

Love Burned She Rose Unscathed Novel

Love Burned Chapter 131 - 140

Chapter 131

The neighbor gossiped, "Seriously? Without a job or education, what's she up to?"

"Oh, you know, playing sugar baby to the rich! Just lie down and spread her legs. And voila, her bank account's blooming. Why bother hunting for a job?"

"Yikes! Hazel, watch your mouth! That's a lady's reputation you're messing with!"

Hazel continued, "Hmph. If his daughter has worked a decent job, why hasn't she shown her face around here in years? She's ashamed, and that's why. Norris surely doesn't want the scandal. In a small town like ours, gossip spreads faster than wildfire. How's he supposed to keep his head high as a teacher?"

"Oh, my lord..."

These whispers never reached Norris. Even if they had, he might have kept to his silence.}

In his eyes, what his daughter was doing wasn't much different from being kept as a mistress in a big house."

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When Roseanne stepped off the train, she couldn't help but wrap her down jacket tighter around herself. Despite Pinehollow being farther south than Lumina City, it was still bitterly cold this time of the year."

She sat in the taxi, watching the scenery reel backward, memories of her hometown slowly aligned with the view outside the window.

With its modest population, Pinehollow had seen its heavy industries move out over the years. The government pushed tourism, leading to significant greening efforts along the roads. They had the old buildings refurbished and parks newly minted. Only the old town retained its original look, with the river dividing the new from the old.

In summer, people would boat on the river.

In winter, its flowing surface would freeze over, breaking at the slightest touch and scattering like diamonds, shimmering brightly.}

An ancient arch bridge spanned the river, and the Cole family lived at one end. While she was walking through the alleys, the sign for Pinehollow Horizon Future Middle School Staff Quarters soon came into view.

Once a top physics student of his generation at Twilight Peak Academy, Norris got specially invited to teach at Pinehollow Horizon Future Middle School.

Within a year, he became the head of the physics department. He also founded the school's physics competition team, sending quite a few students to international contests, all of whom went to prestigious universities and achieved great success.

Being hailed as a teacher whose influence spread far and wide wasn't an overstatement. His teaching excellence secured him among the first batch of teachers to enjoy housing benefits, and he was the youngest.

Thinking of her father, Roseanne felt a wave of emotion.

"I told you to aim high, and this is your choice? For a man, you're willing to throw away your future?"

"To think I, Norris, have failed so miserably as a teacher and a father!"

"If you leave with him, don't ever come back. Don't ever consider us your family!"

"Anne, are you sure about this? Are you willing to give up your parents for him?"

"Fine, from now on, I'm not your father, and you are not my daughter!"

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"Young lady, we're here." The driver's voice brought her back to reality.

Roseanne quickly paid him. "Thank you."

The Cole family lived on the ground floor. They had a cute little yard mostly taken up by a wisteria trellis. Her dad had built it for her mom 'cause she loved purple so much.

When in bloom, the cascading vines filled with vibrant flowers were her mother's favorite retreat. Seeing her love for it, Norris had constructed a swing for her. But as she grew older, the swing was left forgotten. She had been gone for education, and six years had passed without seeing the wisteria or the swing. Wondering how they fared brought a stinging to her eyes. §

Standing before her home, Roseanne took a deep breath and knocked.

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“Who’s there?” Hearing the knock, Norris quickly wiped his hands on his apron, glancing at the freshly made roast chicken and carefully placing it on the table before heading to the door.

In the room, watering the houseplants, Madge heard the knock, peering outside, “Who’s it? Is it Jay?”

Norris replied, “Jay texted this morning and said he’d arrive tomorrow. It’s probably Lacey from next door. You’ve been under the weather lately, and I asked her to bring some fresh milk...”

At the door, Roseanne looked at her father opening the door. Six years flew by. The white at his temples had spread, and the lines on his square face deepened.

As a child, she loved riding on her dad’s shoulders, but her father seemed older, his back more bent, yet his eyes remained as sharp and clear as they had been six years ago.

“Dad...” her voice was soft.

From initial shock to disbelief, Norris’ expression darkened. “What are you doing back?”

The outside fell silent. Feeling something was off, Madge exited the living room before she entered the yard. “Norris, why aren’t you answering? Who is it?”

However, upon seeing the person at the door, her grip loosened, and the watering bottle dropped with a crash.

Tears filled Roseanne’s eyes. Her mother looked as beautiful and elegant as ever, seemingly favored by time.

Their eyes met, and she couldn’t help but murmur, “Mom...”

Hearing her daughter’s voice, Madge’s hands trembled slightly, her lips moving but unable to form a complete sentence.

After a moment, she managed in a husky voice, “Norris, let’s go inside.”

In the living room, the atmosphere was heavy.

Norris sat on the couch, his expression blank, “Why did you come back? Have you forgotten what you said?”

Six years ago, Roseanne had chosen a man over a direct Ph.D. program, something Norris found out about at the last minute. That night, he was so angry that his blood pressure spiked, landing him in the hospital.”

He'd always looked out for her and helped her grow, never thought she would ditch everything for a guy.

He still remembered confronting her in Lumina City, where she declared she had chosen between love and academia with no regrets.

Recalling that scene still made Norris' chest tight with discomfort.

“I've said it before. From now on, you chase your love, and your mother and I will live like we don't have a daughter!”}

“Dad...” Tears streamed down Roseanne's face.

“Don't call me that.” Norris turned away, refusing to look at her. “I'm not your dad, nor do I have the capacity to be.”

Noticing his rising blood pressure due to the emotional turmoil, Madge patted his back quickly. “Enough. You know your blood pressure is high, yet you still get worked up!”

After telling Norris off, Madge turned to Roseanne.}

This daughter of theirs was so stubborn! They had tried persuading and scolding her, but she decided to make her own mistakes. Madge had written many novels with heroines who were bold and resilient, yet she never expected her daughter to be more stubborn than her fictional characters in matters of love!!

Madge had even thought her daughter had lost her sense of love!!

With a hardened heart, she spoke coldly, “You see, your father is not well. He can't handle the stress. If you still consider us your family, don't upset your dad anymore. Just go now.”

Roseanne felt her throat tightening, her nose started stinging, and her eyes got all teary and blurry. “Mom, Dad, I'm sorry. I realize my mistake now. I truly do...”

“Dad, I know you've always had high hopes for me, wanting me to strive for greater heights. I'm sorry I let you down.” She took a deep breath, turning to Madge. “And Mom, you always taught me to be independent and strong, not to be anyone's accessory. I'm sorry. I couldn't do it...”!

Chapter 133

“Coming back home was for two reasons. First, I missed you like crazy. Second, I hoped Mom and Dad could give me another shot to fix my mistakes.” Said Roseanne.}

For years, she’d stayed away, terrified of seeing that look of disappointment in her parents’ eyes. It was also about proving to them that her choices weren’t wrong. But reality had other plans, slapping her hard in the face. She was wrong and astronomically off the mark.”

Norris’ eyes trembled slightly. Did he hear that right? Was she admitting her mistakes?}}

Madge felt a pang in her heart. If their strong-willed daughter admitted her mistake, it must mean she’d been through a lot.”

“Are you... are you sure about this?” Norris’ tone visibly softened.”

Roseanne bit her lip. “I’ve thought it over. It’s just that I was afraid of upsetting you, so I didn’t dare come home...”}

She gave a snuffle, remembering how scared and unsure she was before coming back home.”

She cautiously looked up. “Mom, Dad, can I stay? I want to spend Christmas with you.”}}

Norris turned away, hiding the tears in his eyes, his voice gruff, “Since you’re back, you might as well stay.”}}

Madge sighed with relief. “Come on. Bring your suitcases to your room. Dinner’s getting cold...”

Roseanne couldn’t hold back her tears anymore, bursting into laughter and sobs. “Mom, Dad, I’ve missed you so much. This time, I’ve finally found my way back home.”

Madge’s eyes watered as she embraced her long-lost daughter. After six years, their family was whole again.”

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It took a long while for the family, reunited after six years, to calm their tears and compose themselves.}

Norris denied crying. “It’s just my seasonal conjunctivitis acting up. Don’t you know?”

Madge rolled her eyes. Yeah, right.

She tenderly touched Roseanne's swollen eyes, half amused, half annoyed. "Look at you, crying when you get back. Wasn't it enough to cry yourself, and you had to make us all join in?"

Roseanne clung to her, unashamedly leaning into Madge's embrace, acting like the child she once was. "I haven't seen you in so long. What's wrong with shedding a few tears? Besides, how have you and Dad been while I was gone? You're both looking well."

Norris chuckled. "Your mother and I are doing just fine as always. No worries."}

Roseanne nodded. Norris looked a bit older but otherwise healthy, and Madge could pass for a woman in her early thirties."

Roseanne's eyes felt uncomfortable after crying, and she instinctively reached to rub them.}

Madge slapped her hand away. "I've told you not to rub your eyes."

"Norris, bring an ice pack for Anne's eyes, or they'll swell tomorrow morning."}

Norris nodded.}

His daughter was back, and though he didn't say much, his smile never faded. "Okay, I'll do it now."

As he headed to the kitchen, he remembered, "Wait. I haven't finished cooking dinner yet."

Madge chuckled, rising to check on his cooking. "Did you end up cooking the fish again? I've told you to leave it to me. You never get it right. Let me see how you've done..."}

"We only had three dishes prepared, and that's not enough now that Anne's back. I'll head to the market to get some more."

Madge reminded him. "And don't forget the bacon."}

"I know. Anne loves it."

Hearing her folks' voices, Roseanne felt a wave of warmth inside her.

She looked out the window. The storm had passed, and the skies were clear. It was perfect.

Chapter 134

A tantalizing aroma filled the kitchen as Norris emerged in the evening, holding a steaming bowl. “Minestrone tried a new recipe. Tell me what you think?”

Roseanne’s eyes swept over the dinner table, brimming with dishes like beef stew, green beans, barbecued fish, the minestrone, and meatballs in tomato sauce, all her favorites.

Madge carefully picked the most tender fish and placed it in her bowl. “Your dad might not be the best at cooking fish, but this one? I’ve tasted it. It’s exactly how you like it. Here, have some more.”

Norris feigned offense. “What do you mean I’m not good with fish? I’m about people, not just fish!”

A snort of laughter escaped them.

“Right,” Madge conceded with a playful roll of her eyes, “You’re a true master in the kitchen, whether it’s cooking, fishing, or just being yourself. Satisfied now?”

Norris was pleased. “That’s more like it. I ran into old Mr. Johnson next door the other day. Even he asked for my recipes! You’re lucky I cook every day. You should just be quietly grateful.”

Madge pretended to be angry. “Fine, fine. I’m ‘quietly grateful. Why don’t you eat before your mouth starts another argument now?”

“That sounded pretty half-hearted. You don’t believe me? Ask Anne if my cooking isn’t top-notch.” With that, Norris gently placed another piece of fish into her plate. “Here, Anne. Try this and tell me how it tastes.”

Listening to her parents’ playful bickering brought a smile to Roseanne’s face.

She took a bite of the fish, savoring the fresh sweetness that only needed ginger and scallions to remove the fishy taste, finished off with soy sauce for that perfect flavor, keeping the fish’s natural taste intact.

Norris was always the one doing the cooking, since Madge hardly ever stepped foot in the kitchen.

After school, Roseanne would wait in the office for him to finish work, then they’d ride home together, often passing through the local farmers’ market where everyone knew Norris.

On the other hand, Madge never shopped for groceries, claiming she couldn’t pick good produce and found the market too noisy.

Besides the fish, another specialty of Norris was scrambled eggs, learned solely because of Roseanne's childhood fondness for the dish.!

It didn't stop her from critiquing Norris' cooking despite Madge's lack of culinary skills, which spurred him to refine his craft, eventually earning him the title of the family's master chef.}

After moving away, Roseanne only had Murray for company, taking on the role of preparing meals and waiting for him to come home to dine.

It contrasted her childhood, where meals were always ready, courtesy of her father, and all she did was eat and occasionally critique. When enjoying this treatment once again, Roseanne realized how much her parents cherished her.

Roseanne praised, "It's been a while, but I still think Dad makes the best fish, unbeatable by five-star chefs."

Proud and touched, Norris assured her, "Whenever you crave it, I'll cook for you."}

Holding back tears, Roseanne responded with a warm smile.

After dinner, Madge prepared a fruit platter with the afternoon's fresh purchases. Not finding anyone in the living room, she stepped outside and saw the father-daughter duo sitting in the yard.

With the early nightfall, the yard's lights seemed dimmer, casting a cozy glow around the fire pit's crackling charcoal, adding warmth to the atmosphere. Roseanne sat comfortably, warmed by the fire, with occasional flickers of light dancing on her face.

Madge joined them, offering the fruit platter. "The strawberries from our garden are ripe, sweet, and fragrant. You used to love them as a child. Try some."}

The strawberries glistened with water droplets on them, their sweet aroma wafting through the air.

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Roseanne took a bite, her eyes crinkling with delight. "Yummy."

Madge caught the gleam of happiness in her eyes, reminded of how she looked when she arrived home today. A wave of emotion washed over her. She reached out, taking her daughter's hand in her warm palm, gently brushing her hair back to take a closer look at her face. "You've lost weight."

With her cheeks all stuffed with strawberry, Roseanne shook her head, denying it. "That's not true. I just weighed myself. I'm two pounds heavier than last week."

“It’s just that you look thinner to me. Feel my hands. They’re much more chubby.”}

She feigned distress. “I was considering going on a diet...”

Before she could finish, Norris interjected with a frown. “Young lady, why would you need to diet? You’re so thin. Losing any more weight would turn you into nothing but bones.”}

Kids were always online, following some diet guru and starving themselves, not to mention taking diet pills. It worried him sick.

Roseanne’s eyes sparkled as she leaned into Madge’s hand, becoming limp as if boneless. “I was just saying.”

Madge tapped her on the head lightly. “Even ‘just saying’ is not okay. You’ll be in trouble if I find out you’ve lost weight next time you come home!”}

Roseanne’s eyes danced with laughter. “Got it.”}

Feeling her daughter leaning on her, Madge gently combed through her hair, finally voicing the question she’d longed to ask. “How have you been these past few years, living away from home?”}

Roseanne’s gaze faltered, lightly glossing over the past. “I’ve been okay.”

“And him? He didn’t come with you?” The inevitable question had arrived.

Roseanne looked down, and her voice was soft. “We’ve broken up.”}

After Norris got out of the hospital, he and Madge went to see Lumina. But they left all ticked off because of her stubbornness.”

Since that day, Norris had cut off contact with her, a disconnect that lasted six years.

When bringing up the past, Roseanne thought her father would blame her, but Norris’ aged features were calm and forgiving in the glow of the fire.

“It’s for the best. You two were never meant to be,” Norris sighed gently.”

Roseanne choked up again.”

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Soon, it was Christmas Eve.}

Early in the morning, Madge woke everyone still snuggled in their beds. When Roseanne opened the door, still in her pajamas, feeling sleepy with one eye half-open and her hair sticking up in a tuft, it was clear she hadn't woken up fully.

"Didn't you say you'd help me with the Christmas shopping today? Rise and shine! Go wash up, get dressed, and come down for breakfast." Slightly disgusted, Madge pushed Roseanne back toward her room.

"It's only 7:30 a.m." Her voice was groggy, sounding like it was too early."

Madge couldn't help but laugh. "7:30 is late for me. Hurry up, or the milk will get cold."}

After such a shock, Roseanne snapped awake real quick.

She washed up, brushed her teeth, changed into clothes suitable for going out, and came downstairs for breakfast.}

Breakfast was milk and donuts bought from a nearby diner, along with some homemade rib soup that Norris had prepared, all smelling deliciously inviting.

Sitting down to eat a donut, Roseanne noticed Norris was nowhere to be seen in the yard or the kitchen. She asked, "Where's Dad?" "The principal called him over early in the morning. Something about needing to go over some school matters. He'll be back later." As Madge spoke, her phone rang."

She walked out to the yard to answer it. However, the call didn't seem to go well. Roseanne had never heard her mother sound so agitated and distressed before.

Chapter 136

"Why on earth would you say my work is garbage? Do you have any idea how insulting that is to a writer? Yeah, you're the editor, and I should trust your pro opinions and market know-how, but that style just ain't my strong suit. Even if I had to change, this jump is just too big! I think we both need to calm down. Fine, I have to go."

Madge hung up, meeting Roseanne's puzzled gaze with a forced smile. "It's nothing, just the publishing house editor."}

"Are you okay?"

"Yep," Madge chuckled, wrapping her arm around Roseanne. "The traditional publishing sector has been in a slump these past few years. Many best-selling authors have shifted to writing web novels, making a killing. Of course, some couldn't adapt and got washed out. The editor hopes I can switch to web novels, too, but I'm still on the fence about it."

“Web novels?” Roseanne sounded surprised. “What genre?”

Madge’s smile wavered slightly. “Romantic urban fiction.

Roseanne was at a loss for words.

Madge was renowned for her mystery novels. When the mystery genre was booming, she burst onto the scene with her book *The Weapon*, selling half a million copies in a year. Then she followed it up with the thriller *Abandoned Village School*, setting new sales records. That year was dubbed *The Year of Madge*, with her two books, across five volumes, dominating the annual sales charts.

And it was this very editor who had approached her back then. After a while, Madge found the editor to be insightful and visionary. Moved by the editor’s persistent effort, she signed a ten–year contract in one go. That editor had edited, published, and sold all Madge’s

works since then.

But the bigger success Madge was hoping for didn’t happen. Instead, she seemed to have hit a creative wall. Her ideas were rejected instantly for not fitting the market or lacking appeal. Finally, when she came up with an acceptable concept and was eager to start writing, the editor called to say her outline wouldn’t work and needed changes.

After revising her outline according to the editor’s suggestions, Madge lost the urge to write.

She was troubled by that. Was it a case of writer’s block?

She had plenty of stories, ideas, and thoughts in her mind. Was it a matter of having the spirit but not the strength, finding it hard to translate thought into text?

Yet, she maintained her writing habit each day. Over ten years, she accumulated nearly a million words, but these were all concepts rejected by the editor, written off as practice.

They were never published. Aside from Norris, she hadn’t shown them to anyone else. It wasn’t as if these ten years were entirely unproductive.

Following the editor’s suggestion, she wrote a coming–of–age novel, as the publishing company wanted to capitalize on the boom in TV adaptations of such stories. At that time, coming–of–age dramas were all the rage.”

But that wasn’t Madge’s thing, so the writing process was super tough and took forever. It took her two years to finish. By the time it was officially published, another year had passed, and the trend in television had already shifted.”

Coming-of-age stories had become clichéd “navel-gazing literature.” Madge was heavily criticized for it.”

Long-time readers accused her of “pandering to the market, reaping what she sowed,” while critics slammed her for “promoting underage romance, problematic values.”}

Netizens were merciless, saying she had run out of ideas and was obsessed with love stories, abandoning her roots in mystery and thriller writing to churn out coming-of-age novels.

Some even concocted conspiracy theories, claiming she had sold her pen name and the person writing under it had long since changed.

Chapter 137

During that time, Madge was on the brink of depression. Thankfully, with the company of her husband and daughter, she gradually defeated the gloom. But since then, she swore off the internet, even using a flip phone meant for seniors.

A decade passed, and all she had to her name was a single coming-of-age novel set in high school. Beyond that, Madge hadn’t penned anything new.

“Ah, let’s not dwell on that. How’s the doughnut?” Madge shifted the subject.}}

“Delicious, just like the old days,” Roseanne replied, studying Madge’s face, hesitating to speak her mind but ultimately holding back. “Just that the milk is a bit too hot.”@

“Is it? Let’s let it cool down a bit then.”

As Christmas Eve approached, the calm life in their small town gained a festive edge. Christmas decorations hung on either side of the main street, and the trees had colorful lights.

With the local grocery store packed to the brim and running low on supplies, Madge drove to the supermarket in the city center.

After parking, the mother-daughter duo took the elevator to the ground floor.

Before even entering, they saw two splendid Christmas trees on either side of the entrance. Inside was a bustling scene of people shopping for Christmas goods, the air filled with festive cheer.”

Though they had no young children in their home, the Christmas celebration wasn’t complete without visiting families and friends, especially the Cole family, catching up with former students who’d come, and the occasional neighbor dropping by. So, stocking up on snacks and fruits was a must.

Madge picked some candies and potato chip cookies as she passed the snack aisle. She grabbed various bottles and jars when she realized they were running low on kitchen essentials.

Reaching the seafood section and spotting the shrimp, Madge turned to ask Roseanne if she wanted to take some home. But the person who had been following her around was nowhere in sight.”

Raising an eyebrow, Madge pushed the cart back a few aisles and found Roseanne loading bars of ice-cold chocolate into the cart.

The chocolate was slightly bitter, but eating it at home, warmed by the heater, feeling the chill spread from head to toe was a unique wintertime experience.

She had intended to sneakily grab several bars, not expecting to be caught so soon.

Blinking innocently, she looked at Madge with a pleading gaze. “Can I keep two?”

Feigning strictness, Madge replied, “What do you think?”

Eventually, Madge didn’t put them all back, leaving one in the cart for her.

Roseanne asked, “Mom, do you have to be so strict? One isn’t enough, and what about you and dad?”

Madge shook her head. “Your dad and I won’t eat them.”

“But I will!”

Madge shot her a look. “Dream on. One, and that’s final.”

Roseanne got it. “Fine.”

“Hey, Madge?” Suddenly, a voice came behind them.}

Both turned around.}

A woman in her forties, all dressed up in a white suit with her hair pulled back into a bun held together with a pin, walked over.

Her look was a mix of business and artistic flair, though her overly arched eyebrows gave her a somewhat stern appearance.

“Nadine, what a coincidence,” Madge greeted with a smile.

“Indeed,” Nadine replied, her gaze settling on Roseanne. “Is this your daughter?”

Madge nodded.§

“She’s grown so much! She was still in high school the last time I saw her, right?”

“That’s right.”%

Nadine glanced at Roseanne’s face. “She’s such a beautiful young woman, just like you.”

Madge’s smile grew more genuine. No mother could resist the charm of someone praising their daughter.

“By the way, about that genre shift we discussed this morning, have you given it any more thought?” Nadine inquired.

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Roseanne then realized the woman before them was her mother’s editor.

Chapter 138

Madge sighed. Her frustration was evident as she realized she had forgotten to pick up the allspice on their grocery run. “Anne, darling. would you mind grabbing a pack from that shelf over there?”

“Sure.” Roseanne knew it was Madge’s way of getting a moment alone.

Once Roseanne was out of earshot, Madge said, “I mentioned it this morning. I’m still mulling it over’s

“Mulling it over, huh?” Nadine retorted with impatience. “I brought this up three months ago, and you said you’d think about it. Fine. I gave you time, but still no clear answer. ”

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Madge frowned. “We’ve been working together for years. My forte is crafting suspense and thriller novellas, stories that wrap up within two to three hundred thousand words. And now, you’re asking me to switch to online novels? It’s like comparing apples to oranges!”

“But it’s all storytelling, right? How can it be so different? Literature has a universal language. There’s no mismatch!” Nadine’s tone grew stem, her smile fading.

Trying to reason, Madge explained, “First off, online novels usually run into the millions of words. And the popular genres online, like urban romance or elite love stories, are not my cup of tea. How am I supposed to write that?”

“Didn’t we learn anything from Bittersweet Youth? You also wanted to switch genres back then, but how did that turn out?”

Bittersweet Youth was the title of Madge’s disastrously received teen drama novel!

Nadine got it in a flash and her tone got softer, “I know that book tanked your reputation, and you’ve been struggling to get past it, even left the online scene...”

Madge retorted, “Yes, if you know I stepped back, why push me into those over-the-top romance plots?”²

“Madge, calm down. Hear me out,” Nadine pleaded gently. “Bittersweet Youth failed to break into the market because you were too slow to publish. When it was out, the trends had shifted. Teen dramas were all the rage when I suggested the genre change.”

“So, it’s not all on me, right? You’ve got a slice of the blame pie too. I’m not making excuses. I’m just pointing out where we went wrong.” Madge remained silent. She couldn’t deny that she was a slow writer, but that genre was far from her comfort zone. Her ideas were scattered. How could she possibly write quickly??

Nadine continued, trying to persuade her, “But it’s different this time. In the online world, urban romance and elite love stories in demand. Whether you write fast or slow doesn’t matter. We won’t repeat the same mistakes. I promise.”

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Madge’s eyebrows knitted tighter. “I’ve read the examples you sent. They’re fast-paced, sensational, and wildly unrealistic. They might start interesting, but the quality dips as the story drags on endlessly. I’ve seen stories where the protagonist’s name changes halfway through a million words. I’m not saying there’s no merit to online novels or that I’m demeaning them. They’re popular for a reason, but I can’t align with that style.”

Nadine’s eyes hardened. “After all this dialogue and all this effort to connect, you dismiss it by saying it is not suitable?”

Madge was perplexed. “What else can I say? It’s simply not a good fit.”

Nadine scoffed, “Do I need to spell it out for you? Fine, let’s lay it all out. In the past ten years, you’ve only produced one novel, and it was a commercial flop. What’s the point of calling yourself a writer if you can’t produce something new?”

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“Is someone still a writer if they can’t produce a bestseller?”

Madge was fuming, "I have plenty of ideas, but you..."

Nadine cut her off, "Your ideas lack originality, they're not marketable. Writing them down would just be a waste of time, publishing slot. They won't sell! Do you think you're still the 'Mystery Queen' everyone raved about?"

"Face it, Madge, you're washed-up! It's time to face reality, and face who you are now

"Mom-"Roseanne couldn't stand it any longer and stormed out from behind the shelf.8

Madge quickly cleaned her tears and forced a smile, saying, "Did you get it?"

Roseanne shook the allspice, "Right here. Dad might be back from his school by now, let's check out and head home?"

"Sure.

"Mrs. Harper, we'll be leaving now" Roseanne spoke for her mother.

She knew Madge was deeply hurt and didn't want to face the person causing her such pain.

Nadine managed a smile, "Sure, I'll browse around a bit more."

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Then, looking at Madge, she added, "Think about what I said. Ah, we've been friends and collaborators for so many years."

Madge looked down, silent

Roseanne took the shopping cart and led her away.

"Mom, did you sign a ten-year contract with Mrs. Harper?"

"Yeah."

"If I'm not mistaken, this year is the last, right?"

Madge did the math, "Indeed it is."

"What do you think of her?8

Madge paused before saying, ". She's professional."

Roseanne laughed lightly, not saying much, only asking. "Do you still have the contract?"

“Yes, why?”

“Can I see it tonight?”

“What for?”

“Just curious. Is that okay?”

“Of course! You can see anything of mine!”

Madge was surprised, “All those are just practice drafts, why would you want them?”

“Just, I suddenly realized having a writer for a mom is pretty cool. I want to seriously read your work. If anyone asks, I can share about it. Otherwise, they might think I’m making it up.”

As a child, Roseanne was eager to read Madge’s bestsellers—The Weapon’ and ‘Desolate School

But Madge always said, “Too gory,” “Not suitable for children,” “Wait until you’re eighteen.”

Yet, after turning eighteen, Roseanne lost interest in opening her mother’s books

After graduating college, during the countless days waiting for Murray to come home, she finally read those two books.³

No doubt, her mother was a mystery genius!

Every element, from the smart logic to the gripping suspense and crazy plot twists, came together perfectly. No surprise these two books are still flying off the shelves.

But in the last decade, her mother hadn’t published any mystery novels. Roseanne found it odd but never delved into why.

Until today, seeing her mother’s publisher, she thought she understood the problem.⁸

A publisher wearing a full set of DIOR? Carrying a Hermes crocodile Birkin?⁷²

What kind of publisher makes that much money?!

How come she had never heard of it?

Chapter 140

And from the conversations between her and her mom, Roseanne didn't hear any concern for the author from the publisher just oppression and manipulative tactics.

"Can we, please? Can we, please-"

"Alright, I'll send it over when we get home. Just worried you might not have the patience to read through it!"?

Roseanne promised, "Absolutely noth

When they got home, Norris was out front, struggling with hanging the holiday garlands. He couldn't get the full picture, but Roseanne tilted her head and noticed, "Dad, it looks a bit crooked."

"A bit to the left."

Madge got out of the car, taking and shaking her head, "I think it's too high. You should move it down a bit."

Norris obediently shifted the garland down a few inches, only to hear Madge say, "No, now it's too low. A bit higher."

Roseanne chimed in, "That looks about right."}

After Norris finished, he stepped down from the ladder and checked both sides, feeling something was off, "Does it not align properly?" Madge spotted the mistake...did you hang them up wrong?"

Nomis coughed awkwardly, saying, "...seems like I did."

He'd mixed up the garlands meant for the lobby and the front door, making them asymmetrical. No wonder it looked odd."

Madge

nonchalantly remarked, "There you go, brain stops working the minute holiday break starts..."

Norris was speechless.E

Roseanne couldn't help but snort, bursting into laughter

Christmas Eve.B

Madge was kneading dough, preparing Roseanne's favorite beef pies with thin wrappers and generous filling, utterly appetizing

As per tradition, Norris prepared a feast, including the essentials like chicken, lamb chop, fish, along with local favorites like pork and beef pies.!

By five in the afternoon, the three of them sat down for a lavish Christmas Eve dinner.

After the meal, Roseanne started to clean up, but Madge quickly stopped her, "Don't bother, go watch TV in the living room. Your dad and I got this."

Norris peeked from the kitchen, "Exactly, if you can't sit still, go play outside in the yard."

Nevertheless, Roseanne still helped take out the trash, then washed and cut fruits, opened snacks, and placed them in a basket for easy access!

At seven, with everything tidied up, the family sat down together, and fireworks could already be heard outside.

Roseanne opened the window, watching fireworks bloom and fade in the night sky, resting her chin on her hands, basking in the fleeting peace and happiness.

Suddenly, her phone vibrated.

A Christmas' greeting from Leda, Roseanne smiled and sent back a long blessing.

Instantly, a video call came through.⁸

Leda's hair was slightly curled, wearing a pearl clip, a departure from her usual style, demure and ladylike, obviously toned down for the holidays.

Roseanne guessed right away, Leda only dressed down when meeting elders.

But Leda was surprised seeing the background in Roseanne's video, "I thought like previous years, you'd be in Lumina City for Christmas. Was thinking of calling you out after dinner but looking at your room, you went back to your hometown?"

In the six years Roseanne had been with Murray, they'd always spent Christmas Eve in Lumina City.

Beverley never liked her, thinking her background and education were too ordinary, yet she dared to dream of entering the Sherwood family. Beverley never showed her a kind face, let alone invite her over for the holidays.

At first, Roseanne felt hurt, but eventually, she accepted it, thinking since Beverley didn't like her, they should just keep their distance