side. There was a cozy living room, a study with tall shelves, and a dining room that looked like it belonged in a magazine. The place was beautiful, every corner decorated with its own style.

In the living room, an elderly man with silver hair sat perfectly straight on the sofa, holding a cane. He didn't move, just watched Lydia with a sharp, unblinking gaze. His brow had been furrowed since the moment she walked in.

So this was his real granddaughter, the one they'd brought home after all these years? Why did she look so messy?

Lydia noticed him right away, and her gut told her this old man wasn't happy to see her.

Cameron and Kylie led her over, both of them glowing with excitement. "Dad, Lydia's back."

Mr. Norwood's frown only deepened. He didn't get up, just stared at Lydia. "Is this what the Norwood family's daughter is supposed to look like? People will laugh at us. Take her upstairs and get her cleaned up right now."

The happy mood in the room vanished in an instant.

Cameron hesitated, then tried to smooth things over. "Dad, Lydia got caught in the rain on her way here. That's why she looks like this."

The old man turned his face away, dismissive. "I didn't see anyone else soaked like her."

Just then, Jack's voice came from the doorway. "Sir, you don't know what it was like. The rain in Lakeview Town was pouring down, and the roads were a mess."

Everyone turned to look. Jack stood there, covered in mud from head to toe, his teeth flashing in a grin. If it wasn't for his build and voice, he would have been impossible to recognize.

Kylie coughed into her hand. "Dad, look at Jack. He's even worse off than Lydia."

Lydia glanced at her grandfather, who looked embarrassed and irritated. She spoke calmly. "If you had gone out there, sir, you'd be in even worse shape than Jack."

The whole room went silent.

Mr. Norwood stared at her. "What did you say?"

"I'm just telling the truth."

He bristled. "I knew it. Raised in a small family with no manners at all."

Lydia's voice stayed cool. "If I don't have manners, then you're just using your status to bully me."

He started to speak, but Cameron quickly stepped in front of Lydia, protective. He looked at his father, tired and frustrated. "Dad, Lydia just got home. Can't you give her a break?"

Kylie's voice shook as she spoke up too. "Dad, if you want to blame someone, blame me and Cameron. Don't take it out on Lydia. She was lost for eighteen years, and that's our fault."