

# Love Burned She Rose Unscathed Novel

## Love Burned Chapter 11 - 20

### Chapter 11

Roseanne said sincerely, "You know, I really should apologize for being such a hothead when I was younger. She deserves an apology."

Leda nearly choked on her drink, coughing several times before painting her face with a look of sheer refusal. "Oh, come on, girl, spare me the drama. It's not like you don't know the whole story. The only class I ever flunked and had to retake was Ms. Payne's elective. Just the thought of her gives me the chills. Besides, I'm such a nobody. She's probably forgotten all about me. Honestly, I'm no help to you."

Seeing Leda's reluctance, Roseanne didn't push further.

"But," Leda's eyes twinkled mischievously as her tone unexpectedly turned, "I might just have the perfect person for this job."

\*Oh?"

"Remember my cousin, Owen Reynolds?"

Roseanne sipped her water and nodded. "Of course, I remember."

Owen Reynolds, the youngest leading figure in the national physics community, topped last year's list of the ten most influential young scientists in Nature magazine. An undergrad protégé of Madeleine, he majored in Applied Biosciences, published five papers in SCI within two years, and was hailed as a prodigy by the biological sciences community.!

Then, he made the radical decision to switch disciplines and dive into physics for reasons unknown. It caused quite a stir at the time.

But as it turned out, a capable person could make a mark in any field. Owen had become a heavyweight in the international physics community.

Being his junior by a few years at the same university, Roseanne had heard legendary tales about Owen long before she knew he was Leda's cousin. Owen had been working at a research Institute abroad for years and had only returned home three months ago.

“My cousin just asked about Ms. Payne’s health days ago. He’s been busy but thought of paying a visit. It’d be perfect if you two went together.” The more Leda spoke, the more she convinced herself, promptly dialing Owen’s number

After a couple of rings, Owen picked up.

Roseanne heard a deep voice, cold and formal. “What’s up?”

Leda explained in a few sentences.

The background noise suggested he was busy, and the call ended in less than a minute.

“Done! Owen wants to meet you tomorrow at 2 PM at Thyme & Seasons. You can talk more then.” Leda squeezed Roseanne’s hand reassuringly, “Get a good night’s sleep tonight, and we can worry about the rest tomorrow.”

Roseanne nodded. “Thanks, I appreciate it.”

The following day, Roseanne left half an hour early. When she arrived at the restaurant, she checked her watch and found she was on schedule. There were two minutes to two.

Perfect timing.

When she entered the restaurant, the server led her to a man sitting by the window, immersed in his coffee. His attire was simple yet elegant, wearing a white shirt paired with black slacks and gold-rimmed glasses perched on his nose. The sunlight casting shadows on his profile made him look like a figure out of a painting.

In contrast, Roseanne felt underdressed in her white T-shirt and jeans, her hair tied back in a high ponytail, and bare-faced

Feeling her gaze, the man turned toward her.

“Take a seat. What can I get you?” His voice was rich and slightly husky, making Roseanne snap back to reality. She pulled out the chair opposite him and sat down

“Sorry for making you wait.” Her apology was all in her sincere eyes.

Owen adjusted his glasses lightly. “You didn’t. I was only five minutes early myself. I’ve got a few datasets at the lab, so I can only spare you thirty minutes today. Will that be enough?”

Roseanne nodded. “That’ll be plenty.”

The server approached, and Roseanne ordered a lemonade.B

Owen got straight to the point. "About seeing Ms. Payne, what are y

you hoping

ing me to do?"%

Chapter 12

Roseanne always appreciated a no-nonsense attitude, so her straightforward request was no surprise. "Ms. Payne has left the hospital, and I'm in the dark about her whereabouts. I was hoping you could accompany me for a visit if it's not too much trouble..."

Her gaze flickered slightly, adding, "And if Ms. Payne gets heated, maybe you could help calm things down. You know, for health's sake."

The hint of a smile seemed to play at the corners of Owen's mouth when he heard that.

Roseanne continued, "I understand you're busy. So, you can set the time."

Owen nodded. "Alright, how about the day after tomorrow?"

Roseanne expressed her gratitude with a heartfelt thanks.

Cradling her lemonade, she suddenly asked, "Why... why are you willing to help me?"

Owen met her gaze with his brown, expressive eyes. When Roseanne thought he might not respond, he began, "Because you're Roseanne."

Roseanne was surprised.

"Ms. Payne once mentioned," he said, sipping his coffee, "that she has three regrets in life. One is that the vastness of scientific research exceeds the short span of life. Two is having no children, and three is Roseanne."

Roseanne was stunned, her fingertips digging into her palm.!!

Owen's piercing gaze observed her, filled with a profound curiosity that quickly settled back into tranquility. It was his first encounter with Roseanne, yet it wasn't the first time he had heard her name. What made this girl, mentioned in the same breath as life, research, and family, so significant to Ms. Payne??

Roseanne's throat felt dry as she slightly lowered her gaze. She could almost envision the disappointment mixed with regret in Madeleine's eyes when Madeleine spoke of her."

Owen passed Roseanne a piece of paper with some numbers scribbled on it. "Here's my cell number.

Roseanne glanced at it, noting the elegant handwriting.

"Here's your tiramisu," announced the waiter as he set down the dessert, stealing a covert glance at the patrons seated before him

The man's handsome face bore a hint of indifference tinged with Impatience. The woman across from him donned a chic, red Dior mini skirt and clutched a Hermes Birkin in white, exuding an air of affluent upbringing.

She seemed oblivious to the man's growing irritation, chattering away non-stop

"Murray, I heard from your mother that you've got stomach issues. Our family happens to know a specialist for that, so maybe..."

Murray fiddled with his lighter, offering occasional responses. He had agreed to the blind date arranged by his mother, intending not to cause a scene. However, he found himself utterly disinterested in what the woman was saying.

His gaze wandered until it landed on Roseanne sitting with another man a few tables away. Unable to hear their conversation, he could still make out the faint smile on her face. The previously tolerable noise around him suddenly became unbearably loud, worsening his mood.

Murray scoffed, shifting his gaze away, "I should be going."

Owen was busy, and sparing thirty minutes was already stretching his limits. Roseanne showed understanding, and they both stood up to leave

Exiting the restaurant, Owen courteously held the door open for her. What a fine gentleman.

Roseanne smiled. "Thank you

As they reached the curb, Owen announced, "My car's here."

Roseanne nodded. "See you the day after tomorrow."

She watched Owen drive away before turning to leave, only to unexpectedly lock eyes with someone. The look in those eyes was mocking and chilly.

“Moved on so quickly, have you?”

## Chapter 13

As Murray approached, he noticed Roseanne had her beautiful, wavy hair straightened.

She was not wearing makeup or high heels, just a plain white T-shirt. Utterly simple. But those eyes seemed brighter than before, showing no signs of heartbreak or gloom.

If it was an act, Murray had to admit she was doing a damn good job. It was so good that it was getting under his skin.

Roseanne frowned, knowing him too well. That look was a sure sign of brewing anger.

“Huh, Murray scoffed, “Really, after all these years with me, you should’ve picked up some standards. Don’t just go for anyone—it makes me, your ex, look bad. Where’s my dignity in that?”

“Dignity?” Roseanne couldn’t help but laugh, though her laughter carried a tinge of melancholy.”

It was too bad that Murray didn’t catch it. His mind was all about the images of Roseanne smiling at other men, making his blood boil. He chalked it up to a male’s “territorial instinct.”

Roseanne was his territory once, and even if he didn’t want her anymore, he wouldn’t allow those lowlifes to have her.

“I’ve got things to do. I’m leaving.” Roseanne didn’t want to hear him anymore.

“Leaving? Where to? Leda’s apartment? It seems like that’s your only refuge now, though you’ve got the nerve to have taken your checkbook and ID with you this time. Playing hard to get, huh?!”

That was a sting in Roseanne’s heart. She was used to Murray’s temper and his mood swings, but those words still stung. He thought she was playing games?

Roseanne took a deep breath, trying to calm her emotions, then forced a smile. “First off, Mr. Reynolds and I are just friends, nothing like what you think. And we’ve broken up. What you think is your business.”

Just then, her taxi arrived. Roseanne opened the door and got in. “Please drive “8

Murray snorted, impressed by Roseanne’s newfound boldness. During their argument three months ago, she hadn’t threatened him like that. But then, she dared to bring another man before him, huh?

Suddenly, a pair of soft hands clung to his arm, and Hannah leaned in close, her perfume overwhelming. "Murray, why the rush? You're not even waiting for me..."} }

Despite finding the scent too strong, Murray didn't push her away but wrapped his arm around her waist. "What? You want to come with me?"

If Roseanne could find another man, couldn't he find another woman??

In the taxi, Roseanne glimpsed the intimate pair in the rearview mirror and couldn't help but smirk bitterly."

So, Millie wasn't his only woman.

Six years was all for nothing.

As the taxi drove away, Murray's expression darkened. He coldly removed Hannah's hand.

Confused, Hannah tried to get closer but got harshly pushed away as Murray walked off without looking back.

"Wait, Murray! Murray, stop!"

Frustrated, Hannah bit her lip.

Murray got into his car, started the engine, and called Hertha.

Hertha picked up the call. "Murray? Weren't you on a date?"

Through gritted teeth, Murray said, "Did you tell Roseanne about me being at Thyme & Seasons today? Can't you keep things to yourself? Why'd you have to tell her, letting her bring some guy to get to me? Can't you think for once, always messing things up?"

## Chapter 14

Hertha was startled by the sudden spike in Murray's voice, "Hold up, Murray. What are you talking about? I've never..."]

Caught off guard by the tirade and then staring at the disconnected call, Hertha was speechless. "Seriously, what did I even do?"

Before she could stew in anger, the butler approached with a list of gifts. "Miss Sherwood, could you please check if these are sufficient?"

Hertha glanced over the list, noting the high-quality items, and after a thorough review, she nodded in satisfaction. "These are for Ms. Payne. Ensure everything is perfect. No mistakes, got it?"

The butler nodded respectfully. "Understood."

"Ms. Cole, this is arguably the best listing near Kingswell University. Look at the natural light and the surroundings. People are lining up to rent this place. If you hesitate, it might slip through your fingers." The agent was brimming with enthusiasm as Roseanne took a look around

The apartment was modest, a two-bedroom with a living room whose decor was outdated for over a decade. It was an old and small unit, accessible only by stairs. But it had its merits. Not only was it close to Kingswell University, but it was also next to a library, with convenient transportation options. Most importantly, the natural light and the environment were indeed appealing. If she wanted a fresh start, that was the place.

"Okay, I'll take it." She signed a one-year lease on the spot.

Leda returned and found luggage scattered on the floor. "You're moving out?"

Roseanne packing her clothes, replied, "Yeah, I've found a place."

Leda hummed, guessing, "Murray came around, huh? Not bad. It lasted a whole week this time. It's about time you let those jerks cool their heels, stop them from getting too cocky, thinking they're God's gift..."

Roseanne paused, locking eyes with Leda. "Leda, this time, it's over with Murray. I'm not going back to him."

Leda was shocked but then seemed to believe her. Over six years, she watched Roseanne gradually hide her true self for Murray, her brilliance dimming, becoming a woman who revolved around a man. No, even a housewife has her dignity and rightful place. But what was Roseanne to Murray? He was wasting her time!

Leda cheered. "Good riddance! It's about time to move on. There's plenty of fish in the sea, Murray's not the be-all and end-all!"

"Exactly!" Roseanne nodded.

Leda tried to confirm with Roseanne. "Ahem... So, you're serious this time? You won't return to him in a few days, will you?"

Roseanne couldn't help but laugh.

On her way back, she stopped by the market. The apartment was showing its age, with peeling walls. The furniture seemed like antiques, bearing the weight of years. She decided to buy some eco-friendly paint to give the place a fresh coat.

Roseanne asked politely. "Sir, could you help me with these?"

The driver assisted her in unloading several large cans from the trunk.

Roseanne looked up at the seventh floor it was going to be a climb. To repaint the walls meant moving furniture around, an opportunity to rearrange her living space.

She kept the door open while she lugged the paint cans up, one step at a time. The cans were heavy, and it took considerable effort, resting every two floors until all were upstairs, leaving her breathless.

She felt refreshed after a short break and a face wash in the bathroom. While picking up a paintbrush, Roseanne sized up the walls, rolled up her sleeves, and got to work!!

## Chapter 15

Roseanne hadn't experienced the rush of doing manual labor in forever.

Living with Murray for those years, she didn't have the maids waiting on hand and foot, but she steered clear of any heavy lifting. Even in the early days, when Murray's startup was getting off the ground when money was tight, they still had a cleaning lady come weekly for the house chores.

After finishing a can of paint, Roseanne stretched her aching back. Being pampered for years had made her soft. She went to the hallway, planning to bring in the rest of the paint.}

But, in her haste, she knocked over the can. Though she acted quickly, a small spill still spread on her next-door neighbor's doorstep. She grabbed a mop instantly, but as she was halfway through cleaning, the previously shut door suddenly opened.

Their eyes met, and as she was about to apologize, she found herself face-to-face with a familiar person.!!

"You live here?"

"Owen?"

Both spoke at the same time.

Owen glanced at the mess at his feet, then back at her. "So, the new tenant is you?"



Roseanne hadn't expected such a coincidence. "As you can see, we're neighbors now."

Owen's gaze shifted subtly. He had chosen to live there because it was close to the lab and university, making it convenient for teaching students and conducting experiments.

But why Roseanne? The environment wasn't ideal for a young woman, not least because of the lack of an elevator, which wouldn't be a first choice for the younger crowd.?

Roseanne thought he was upset about the spill in the hallway. "Sorry about the mess with the paint. I'll have it cleaned up in no time."

She sped up her cleaning and finished quickly. She pointed to the trash by Owen's side as she headed downstairs. "I'm heading down. Let me take that out for you."

Owen didn't refuse. In return, he fetched a folding ladder from his apartment. "This might make painting your walls a bit easier."

Roseanne smiled. "Thanks."

With the ladder, painting became much more efficient. In just one morning, Roseanne had refreshed all the peeling paint in her apartment. It looked clean and orderly in no time.

Later, she picked a new sofa and dining set, giving the room a light makeover, finally bringing her project to a close. When she finished, it was nearly dark.

Roseanne rubbed her shoulders, looking around. The warm glow of the lamps transformed the once-dingy space, making it feel brand new compared to when she first arrived.

Her little nest boasted her favorite light-colored cotton duvet cover on the bed, which smelled faintly of laundry detergent after a day in

the sun.

The green plants she bought in the afternoon were lined up by the window radiating vitality.

And her checkerboard patterned bean bag chair, filled with perfectly fluffy cushions, was ideal for reading and resting comfortably.

Though the space was small, it had everything she needed.

“Is this your new place? It looks pretty good.” Leda remarked over their video chat. “Your DIY skills are as impressive as ever. You haven’t lost your touch since you single-handedly redecorated our dorm room back in the day.”

Roseanne chuckled. “It’s nothing, just making the place feel like home.”

“Anne, you’re stronger than I thought, finding a new direction so quickly.” Leda had her suspicions when she heard the new address but didn’t press on it. “I’m happy you could start over”

After hanging up, Roseanne suddenly felt a wave of sadness wash over her!!

## Chapter 16

Roseanne realized too late that she had been living in a bubble, but thankfully, there was still time to turn things around 2

It was 6 pm. After a hectic day, she hadn’t had a chance to eat anything!!

She had some bread, fresh veggies in the fridge, so she made some sandwiches and cream of mushroom soup

As she returned the ladder she had borrowed, she thought it over and decided to pack up some soup and the sandwich.”

Owen was into revising the experimental data for his paper. Hearing a knock, he stepped away from his study to open the door

“Thanks for lending me the ladder, and I made some dinner. If you don’t mind, give it a try?” Under the porch light, Roseanne’s eyes sparkled with sincerity.

Owen was momentarily stunned but then reached out to take the food, muttering a thanks.

He returned to his room and resumed the data adjustments, comparing them against previous experimental results. When everything was in order, it was already eight o’clock.

His stomach was growling. He automatically reached for his phone to order takeout but noticed the bag under the desk lamp. He opened it and found the contents still warm. The sandwich and soup beckoned.

After taking a bite of the sandwich, he paused in surprise. The bacon was perfectly crispy, complementing the freshness of the veggies, with a fried egg in the middle adding just the sweetness and moisture. It was a revelation for his taste buds.

After finishing the sandwich, he tried the soup, finding its simple, smooth texture surprisingly satisfying. It warmed him up from the inside, more so than most soup he had tried. Owen found himself smiling, a mere sign of contentment!

Not bad at all. Owen finished the soup and sandwich quickly.

At ten o'clock, after a nighttime run, Owen bumped into Roseanne on his way back.

She wore casual sportswear, her hair in a bun, standing out among the crowd.

"Out for a walk?"!

"You're running at night?"

They spoke at the same time.

Roseanne nodded. "Yeah, just out for a bit, picking up a parcel."

He slowed his pace to match hers, catching his breath as they walked side by side. "Thanks for dinner. It was great."

Roseanne replied, "You've helped me twice. I should be the one thanking you"

They passed by a children's playground. Its lively noise was distinct against the evening calm

Roseanne smiled. "It's pretty lively around here."

In Murray's mansion, it was always eerily quiet.

Owen followed her gaze, realizing he hadn't paid much attention to these details despite living there for over two months.

Remembering a message that he had received earlier, he casually mentioned, "I checked with my junior colleague. Ms. Payne has been recuperating at home. I plan to visit her tomorrow at ten in the morning. Would that work for you?"

"Tomorrow at ten?" That was so soon. She suddenly felt nervous when she thought about meeting her professor after six years, her heart fluttering with unease.

Owen turned to her. "Is there a problem?"

"No, not at all." R

Owen glanced at her, sensing her mood shift, but chose not to probe further. He valued privacy.

They said their goodbyes at their respective doors, retreating into their homes.

Roseanne took a distracted shower and lay in bed, trying to find sleep. A soft rain began to fall through the night, and she tossed and turned, hardly catching a wink of sleep.<sup>3</sup>

Rising early, she had breakfast and waited for Owen.

At ten, the knock came right on time. Roseanne opened the door promptly, ready to step out.

Owen paused momentarily before saying, "Let's go."

## Chapter 17

the way, with Owen trailing a step behind. She seemed to have become her usual self, contrasting the previous night's

Roseanne led th unease!

Owen pulled up the car, and Roseanne slid into the passenger seat. They were driving when they passed a local flower store.

Suddenly, Roseanne opened her mouth. "Could we stop for a moment, just two minutes? I want to pick up some flowers,"

"Flowers?"

Roseanne nodded. "Yeah, for Ms. Payne,

Owen gripped the steering wheel, puzzled. "Is that necessary?"

Roseanne was stunned, then chuckled. Do you always show up empty-handed when you visit someone?"}}

Owen nodded earnestly.

Roseanne gave him a thumbs-up, amused, thinking. "So this is how the big shots do it, huh?"

But still, the man pulled over.

Madeleine lived on Maple Avenue, not far from Kingswell University. The neighborhood had cozy bungalows, a blend of traditional and modern designs, each standing alone, simple, yet full of character

After they passed through a grove of maple trees, the house came into view.

It had been six years, Roseanne tightened her grip on the seatbelt, eyeing the flowers at her feet, suddenly feeling nervous.

Owen sensed her hesitation. "Aren't you coming out?"

Roseanne bit her lip. "I think I'll wait a moment"

The man glanced at her, then nodded. "I'll go ahead."?

Roseanne appreciated his silence. After taking a few deep breaths, she unfastened her seatbelt and stepped out of the car.

Spring was in full bloom. When Roseanne entered the yard, a gentle fragrance of flowers greeted her. The flowers by the fence, probably neglected due to the owner's illness, looked wilted."

Even before stepping inside, Roseanne could hear Madeleine's voice, causing her heart to flutter. She hurried after Owen.

Owen greeted, "Ms. Payne.

Madeleine set down the latest issue of a biology journal magazine and adjusted her reading glasses. "Eh? Owen? What brings you here?" Owen stepped forward to assist her. "Just checking on you. How have you been feeling?"

"Just a minor ailment. There's no need for everyone to fuss over me like this." She patted his hand. "You're too kind. I'm perfectly fine!"

Owen paused. "I brought someone else with me today."

"Who?" Madeleine looked puzzled.

Following his gaze, Roseanne appeared in the doorway, head bowed like a child who had done something wrong.

Madeleine's eyes flickered, taking a few steps forward before the initial shock and a hint of joy turned into complexity and deliberate coldness.<sup>8</sup>

"What are you doing here?" Madeleine asked sternly.<sup>8</sup>

"Ms. Pau

Payne... Roseanne was at a loss.

Madeleine's voice was firm, devoid of emotion. "Who said she would chase love at all costs? And now you're back??

Roseanne's lips tightened, tears starting to form, "Ms. Payne, I'm sorry I let you down."

"What else?" Madeleine rarely showed such severity.

Roseanne stammered, "And... I was wrong." After a pause, she added softly. "Is it too late?"

"Finally..." Madeleine sighed, her expression softening. "Do you know how long I've waited for you? Six years, a whole six years."?

Tears welled up in Roseanne's eyes. "I... I didn't know." Had Madeleine been waiting for her all this time?

"It's good that you've realized your mistake." Madeleine heaved a sigh of relief. But behind this realization was unknown hardship and grievances, visible on Madeleine's face as a look of sympathy.

## Chapter 18

Roseanne's eyes filled with tears she could no longer hold back, and with a rush of emotion, she threw herself into Madeleine's arms. "Ms. Payne."

up and still a

Madeleine patted Roseanne's back with her dry, soft palms, and Madeleine's heart softened. "There, there. You're all grown up crybaby. You'll make us both a laughing stock."X

Owen quietly observed the heartfelt reunion from a distance, silently stepping out to the balcony to give them space to talk once they had embraced and made up.

After years apart, Madeleine was eager to catch up with Roseanne but deliberately steered clear of any mention of her love life.

The fact that Roseanne could say, "I was wrong," was proof enough that the path she had chosen, or rather the person she had chosen, was a mistake. Why reopen old wounds?!

Roseanne mumbled, "I've rented a place near campus and started studying again. I plan to apply for your graduate program by the end of this year..."

Madeleine's eyes sparkled with an immense joy. "Really? Are you serious?" She even asked twice to be sure.

"Yeah," Roseanne nodded, ashamed to meet Madeleine's gaze. She had once forsaken the path laid out for her, and she wished to start

anew

Madeleine sighed, "Great! That's how it should be! Don't you dare fool me! You've committed to applying for my graduate program. It seems I didn't save this year's spot for nothing...1

Roseanne was stunned. She had suspected that Madeleine might have saved her a spot, but hearing it confirmed still felt unreal. Roseanne wondered, "Roseanne. Oh, Roseanne, what have you done to deserve this??"

"Ms. Payne, getting in is not a sure thing. You..." she tried to temper expectations.

Madeleine cut her off, "If you're determined, failure isn't an option. I know your capabilities better than anyone. Unless you deliberately perform poorly to tease me!"

"How could I..." Roseanne couldn't help but smile through her tears.

Madeleine smiled. "It's getting late. Owen, Oh? Where did Owen go?"

"Ms. Payne." Owen stepped in from the balcony.

"It's about time for lunch. Today, you and Anne should stay. I'll cook!"

At the mention of Madeleine cooking, Roseanne's face paled, and Owen's expression turned complex.

"Um, maybe I should cook instead." It wasn't that Roseanne wasn't grateful, but with Madeleine in the kitchen, she feared for its survival. Madeleine cleared her throat awkwardly, aware of her culinary reputation yet unwilling to lose face before her students, so she vaguely conceded, "Ahem, right, I'm still recuperating. It's best if I don't cook."

Quickly tying an apron, Roseanne took charge of the kitchen.

Owen rolled up his sleeves and followed, "I'll help."

Madeleine watched them with a deepening smile.

The fridge was full of fresh ingredients. Aiming to cook something light for the convalescing Madeleine, Roseanne got to work. Owen asked, "What do you

you need me to do?"

Glancing at the vegetables, Roseanne replied, "Can you wash these?"

Owen agreed, "Shouldn't be too hard

Roseanne made room for him. His movements were clumsy but earnest, ensuring he washed away every bit of dirt

Roseanne casually asked, "Any dietary restrictions?"

Owen answered casually, "None"

Roseanne kept asking. "And your taste preference?"

Owen said without hesitation, "Anything's fine."

"You're

easy to please she muttered.

Owen was unlike Murray, who had picky taste and endless demands.

Chapter 19

Owen didn't make a sound. To him, food was a means to refuel, and he never cared about the taste. "All clean now."

Glancing at the neatly arranged bell peppers and kale, it was evident the work of someone with a touch of OCD.

"What's so funny?" Owen asked, puzzled.

Roseanne cleared her throat. "Nothing. You should head out now."

"Okay" Owen dried his hands and nodded slightly.

Roseanne had made a whole spread of dishes, leaning toward the lighter side, the kind of food Madeleine could and would enjoy.

"It's kind of you to remember, Madeleine remarked, touched.

After the meal, Roseanne cleaned up without being asked. Owen naturally joined in to help.

While standing under the warm glow of the kitchen light, his silhouette elongated. From Roseanne's perspective, his finely chiseled profile resembled that of an ancient Greek statue.

Madeleine leaned against the doorframe. "Anne, how did you meet Owen?"



Owen was her most proud pupil, and Roseanne her favorite student. She had long wanted to introduce them to each other. Surprisingly, they had met each other beforehand due to a twist of fate.

Just then, from outside came a voice. "Ms. Payne, you have a visitor!"

Madeleine turned and walked to the living room, where a young woman rose from the sofa with a smile. "Ms. Payne, I'm Hertha. I visited you in the hospital before and inquired about this year's graduate admissions."

Madeleine nodded, "I remember. Please have a seat."

Hertha's smile brightened. "I heard you've been recuperating at home, so I brought you some health supplements."

Madeleine glanced discreetly at the gift box on the tea table. There were vitamins, fish oil, calcium tablets, and the like.

Her smile slightly faded.<sup>8</sup>

Hertha mentioned, "Last time, we talked about the graduate program spots for this year..."

Madeleine interrupted, "Thank you, I appreciate the gesture, but please take these back. As for the graduate program, it's competitive every year, Admission depends entirely on merit.")

Hertha was shocked.

Last time at the hospital, Madeleine's words were full of encouragement, talking about 'opportunities,' "trying," and "doing your best." Why does she sound so different today?"

Hertha tried to say something else. "Ms. Payne, I..."

Madeleine cut her off. "Ms. Sherwood, I'm sorry, but I have guests over, so I can't keep you any longer. I'll have Bob help you with your things to the car."

Hertha could sense she was getting dismissed. Confused about what went wrong, she left in a daze, accidentally bumping into

someone.

"Roseanne?" Hertha exclaimed in surprise, "What are you doing here?"

Roseanne stood there in simple attire, a white T-shirt paired with a quaint floral apron, holding a trash bag.

“What a coincidence” Roseanne was equally surprised but quickly smiled and greeted Hertha

She didn’t dislike Hertha despite her being spoiled and arrogant. But she was still polite. But their relationship was nothing beyond that, not as close as she was with Leda.

“You...” Hertha looked her up and down, “started working as a cleaner?”

Roseanne was confused.

“Didn’t my brother give you money?”

Roseanne looked at her with more confusion.

“Oh my God! That’s so tacky! I can’t stand him anymore.” She ranted while walking away, her heels clicking on the floor. Continuing her rant, she pulled out her phone. It wasn’t that she felt upset for Roseanne. If Roseanne chose to be a doormat, it was on her. But Murray’s actions were just too demeaning! It was like going to a diner and not tipping! Hertha felt utterly embarrassed X

## Chapter 20

“Hey, Murray! I can’t hold it back anymore.” The phone call connected and Hertha was all set to let it out

Murray sighed impatiently, I’m busy here. I’ve got no time for your drama.

“It’s not... who’s making drama? The one overstepping is you, okay? How did you become such a penny–pincher? Don’t you know that stingy men are as disgusting as rats?”

“Go bother someone else with your craziness.” Murray had no idea what Hertha was talking about

But Hertha didn’t care. “Roseanne, bless her. She cooks your meals, does your laundry, and keeps you company day and night. How can you not spare a dime? Forcing her to work odd jobs for cash, you want to ruin your reputation like that, huh?”

There was silence on the other end for a moment. “Who did you say?”

Hertha repeated it. “Roseanne.”

Murray was confused. “Odd Jobs... what do you mean??

Hertha spilled everything she had seen. “You’ve gone too far this time. Even a loyal dog doesn’t deserve this kind of treatment...” “8

Whatever Hertha said next, Murray didn't catch a word.

Echoing in his ears were, "Roseanne, odd jobs, making money..."

Even though she cashed the fifty million dollar check, she dared not use it!

Murray loosened his tie, his gaze deep, his expression hard to read, imbued with a profound mystery. He was deep in the thought. "Hah, she left decisively then. I thought she could do more, but now, without me, she can't even make ends meet.'X

"Hey, Murray, what's with the daydreaming? It's your turn." Corley pointed at the dice cup in his hand, reminding him.

"I'm out" Murray grabbed his jacket and car keys, ready to leave.

"I thought it was y

you who wanted this get-together?" Corley was puzzled.

Murray snorted, "Change of plans. Got something to do."

He figured it was about time for Roseanne to come back, huh?

Murray waited in his car, receiving a few calls of work and a flood of messages, but not the one he hoped for. He finally gave up waiting and drove straight to Leda's apartment.

with

no relatives or friends in Lumina City Roseanne always went to Leda's place whenever they fought. He had picked her up from there more times than he could count. So, he didn't need a GPS to find his way.!!

"Murray?"

Just as he got off, someone called him. Murray turned around to see Leda arm in arm with a young guy, probably heading home.

"What are you doing here? Leda's eyes held a hint of wariness.

Murray asked directly, "Where's Roseanne?"

Leda asked him back. "What do you want with her?"

I'm asking you where Roseanne is? His tone grew impatient.

Leda was bold and lived life on the edge. Murray's impression of her was poor.!

He even warned Roseanne to keep her distance so she wouldn't pick up bad habits. But the usually obedient Roseanne, in this regard, surprisingly didn't listen, souring Murray's view of Leda even further

Leda wasn't having any of it. "Let's get this straight, big guy. You two have broken up. What right do you have to come here asking for her?"

Murray scoffed, "How many times have we broken up? Can you even count them on your fingers?"

"So what?"

"Blocking me now is p

pointless. You're lu

just wasting your time playing the villain.

In the end, Roseanne would always come back, begging for reconciliation

Leda couldn't help but laugh at his arrogance and presumptuousness. "In your eyes, is Anne less than a dog to you? You take her when you want and discard her when you don't, assuming she's not significant or worth cherishing."

Murray didn't want to hear her ramble. "If you don't tell me, I'll find her myself.2

Then, the young guy beside Leda stepped forward, blocking his path. "Sit, breaking into someone's home is illegal"

Murray didn't even glance at him, his eyes fixed on Leda, scoffing as he nodded, "Fine, I'll remember this. But it doesn't matter. Anne will return to me, tail wagging like a dog."