

True Heiress Return to Her Unemployed Rich Family

She no longer felt at ease sitting in her usual spot, convinced she'd lost the right to occupy the seat beside her mother. After all, Arabella was the biological daughter.

"Arabella, please, take my seat," Naomi offered, beginning to rise.

Catching the strained note in Naomi's voice, Arabella politely declined. "It's really not necessary. You've always sat there, so there's no reason to change. I'm fine right here." With that, she pulled out the chair next to Alfred and settled in.

Seeing her sit down, Alfred gave her a soft smile and slid a glass of water toward her. He knew Arabella had a generous spirit; she wouldn't engage in petty rivalry with Naomi over something like seating.

Accepting the water, Arabella returned his smile with a look of understanding. Her simple action was a silent message to Naomi—she wasn't here to stake a claim or fight for status. She was simply returning to her family, and she hoped Naomi wouldn't read more into it.

Ruby had been clutching Naomi's arm, holding her back. Hearing Arabella, she chimed in, "See, Naomi? Arabella said it's fine. Just sit down. We're all family. Uncle Jonathan and Aunt Florence have made it clear—you and Arabella are both their daughters. That hasn't changed." She deliberately emphasized that Naomi still belonged here.

Arabella didn't even glance Ruby's way. Instead, she calmly took a sip of water.

Florence understood exactly what Naomi had meant with her earlier words. With Ruby's not- so-subtle reminder hanging in the air, she couldn't take sides now.

Doing so might drive a wedge between the sisters, and she wanted no misunderstandings between them.

Jonathan remained silent. In Cloudrise Manor, they'd never had disputes—or even jokes—about seating arrangements.

It surprised him that the usually easygoing Naomi would be sensitive about it.

Arabella's return had clearly affected her, making her insecure. It seemed they needed to be mindful of Naomi's feelings while welcoming Arabella.

Since Arabella was already seated and showed no intention of competing, Florence felt relieved and tried to smooth things over. "Where we sit really doesn't matter. Our table is so large—there's no assigned seating."

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Changing the subject, she asked, “Arabella, what do you like to eat?” As she spoke, she didn’t return to her previous chair but sat down beside Arabella instead.

Naomi noticed. Even though Florence said seating wasn’t important, she hadn’t chosen to sit next to her. Usually, during meals, Florence would sit beside Naomi, looking out for her. Now, she hadn’t even asked what Naomi might want, her attention fully on Arabella...

A sour, indescribable feeling settled in Naomi’s heart. Reluctant as she was to admit it, Florence’s focus had shifted. Arabella was indeed taking her place in their mother’s affections.

The others didn’t notice Naomi’s expression.

“Just some oatmeal and eggs would be great,” Arabella replied directly.

“Of course, let me get that for you,” Florence said warmly, immediately reaching for the serving spoon.

Naomi watched this scene—a warmth that once belonged to her. She couldn't get used to it.

Florence's attentiveness to Arabella even seemed to surpass what she'd once shown Naomi. Just having her mother serve her used to make Naomi's day.

Now, Florence was not only serving Arabella oatmeal but carefully peeling an egg for her... the care and intimacy seemed greater.

The food on her plate suddenly looked utterly unappetizing, tasting like cardboard. Naomi picked at it for a few bites before setting her fork down uncomfortably. "Dad, Mom, I've been away at that international competition and haven't been to the office for days. Please excuse me, I should get going."

She then turned to Ruby, who was still eating. "Ruby, you're finished too, right? Let's go." "Huh? But I've barely..." Ruby's eyes widened in surprise. She'd only had a few spoonfuls of the oatmeal—and it was the *good* kind with truffles, which they didn't have often!

But with Naomi leaving, she didn't dare stay alone. "I'm full too. Thanks for breakfast."

Seeing Naomi leave after eating so little, Florence asked with concern, "Naomi, are you sure you've had enough?"

"I'm fine," Naomi replied flatly, grabbing her bag and heading for the door.

“Don’t rush off. Let the driver take you,” Jonathan said, noticing her hurried pace. He signaled for the chauffeur.

Chapter 16 The Seat of Tension

Arabella saw right through Naomi’s actions. She knew Naomi must be hurting, and it was not wonder she’d lost her appetite.

Even Alfred, sitting quietly beside them, said nothing, simply continuing with his meal.

Florence and Jonathan exchanged a look before turning to Arabella. “Sweetheart, take your time and eat properly. Don’t rush like Naomi. She has a company to run, so she’s always on a tight schedule.”

Though Naomi was technically still college-aged, she’d excelled, finishing her degree requirements early and interning for some time. For her last birthday, Jonathan had given her a small company to manage, and she’d been running it surprisingly well.