

Love Burned She Rose Unscathed Novel

Love Burned Chapter 21 - 30

Chapter 21

Murray slammed on the gas and took off, leaving a cloud of dust in his wake

Leda was fuming on the sidewalk, cursing at the top of her lungs. "What kind of jerk does that? A total scumbag! Absolute trash! He's driving me insanel

w the o

Grabbing the young guy by the collar, who was as innocent as a puppy caught in the rain, she vented, "Listen here, Anne is never going back to him! Never!"

Trying to play peacemaker, the young guy nodded frantically, "Yeah, yeah, don't get worked up."

But was that even possible? The confidence Murray exuded seemed unshakable.

Stealing a glance at Leda, the young guy wished Leda could trust men as unconditionally as her friend did. Stop right there! He wouldn't dare even dream of it.

Meanwhile, Murray answered a call in his car, his tone icy because of his bad mood, "What's up?"

"Hey, babe, I found this amazing place that serves the juiciest crab. Tomorrow's Saturday. Let's go check it out shall we?" Millie's bubbly voice came through the phone.

She knew Murray's love for seafood and was playing to his tastes.

They hadn't been in touch since the previous night, and her anxiety was getting the better of her, pushing her to make the call without second thought

Usually, Murray would plan their dates, and all she had to do was playfully refuse before shyly agreeing.

But things had changed recently. Murray's attempts to reach out had dwindled, his texts brief, sometimes left unanswered.

Busy, he would say, like at that moment. "Saturday? I'm tied up. No can do."%

"If you're busy on Saturday, Sunday works, too..." Millie's grip on her phone tightened, her lips turning pale.

"I said I'm busy. Let's leave it at that." With that, Murray hung up.

ly become

Millie stared at her phone's blank screen, feeling her panic surge again. She thought, 'No, I can't give up yet, not when I've finally Murray's girlfriend.

As the sun dipped low, Owen and Roseanne bid farewell to Madeleine.

"Time flies, doesn't it?" Madeleine said, a hint of sadness in her voice. "Why don't you stay for dinner before you go?"

Owen shook his head. "Can't, I need to swing by the lab,"

Roseanne echoed his sentiment. "We'll have plenty of other opportunities."

"Fine, take care, and don't be strangers," Madeleine replied, her words directed at Roseanne.

Nodding eagerly, Roseanne responded, "Definitely!"

Madeleine reminded her, "By the way, there are some pape

papers and three books on the table for you, stuff you left behind from before."

Roseanne's major was in bioinformatics, with a focus on algorithms. She had been halfway through a paper intended for SCI submission before graduation, and her professors had kept everything for her.

Touched, Roseanne faltered, "Ms. Payne, ..."

"Off you

you go now. Oh, and don't forget your lunchbox on the table. I've cleaned it for you."

Roseanne was surprised.

Madeleine playfully chided, "You got all the way to the hospital door and didn't even come in to see me. You left that lunchbox, and almost ate too much

Blushing, Roseanne promised, "Won't happen again.

On the way back, knowing Owen had things to do, Roseanne didn't dare to ask for a direct drop-off, so she suggested getting off at Kingswell University's entrance.

"It's a short walk. Could do with the stroll, Roseanne said. B

Owen agreed, "Sounds good."

When Murray spotted the figure sitting at the villa's front door, his heart leaped. But upon recognizing the woman's face, his excitement quickly deflated.

"Millie."

Chapter 22

"Murray, you're back?" Millie's eyes lit up with surprise as she stood up, her bright, starry eyes focusing on him!!

Murray asked with a straight face, "What are you doing here?"

"I was waiting for you. I called you earlier today, but you said you were too busy, so I had to wait until you were off work to come over. I hope I didn't interrupt your work." Millie's voice carried a hint of apprehension, her gaze flitting uncertainly.

"No, you didn't" Murray slowly shook his head.³

"That's a relief!" Her smile returned, only to fade as she hesitated, "Murray, I'm hungry."

Millie looked down with her cheeks puffed out in a pout!!

Murray began, "Come on, let's go grab something to eat."

"Really? Awesome!"

They ended up at a cozy restaurant, where Murray barely touched his food while Millie delighted in the array of traditional delicacies. Perhaps noticing his subdued mood, she spoke less than usual!

"Are you full?"

Millie nodded enthusiastically, "Yep!"

Murray nodded. "Alright, let's get you back to campus."

"Okay"

It was a ten-minute drive to Grandstone Institute. After the car pulled up, Millie hesitated before opening the door, turning to Murray, "Aren't you coming in?"

Murray nodded, "Sure.")

The entrance of Grandstone Institute was bustling, with students heading out for fun.

Being the undisputed campus beauty, Millie drew many curious glances, especially since she was arm-in-arm with an impressively handsome man

Blissfully ignoring the whispers around them, Millie looked back at Murray, her smile radiant, "When can I introduce you to my roommates? They're dying of curiosity about you."

Indeed, the whole Grandstone Institute was curious about the e

the enigmatic man dating their beloved campus darling

Once, when another woman was by his side, Millie wouldn't dare show off their relationship.

But things had changed. Murray had promised Millie a title. He had fulfilled his promise, freeing her from any need to hide. Murray

remained silent, clearly uninterested in meeting her roommates

Yet Millie seemed oblivious to his disinterest, her excitement undimmed. "It's wonderful, Murray. Every second with you is a joy." With those words, she suddenly faced him, her ponytail swaying gently behind her as she leaped up, planting a soft kiss on his lips. Gasps and murmurs of admiration filled the air

"So, the rumors are true. The campus beauty is off the market!"

"It's like something out of a TV drama!"

"Millie looks gorgeous, and her boyfriend is so handsome."

"They're perfect for each other, a match made in heaven!"

Roseanne found herself on the edge of the gathering crowd, her attention unexpectedly caught by the spectacle. What a coincidence. Snapped back to reality by the kiss, Murray faced the smiling girl before him. Suddenly, he was haunted by the memory of another pair of bright, shining eyes. Years ago, at Kingswell University's graduation, a girl had looked at him with the same intensity.

Her eyes sparkling, she said, "Murray, I choose you. And I have no regrets."

Memories he had thought long buried surged forward, striking him deeply. He instinctively stepped back, distancing himself from Millie. Millie was confused. "Murray? What's wrong?"

Murray managed. "It's late. You should go in."

Chapter 23

"No," Millie said, shaking her head. Then, blushing, she tiptoed closer and said, "I want to spend a little more time with you."

Before she could get any closer, Murray took the lead. With one arm, he wrapped her waist and planted a fierce kiss on her.

Whoa! The crowd around them went wild again.

"Dude, get a room!"

"Man, that's some crazy love!"

Roseanne watched the scene unfold, her fingers turning white as she gripped her book tightly. So, hearts did break. Yet her face remained eerily calm, almost numb.

She thought, "You get used to it."

If quitting smoking had withdrawal symptoms, what was a six-year relationship? Without lingering any longer, Roseanne turned to leave. She had books to get back to.

In the crowd, Murray felt something amiss and glanced around. A familiar silhouette flashed through his vision.

But then, Millie's soft hand slipped into his, their fingers intertwining affectionately.

Millie asked softly, "What are you looking at?"

Murray turned his gaze back to her. "Nothing."

After escorting Millie to her dorm, Murray prepared to leave.

But Millie held onto his hand, her eyes brimming with adoration. "It's still early. Can't you stay a bit longer?"

Murray patted her head and said, "Be good. I'll pick you up this weekend."

Under the streetlight, his features were cast in shadow, making his sharp features even more pronounced. Millie's eyes shimmered with innocence and allure. "Murray, can I go home with you tonight?"²

The implication of her words would be obvious to any adult.

Murray paused, his eyes reflecting a complex mix of emotions. "You're still young. Let's wait a bit longer."¹

Millie was stunned but felt a secret thrill. His reluctance showed he cherished her, not just for a fleeting moment of pleasure but for something lasting.

"Okay, I've got things to do. I'm off" Murray glanced at his watch.⁸

Millie nodded sweetly. "Okay, try to get some rest. I'll bring you some oatmeal tomorrow."

He didn't respond, lost in thought for a moment!

Back in her room, Roseanne's typing slowed as the image of their kiss replayed in her mind. She pressed her lips together. She headed to the bathroom and doused her face with cold water three times before her mind cleared. The past, once discarded, didn't deserve her attention.

Her main focus was on her exams. Time was running short. Returning to her desk, Roseanne opened two books given Madeleine. One was a textbook on bioinformatics, the other filled with notes and annotations by Madeleine.

to her by

There was also a flash drive containing a thesis she had abandoned during her undergrad.

Initially meant for her postgraduate studies, she had spent countless hours in the lab, neglecting sleep and food to gather and analyze data. The pursuit of perfection in her research was relentless.

Even though she eventually gave up on pursuing further education to look after Murray, Roseanne never totally abandoned her thesis. Over the years, she did two things. One, she played the free housekeeper for Murray And two, she refined her thesis.³

What Madeleine had given her was the work from her undergrad. Roseanne pulled the latter half from her computer, merging it with the first. Together, they formed a complete thesis. At that moment, it felt like the confusing first half of her life and the suddenly clear second half had met, creating a whole new her.

Chapter 24

After pulling an all-nighter, Roseanne looked at her finished manuscript and decided to strike when the iron was hot by submitting it to *Science*, one of the three top-tier global academic journals, and representing the pinnacle of human research in natural sciences.)

Roseanne wasn't too confident about her submission getting accepted. After all, with so many disciplines, fields, and brilliant researchers worldwide, she was nobody in comparison. But she wanted to give it a shot.

Before dawn broke, Roseanne shut down her computer and caught some much-needed sleep. At eight o'clock sharp, she woke up, got ready, grabbed a quick breakfast, and headed to the library with her study materials.

She hadn't expected to run into Owen as she was leaving.

It was raining outside, and the umbrella he was holding was still dripping.

Roseanne greeted him, "Morning! You didn't pull an all-nighter, did you?!!"

Owen replied honestly, "Yeah, I was rushing to get some data out."8

He had just returned from the lab and was about to head there again after grabbing something quickly.

"Here, take this." Roseanne handed him a cup of hot coffee. "It'll warm you u

Thanks."

up.

"And remember to change your clothes after getting soaked." She pointed at his shoulder, and Owen turned to notice a wet patch. "I should get going then Roseanne smiled and headed downstairs.

By nine, the library was already bustling. Roseanne closed her umbrella and was about to enter when a familiar voice called out. "Roseanne!"

Hertha was there to meet with university officials about her postgraduate exams. As she passed by the library, it started to rain, trapping her temporarily, but unexpectedly, she ran into someone she knew.

"Why are you here at the library? Another part-time job? You must be lacking in cash, but don't worry. I've talked to Murray about it, telling him to be more generous from now on."3

“So, you should quit these part–time jobs as soon as possible. Taking care of Murray matters more than anything. I heard his stomach issues flared up again yesterday. You...

“Hertha, who are you talking to?” Before Hertha could finish, a voice suddenly interrupted her.

A tall, elegant middle–aged woman approached, wearing Chanel’s latest spring haute couture, her well–maintained face showing hardly any signs of aging, and carrying a rare Hermes Kelly bag 8

Beverley approached her daughter and then noticed.

“Huh? Isn’t this my son’s budget girlfriend? She smirked in her heart.

After giving Roseanne a once–over, her dismissive expression grew even more disdainful, Dressed in a T-shirt and jeans, with no makeup and hair undone, Roseanne wasn’t presentable.

Beverley glanced at the library behind, then at the two books in Roseanne’s hands, her gaze deepening.

“Ms. Cole, what a coincidence.” She emphasized the word “coincidence” quite heavily.

The implication was clear, To curry favor with me, you’d even stage such a poor encounter

“You’ve gone out of your way, Beverley sighed, “But as the old saying goes, a monkey in silk is still a monkey. Save yourself the effort in the future. I’m not buying it.”

“Since we’ve run into each other today, I might as well make myself clear. Murray will never marry you. However, considering you’ve taken care of his needs over the years, there’s no credit but some hard work. After he marries, we might keep a spot for you by his side.

“As for anything else, don’t get your hopes up. Stay in your lane, and you’ll last longer. Understand?”

Chapter 25

In a world where marrying into wealth often meant Ignoring infidelity, Beverly had seen it all. Men of status frequently had mistresses tucked away. Everything else was fair game as long as the lawful wife remained intact.

As a mother, she never interfered much. Today was supposed to be when she officially offered Roseanne a place in their prestigious family

But the gratitude Beverly had expected was nowhere to be seen. Instead, she got a cold sneer from Roseanne. “Mrs. Sherwood, keep your charity for someone else. I don’t need it. Besides, I’ve broken up with Murray. It’s best if we take each other as strangers from now on.”

Roseanne had once tolerated Beverly for Murray’s sake despite Beverly’s disdain for her lack of academic and professional achievements, deeming her unworthy of her precious son. But Roseanne no longer cared for Murray’s approval, nor Beverly’s. Why should she dance to their tune?

“Oh, Mrs. Sherwood,” Roseanne added with a slight smile, “you might want to be less harsh with your words. They can come back to bite you. And remember, dressing up a monkey doesn’t change its nature.”)

With that

that, she turned on her heel and walked into the Kingswell University library, leaving Beverly frozen in shock.!!

Beverly couldn’t believe her ears. “How dare she say that to me? Who does she think she is? Does she not want to marry into the Sherwood family anymore?”

Her daughter, Hertha, was shaken by Beverly’s grip, snapping back to reality. “Mom, did Roseanne just say she broke “Do you believe that?” Beverly scoffed.

Hertha nodded. “Right, they’ve broken up many times before.”

up

with Murray?”

Everyone knew Roseanne was head over heels for Murray, loyal as a devoted dog. But Hertha shifted the focus quickly, “Mom, we have an appointment with the university dean today

Realizing the time, Beverly took a deep breath to calm her rage. “Let’s go. We can’t let Roseanne ruin our day.”

The Kingswell University library, a treasure trove of knowledge, was where Roseanne went after the confrontation. She wandered until she found a seat near the bioinformatics section, which was convenient for her studies.

Her eyes caught a book by Owen, with the cover a vast universe, much like Owen’s personality, deep, expansive, and serene. The book, a blend of biology and physics, fascinated her, and she spent hours engrossed in it.

By afternoon, Roseanne's stomach reminded her to take a break. Mid-meal, Leda called,

"Leda, what's up?"

"Are you at home?"

"No, at the library. Roseanne took a sip of water. "What's going on?"

"Murray showed up yesterday, asking for you!" Leda was still fuming. "As if I would ever tell him where you are. You haven't seen him, have you?"

Roseanne reassured her friend, eager to avoid the drama and focus on her future, unfettered by her past with Murray

Chapter 26

"That's a relief." Leda sighed, her tension visibly melting away. "Hey, are you free tonight? I could use your help."

After a successful meeting with the school board, Hertha's mood visibly brightened, contrasting her frustration from her recent encounter with Madeleine

"Let's go, Mom. Time to hit the road,"

Her mom Beverley frowned, her gaze drifting away from the direction of the library. "You go ahead. I've got something else to deal with.

Beverley dialed her phone without another word, arranging for another family driver to fetch her

t. Little did she know, as soon as Beverley got

Hertha figured her mom was just heading to another fancy lunch and didn't think much of it in the car, she ordered. "Drive to Murray's office.

Just ending a meeting, Murray was surprised to see his mother storming in with a scowl, "Mom, what brings you here?" Beverley scoffed, "What, I can't visit?"

"It's not that," he said, touching his nose nervously.

Beverley huffed and plopped onto a sofa. "If you can't handle your woman, I don't mind stepping in."

Murray was puzzled

Beverley fumed. "Look at the attitude on Roseanne. It all boils down to your spoiling her!"

Murray tensed slightly, "Roseanne? What happened?"

"And you ask! I ran into her at Kingswell University's library, I gave her a piece of my mind, and she blew up, accusing me of being harsh and mocking me as an uneducated woman! She's from a lower-class background, no manners whatsoever!"

Murray frowned. "You met her at the library?!"

Beverley nodded immediately. "Yep. Instead of staying home, cooking, and tidying up, she's there pretending to be an intellectual, thinking it'll make me respect her. Dream on!"

"She even said she'd broken up with you and that from now on, we're strangers! Who talks to their elders like that? Does she not want to be part of the Sherwood family anymore?"

Murray's gaze darkened even more.

Suddenly, Beverley asked, "So, you two broke up?"

He blurted out, "How could we?"

Beverley disdained, "Hmph! I knew it! A girl like that, who's landed a golden ticket, isn't going to give it up easily! Make sure you give her a good talk when you get back!"

Listening to Beverley's rant, Murray grew increasingly irritated.

"Mom," he interrupted, "enough. I've got another meeting soon. I'll have someone drive you home."

"But I have..." Seeing her son's mood darken further, Beverley wisely shut her mouth.

"Okay then, I'll leave for today. But don't let Roseanne off easy. Women need to be kept in line and tamed properly, then they'll listen!" "Sure." After seeing Beverley off, Murray loosened his tie and exhaled deeply.

Gazing out the window at the setting sun, he wasn't in a hurry to return to his mansion. Remembering Millie's birthday was around the corner, he texted Cliff about what to get her.

Cliff instantly replied, [Women love jewelry. Maybe a bracelet or a necklace would do.

Murray texted, I'm clueless about these things. Let's go together.]

Cliff was speechless, What? Do I, a freaking bachelor, seem like a jewelry expert?'

They met up at the downtown SKPB

Inside the jewelry store, the sales associate asked with a smile. "What are you looking for?"⁸

Murray answered, "Something for my girlfriend."

"How about this ladies' necklace? Its heart design is subtle yet sweet, perfect for a young woman..."

Clueless about jewelry, Cliff quickly lost interest and started looking around

Suddenly, he exclaimed, "Roseanne?"

Murray stiffened for a moment before turning around casually.

Leda was at a business dinner and co

couldn't leave the

the office, so she asked Roseanne to pick up a custom jewelry set on her behalf.

Running into them was the last thing she expected.

She smiled at Cliff. "Cliff."

"It's been a while. Been busy?" He glanced over at Murray briefly. "Since we're all here, how about grabbing dinner together?"

Chapter 27

"I'll skip dinner. Got some stuff to handle. Let's catch up later, okay?" Roseanne always had a way of letting people down easy, her good-natured refusal leaving no room for Cliff to feel slighted.

She was holding a designer jewelry box, a sign she wasn't making excuses. Cliff noticed, but before he could say more, Roseanne had breezed past Murray, making a beeline for the exit without a second glance.

The atmosphere tensed up. Cliff stole a look at Murray's sour expression and awkwardly tried to smooth things over. "Uh, Murray, maybe Roseanne didn't see you. Don't take it to heart..." }

Mentioning it worsened Murray's mood. He cleared his throat, opting to stay silent, though he thought, 'Roseanne's standing her ground this time!'

The sales girl asked, "Sir, are you still interested?"

Murray's eyes snapped up, cold as ice. "Of course, why wouldn't I? Give me the most expensive one."

Murray thought, "If she doesn't want it, someone else will!"

When Roseanne arrived, the party was in full swing at a villa down Crescent Lane. The place was bustling, and the moment people recognized her, the air filled with unspoken judgments. When she was Murray's plus-one, she was a regular at these gatherings, blending into the crowd without much fuss.

But rumors of their split had spread, and her solo appearance only fueled the gossip. Was she the Cinderella again without her prince? Six years of her life was all for nothing, just another cast-off. The juicy gossip was too good to pass up.

Roseanne ignored the stares and went straight to Leda, handing over the jewelry.

"Anne, why don't you stay? The food's great tonight."

"No, I should get going. Don't drink too much and make sure you get home safe."

"Okay," Leda didn't press her. She knew the kind of judgment Anne would face if she stayed. "Got it, Miss Nagger! Karl will drive you."

"Thanks." Roseanne turned to leave, the whispers growing louder around her

"Did you see that? Roseanne showed up, the nerve!!!"

"She was with Murray for six years. There's bound to be some leftover feelings.!"

"It's just sad. Do you see what Roseanne is wearing? My cleaner dresses better."

"Everyone knows she was practically his maid, cooking and cleaning for him..."

"Ms. Cole..." Karl caught a glimpse of Roseanne's expression."

Even as a man, he found the harsh words unbearable, yet Roseanne seemed unaffected.

"Let's go." She had anticipated this kind of talk when she decided to leave Murray. Today's scene was no surprise.

Karl said, "Ms. Cole, just a moment. I'll bring the car around.

"Sure." Roseanne stood outside the hall, looking up at the sky. The sun was setting, and the breeze was gentle. That was when she heard

"Roseanne?" A deep, slightly tipsy voice called out!

She turned, their eyes meeting.

"What a coincidence."

Holding a wine glass, Aaron Lincoln looked at her with a subdued delight. "Long time no see. I didn't expect to run into you here. It's been a while. The last time we met was at your college graduation. Shame, Murray kicked me out before I could give you the flowers."

Roseanne felt a twinge of awkwardness.

Back then, Aaron and Murray had pursued her around the same time, both heirs to fortunes and equally attractive yet equally wild !

"I've got to go."

Chapter 28

Chapter 28

Aaron couldn't stand the thought of her walking away. "All these years, Murray's treated you like some prized trophy, keeping you locked away at home, making it damn near impossible for anyone else to even glimpse you."8

Roseanne looked up, her smile fading slightly. "What are you trying to say?"

Aaron took a dee

breath. "Back in the day, you turned us down but ended up with him because he wouldn't give up, always the more persistent one. But did you ever stop and think that his persistence was more about winning the game than about you?"

Roseanne felt her already shattered heart torn apart again, Was what she considered deep affection merely a momentary passion, a desire to compete and win?

Seeing her face turn pale, a flicker of sympathy crossed Aaron's eyes."

He reached out, trying to touch her face, but Roseanne stepped back, putting distance between them. "Mr. Lincoln, please keep your distance.

Aaron leaned in closer. "Stop pretending. I know things are done between you and Murray."

"And what about it?" Roseanne asked, lifting her gaze with a smile.

"Anne, be with me. I'll cherish you and protect you more than Murray ever could. Whatever you want, I'll do everything I can to give it to you as long as you're with me..."

Whether it was six years ago or today, Aaron's heart still raced at the sight of her. He knew he had never moved on.}

Roseanne laughed. "Jumping from one mess into another? Mr. Lincoln, it was nice seeing you today. But from now on, it's best if we part ways."

With that, she turned and walked away.

Neither Murray nor Aaron was someone she wanted to deal with right then. And they'd both do well to stay away from her...

Aaron watched her slim figure disappear, a shadow crossing his gaze.

Suddenly, he sighed, whispering with a slight chuckle. "Anne, the tree desires calm, but the wind will not cease. Do you think you can escape?"}

Unbeknownst

lips.

t to th

them, someone had witnessed the entire scene. York checked the photo he had taken, a satisfied smirk playing on his

Corley was also there, stepping out for some fresh air, when he spotted York with his phone, grinning like a cat that got the cream. "What's with that disgusting smile?")

York wasn't bothered by his tone, lifting his phone with pride and waving it before him.

With his sharp eyes, Corley glanced at the photo and instantly recognized the people in it. "Roseanne?"

-von-York

"Yep." nodded, his face alight with the thrill of gossip. "Not just her, but Aaron too. I've already sent it to Murray."

They had witnessed the drama of two men vying for one woman's affection with their own eyes, recalling how crazed Murray had been back then.

Corley's gaze darkened. "Aaron jumps in immediately after their breakup. And judging by Roseanne's reaction," He paused, his tone taking on a meaningful edge. "It seems Roseanne is playing for keeps this time."

"No, Roseanne's not got it in her to leave Murray for good. Just watch. They can't split up. To put it more accurately, she can't leave Murray,

Corley asked, "And you sent him the photo because?"

York shrugged it off. "Just for kicks and to stir the pot a bit. What's the harm in that?!"

Corley raised an eyebrow. "Just don't overdo it, or you might end up losing friends over a prank."

York said proudly, "I'm just capturing a moment. That's all. And considering how Murray's been with Roseanne, an ex-girlfriend won't break anything. You've got to admit this photo captures the mood perfectly, right?"

Corley's gaze lingered on the beautiful profile of the woman in the photo. "You're right. An ex chasing someone else is pretty normal..."

Chapter 29

Karl dropped Roseanne off at her apartment building, and instead of heading straight up, she detoured into the nearby farmers' market

Twenty minutes later, laden with bags of groceries, she was about to head inside. Just then, she saw Owen approaching in the glow of the setting sun.⁸

er by the sunset. He walked with a

The light was fading, but he was in a cloak of orange and gold, his tall figure stretched even longer by purposeful stride, his eyes fixed straight ahead.[§]

"Fancy bumping into you again," Roseanne called out, initiating the conversation.

Owen looked up, adjusting his glasses. "Indeed, quite the coincidence."

"Have you had dinner? I've got plenty of groceries. How about joining me for a meal?"

Owen was about to decline, but the thought of her cooking made him nod almost against his will.

It was his first visit to Roseanne's place. The front balcony was adorned with blooming tulips, and two goldfish swam lazily in a square aquarium to the side. The white curtains fluttered in the sunset, casting warm hues over the cherry wood furniture. It was cozy, peaceful, and beautiful.³

A spread of graduate school books and papers lay on the glass coffee table. A glance told him the answers in black ink were almost correct.

Roseanne asked warmly, "Would you like something to drink?"

Owen smiled. "Just water is fine."

Roseanne poured him a glass of water.

"Thanks B

"I bought quite a bit today, perfect for making a fancy meal."

She unpacked the groceries, including various vegetables, beef, and a box of handmade meatballs. There was also some chicken leftover last time, which was ideal for dinner.

"You got one of the multiple-choice questions wrong," Owen suddenly said.

Following his gaze to the test paper she had worked on that morning, Roseanne immediately knew which one he meant. "Embarrassing. huh? That question involved biophysics. I'm still trying to wrap my head around the dynamics part."

"The choice of potential and its relationship with dynamic calculations is crucial. Different potentials lead to different potential energy surfaces, affecting the trajectories of molecular motion and intramolecular movements," Owen explained.

Roseanne paused, then her eyes lit up. "I see now!"

Owen was surprised at her quick grasp. "You understood that?"

"Mostly," Roseanne admitted honestly. "I've read your research notes in the library and picked up the basics of molecular dynamics."⁸

"And you could follow?"

Owen's face turned slightly red. "Those were my undergrad notes. Ahem, they're full of typos."

Roseanne couldn't help but laugh. There were quite a few

“You’re smart and insightful. You won’t have trouble with grad school exams.”

Her smile widened. “I’ll take that as a good omen, Mr. Reynolds.

When Murray and Cliff left the high-end shopping area, it was dark.

Cliff glanced at the shopping bag in Murray’s hand, containing jewelry worth almost a million, casually swung by its handles. It was as if he wanted everyone to see.}

ing it himself, Sadly, their entire walk was uneventful, devoid of

Despite the store offering secure delivery, Murray had insisted on carrying

ad insisted

any encounters they might have hoped for.

“How about dinner?” Cliff suggested, noting the time!

Murray nodded, not really caring. “You pick.

Cliff chose a well-known local restaurant nearby. They sat in a second floor private dining room with a great view and some privacy

The waiter brought over the menu. The restaurant was known for local cuisine, featuring a variety of fresh, farm-to-table dishes. Cliff took his time choosing, his eyes nearly crossing from all the options.

Chapter 30

Noticing Murray’s silence, he took the initiative to break the ice. “I’ve heard good things about this restaurant. They say it’s got the real deal, an authentic and diverse menu. Anything you’re craving, Murray?”)

Murray was indifferent. “Your pick is fine.”

Since they left the jewelry store, Murray had been fiddling with his lighter, seemingly lost in thought?

Remembering how Roseanne didn’t even spare him a glance and walked past him as if he was invisible, it was hard for Murray to relax his frown.

“Treating me like thin air? And why, after moving out from Leda’s place, hasn’t she come home? How much longer is she planning to drag this out?” His thoughts were a tangled mess as he lit a cigarette and took a deep drag.

Cliff chose the classic comfort food, like beef steaks, reindeer sausages, lobster mac and cheese, and a must-have vegetable salad.

As the dishes were served, their aroma filled the air. Cliff, starving by then, couldn't wait to dive in. Taking a bite, he nodded in approval. The taste was genuinely good.

He looked at Murray but noticed his friend was barely eating. His movements were slow and without any sign of enjoyment.?

"Murray, still hung up on what happened earlier? I think Roseanne is probably still fuming. Give it some time, and she might cool down," Cliff speculated, pausing as a thought struck him. "Besides, breaking up with her before all those people the other day was a hit to her pride. It might take a while for her to get over it. Give her a few days, then try sweet-talking her."

Murray's expression hardened. "Who said I was thinking about her? Just eat your food."

"Okay." Cliff thought, noting his friend's denial.

Suddenly, Murray's phone vibrated.

He tapped the screen, and a photo popped up. A woman stood sideways while a man reached out, about to touch her face with love and affection. The resolution was terrible, even a bit blurry, but he instantly recognized the woman as Roseanne and the man as Aaron! Murray's eyes turned icy in a moment.

Seeing his reaction, Cliff felt a sinking feeling. "Murray, what's wrong?"

Murray slammed the phone on the table, his voice cold. "So much for cooling down, huh? It seems she's gotten too bold for her good!"

She was going after Aaron again!

Cliff blinked, glimpsing the photo on the phone, and winced.

Aaron was crossing the line, knowing Roseanne was upset and deliberately choosing this moment to make a move, adding fuel to the

fire.

"Huh,"

Murray sneered coldly, "Leaving me has lowered her standards, falling for someone like Aaron."

Did she think he would care?

...

Unaware and uncaring of the outside world's drama, Roseanne's life was all about study, monotonous yet fulfilling and peaceful!

Her routine was simple, from her rental to the library and back, occasionally cooking herself a nice meal and sharing it with her neighbor, who often worked late. Though materially less than before, stepping out of that mansion felt like breathing in freedom.

"Anne, studying again?" Leda's daily call was as punctual as ever.

"Yeah." Roseanne moved to a corner, speaking softly to avoid disturbing others.

"It's Friday. Let's go out for dinner?"

"But..7

Leda cut her off immediately. "No buts. Why can't you relax a bit? Besides, it's important to balance work and rest. Don't bury yourself in books.

"Okay"

They agreed to meet at a new restaurant.