

# Love Burned She Rose Unscathed Novel

## Love Burned Chapter 31 - 40

### Chapter 31

Leda was craving something light and refreshing, so she ordered salmon sashimi and jumbo shrimp, her go-to favorite for a quick seafood fix.

On the other hand, Roseanne wasn't much for cold dishes, so she opted for chicken noodle soup and a side of sushi rolls. The soup was nothing to write home about, but its saving grace was the fresh ingredients.

Leda watched her eat with polite enthusiasm and teased her, "This salmon is so tender and fresh. Are you sure you don't want to try it? It might open up a whole new world for you."

Roseanne waved her off. "You know I can't get my head around raw food. I'll stick to my soup, thanks."

"You haven't changed a bit, have you?" Leda had always noticed how Roseanne stuck to her likes and dislikes stubbornly.

Speaking of changes, Leda suddenly remembered, "I haven't had a chance to visit the spa in days. I've been so busy that my hands are starting to feel rough."

Then, she sighed and added, "It's all because my dad's been on my case about going on blind dates. And my mom's not helping either. She's siding with him on this."

"It's not like they can't afford to keep me, so what's the rush?"

"And anyway, my cousin Owen hasn't settled down yet, so why should I be in any hurry..."

Speaking of Owen, Roseanne remembered they were neighbors but had barely seen each other since they last had dinner together, except that she once dropped off a sandwich at his place.

Unaware of Roseanne's drifting thoughts, Leda popped a piece of sushi into her mouth, reminiscing about the last meeting. "Didn't you and Owen visit Ms. Payne the other day? How did that go?"

Roseanne sipped her soup, and after a thoughtful chew, she swallowed and replied, “Well, it went about as you’d expect. Ms. Payne already reserved a spot for me, so I need to pass this year’s grad school entrance exams.”

Leda clapped her hands. “That’s the spirit! I love seeing you so confident. As a reward, how about I take you somewhere special this weekend?”

Roseanne’s curiosity was piqued. “Where to?”

Leda smirked. “You’ll see when we get there.”

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After insisting, Roseanne had Leda drive her back to the library after their meal. It was still early enough to get some studying done.} After working through a few practice tests, she looked up to see the sun setting outside her window. The golden rays warmed her, casting a soft glow over her study area.

Stretching lazily after packing her books and papers, Roseanne heard the library’s closing announcement over the PA system.

She grabbed her bag and headed out right on time, stepping into a sunset that painted the sky in vivid orange and red, looking just like a vibrant oil painting.}

Slowly making her way home and pondering what to have for dinner, Roseanne’s thoughts were abruptly interrupted by a shadowy figure approaching.

A week ago, Owen had been grappling with incorrect data from a recent lab experiment, leading to days of sleepless nights and repeated tests that yielded frustrating results.

The project’s lead, a man in his forties, had been working closely with Owen since the beginning. The unexpected issues had left him equally concerned. “The initial results were promising, and everything seemed on track. Why did the data suddenly go wrong?”

His brows furrowed in thought, Owen responded, “Experiments are about trial and error. The outcome isn’t the only thing that matters.”} “But incorrect data means the experiment has failed. We’ve been over this countless times. Shouldn’t a week be enough for us to see clearly?” Cautious, the lead suggested, “If we can’t make progress, perhaps it’s time to cut our losses. Exploring a new direction might not be a bad idea.”}

Owen’s gaze was sharp, his voice steady, “Are you worried about the experiment failing, or do you think shifting focus to what you believe is more profitable is the better path?”}

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He adjusted his glasses and said, "Physics isn't something you can master overnight. It has its rhythm and path, and you can't stop it on a whim."

A bit sheepish, the project leader responded, "I was just saying."}

They parted ways on less-than-friendly terms. Owen turned around, only to see Roseanne smiling and waving at him. "Long time no see, neighbor."

Walking side by side on their way home, Roseanne deliberately steered the conversation away from the earlier incident, opting for lighter topics instead. "Thanks for your help the other day. I've been sailing through my assignments ever since."}

Owen shrugged it off modestly. "It's all you. Your insight made the difference. Have you met with Ms. Payne lately?"

Hands clasped behind her back, Roseanne gazed at the ground as they strolled. "No, just a few phone calls. She's recovering nicely and should return to the university in a few days."}

"That's good to hear," Owen nodded. "Ms. Payne takes her teaching duties very seriously. I bet she's itching to get back."Z

As the evening darkened, a cyclist wobbled past them.

Stepping on an uneven paving stone, Roseanne stumbled and nearly lost her balance, almost crashing into the bicycle.

In a flash, Owen reached out, grabbing her slender wrist firmly and pulling her close to avoid the oncoming bicycle.

"Are you okay?" His warm fingers tightly clasped her wrist through the thin fabric of her summer clothes, transferring a comforting heat.. Roseanne's ears flushed with warmth. "I'm fine, thank you."}

They were so close that their breaths seemed to mingle. Realizing it, Roseanne took a step back. Owen, too, let go of her hand, and they continued home in silence.)

Upon entering her home, Roseanne replayed the moment in her mind, the details magnifying uncontrollably, the warmth of his hand, the minty freshness of his breath, and those deep eyes. She touched her wrist, feeling a phantom warmth.

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Walking back from the lab after a debate left Owen sweaty and uncomfortable. Slipping into flip-flops, he took a shower and ordered some takeout.

While casually checking his phone, he noticed an ad for a pair of teddy bear slippers at \$9.99. They reminded him of the ones Roseanne wore the last time he visited her. Her toes, peeking out from the dark slippers, appeared dainty and fair against the contrast.

The memory of their close encounter raced through Owen's mind—his hand wrapping around her slender wrist, surprised at how smooth her skin felt.

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Come Sunday, under a blazing sun and clear blue sky, Millie chose a light green sundress adorned with little yellow flowers, its ruffled edges making her look artsy and fresh. She spent a whole hour perfecting her makeup.

Her roommate teased, "Who's this? The girl who never wakes up before noon on weekends is up early and dolled up. I'm jealous someone's got a date with our little fairy."

Thanks to the forum buzz, the whole Grandstone Institute knew about Millie and Murray's intimate kiss at the school's entrance. Millie was officially off the market.

Another girl interrupted, "Who else but Mr. Sherwood? Millie, it's your birthday today. He must have planned a surprise, right?"

As she put on her sunflower-shaped earrings, Millie felt a surge of anticipation. But played it cool. "I'm not sure."

As her roommate prodded further, Millie glanced at the clock, grabbed her bag in a panic, and said, "I'll tell you all about it later. Gotta

run!")

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Chapter 33

Millie bounded down the stairs in a few quick steps and raced toward the school gates, her eyes immediately locking onto Murray's car parked by the curb.

Leaning against the car hood, Murray was the picture of youthful vigor in a cream-white tee under a charcoal-grey long coat paired with sleek black jeans that made him look like a college student. His appearance turned heads.

He checked the time on his wrist three times in less than three minutes. They had agreed on 10 o'clock, and they were running late.

Pulling out his phone, he scrolled to Millie's contact, about to call her, when a sweet, soft presence enveloped him.}

Millie wrapped her arms around Murray's neck, her voice playful and cute, "Have you been waiting long?"

"You're late." Murray glanced at her, hands casually stuffed in his pockets.

"Sorry, I promise I'll be on time next time." When noticing he wasn't making a big deal out of it, Millie breathed a sigh of relief.

"Get in the car." Murray could see right through her little schemes but chose not to call her out on it.

Millie quickly hopped into the passenger seat, chattering away nonstop.

Keeping his eyes on the road, Murray occasionally grunted in response."

As they stopped at a crossroad, Millie glanced out the window, catching sight of a massive LED screen advertising the newly opened Universal Studios.

Her heart leaped at the sight, and she tugged at Murray's sleeve, her eyes gleaming with anticipation. "Babe, can we go to Universal Studios today?"

Murray agreed without a second thought, "Sure."}

Today was all about celebrating Millie's birthday, so Murray didn't mind the destination. He casually handed her a bag branded with a luxury jewelry logo, "Happy birthday."

Millie gasped as she opened it. "Isn't this Chanel's latest limited edition bracelet? It's super expensive and hard to get!"

Excitedly, she took it out of the box, slipping it onto her wrist. Admiring the shell design with sparkling diamonds, Millie couldn't help but flaunt it before him.}

"Does it look good? How did you know I wanted this?" Millie's voice was full of playful complaints and sweetness, utterly charming Murray.

As the light turned green, Murray stepped on the gas. Catching Millie snapping photos with her phone, he casually remarked, "As long as you're happy."

...D

When Leda said she had a place in mind, Roseanne hadn't expected such an early start. She had just woken up when Leda called.) Leda's voice rushed through the phone, "Hurry up, Anne. There's no parking here. I'm giving you ten minutes!"}

Roseanne climbed into the car ten minutes later, even handing Leda a sandwich.

.Leda took a bite, playfully scolding, “You’re never late, are you?”}

The sports car zoomed off, eventually coming to a halt outside Universal Studios.

Roseanne looked up. “This is where you wanted to take me?”}

“Gosh, you’ve been cooped up studying and reading every day. How boring is that? It’s the weekend, time to relax. I’ll grab the tickets. You wait here.”

Soon enough, Leda was back. Along with two tickets, Leda also had two headbands.

“One for each of us.” Leda handed Roseanne a pure white fox headband, keeping the pink Princess Bell one for herself.

After putting them on, Leda saw Roseanne hesitating and urged, “Why aren’t you wearing yours?”

With no other choice, Roseanne put it on.

Leda stepped back, examining her, then nodded in satisfaction, “Fluffy and cute, you’ve got that fox spirit vibe going on.”

## Chapter 34

Leda grabbed Roseanne’s hand. “Let’s go! I’ve already scoped out the best spots before we even got here. Today, we’ll have a blast!”

“Ah!”

“Ah, holy shit!”

Leda’s screams echoed in her ear for five minutes. Rubbing her numb ears, Roseanne glanced at her friend, who had just finished throwing up, looking pale as a ghost. She gently patted Leda on the back with amusement and sympathy. “Feeling any better after throwing up, huh?”

“I’m going to... ugh...”

Seeing Leda lean over the trash can again, Roseanne quickly grabbed some tissues and opened the water bottle. After Leda had finished, she handed over the water. She didn’t sigh with relief until Leda had rinsed her mouth and stopped throwing up.

“They say the roller coaster here is a slice of heaven for thrill-seekers, but I’ve just had a tour of hell. Scared me to death.” Looking a little queasy, Leda wiped her mouth with a tissue and patted her chest.

Roseanne couldn’t help but tease, “Who wanted to push her limits? You asked for it.”}

Despite Leda’s mild fear of heights, she had insisted on going on the ride, a classic case of biting off more than she could chew.

“Wah, can’t I just regret it?” She leaned on Roseanne, barely catching her breath.”

After resting for a while, Leda regained some of her energy. It was also lunchtime, so Roseanne suggested they grab something to eat. On their way, they noticed other visitors stopping in their tracks, excitedly snapping photos of the sky.”

“Look at all those balloons! Is this some surprise event for the park’s opening?”}

“Do businesses go to all this effort now? Blowing up that many balloons must’ve taken hours!”}

Roseanne looked up to see a sky filled with balloons against the backdrop of clear blue, the colorful ribbons attached to them fluttering in the wind like dancing butterflies.

A spectator scrolling through their social media feed commented, “Figured it out! Over by Grandview Plaza, some rich kid pulled off this birthday surprise for his girlfriend.”

“Why do I always miss out on witnessing these romantic gestures? Always a spectator, never a participant!”

Uninterested in such grandiose displays of affection, Leda nudged Roseanne, “Come on, I’m starving.”}

“Okay.”

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Universal Studios was bustling that weekend, with long lines forming near Grandview Plaza’s Pirate Ship ride.

Murray waited in line patiently while Millie grabbed a slushie, peering ahead at the dense crowd, “Only ten more people to go. Hang in there!”}

With temperatures soaring to 90 degrees Fahrenheit, Murray had slung his jacket over his arm, idly scrolling on his phone as they waited. Along with everyone else’s, their attention was drawn to a spectacle near the carousel where balloons filled the sky. A

man holding a 'bunch of red roses approached a woman, and they embraced, resembling a scene from a romantic fairy tale.

"Is this a birthday surprise? It's so romantic." Millie felt a twinge of expectation. It was also her birthday, and she wondered if Murray had planned any surprises aside from her gift.

Murray glanced lazily in that direction before returning to his phone, unimpressed. What others found romantic, he found tedious.

It wasn't that he didn't notice Millie's expectations, but he had never gone for such extravagance with Roseanne, and he wasn't planning to start now.

## Chapter 35

After lunch, Leda snagged two tickets for a dolphin show, excited to take Roseanne along."

Wading through the visitors, they followed the crowd toward the southwest to find the marine show arena. Inside, the air conditioning was a godsend, providing a stark, blissful contrast to the scorching heat outside.

Roseanne wasn't particularly keen on animal shows, but Leda adored dolphins. During the interactive segment, she handed her camera to Roseanne, asking her to snap some photos. Leda's beaming smile eventually pulled a hesitant grin from Roseanne as well.

Half an hour later, as the show concluded, Roseanne handed Leda her bag, mentioning she wanted to use the restroom.

Turning a corner, Roseanne saw Millie washing her hands at the sink. She hesitated for a moment, then brushed past Millie toward a stall.

Emerging later, Millie was still there, seemingly waiting for her. Roseanne ignored her, focusing intently on washing her hands. The only sound was the drip of water. The silence was palpable, the air thick with tension.

Looking up, Roseanne accidentally caught Millie's gaze, then quickly diverted her eyes as if she were a stranger."

But Millie broke into a smile, glancing at her wrist where a bracelet peeked out from under her sleeve.

"Roseanne, what a coincidence," she said."

Roseanne didn't bite.

Undeterred, Millie continued, “How have you been lately?”}

Roseanne offered a polite smile. “Not bad.”}

Millie seemed to search her face, wondering whether her calm was genuine.

After a brief pause, Millie said with a laugh, “Really? It must be hard, moving out of that big house, huh?”

Roseanne retorted, “You needn’t worry about me.”

“I should thank you, truly,” Millie’s eyes shimmered with tears, her youthful face exuding innocence, “If you hadn’t stepped aside, I wouldn’t have Murray all to myself now.”

Roseanne listened silently, rinsing her hands meticulously. She washed with care and focus from the back of her hand to her fingertips. “You saw the balloon display earlier, right? Today’s my birthday. That was Murray’s surprise for me,” Millie’s lips curved up. She casually lifted her hand, “Oh, and this is his birthday gift to me. Pretty, isn’t it?”}

“He said my hands were soft and delicate, perfect for this bracelet. He thought of kissing me when he saw it...” Blushed, Millie’s eyes gleamed like a peach refreshed by dew.

Roseanne instantly recognized the logo on the bracelet as Millie rotated her wrist. It clicked. That day at the jewelry store, Murray picked Millie’s birthday present.

Turning off the tap, her nails digging into her palm brought her back to reality. With a self-deprecating smile, Roseanne said, “Is that so? Well, congratulations.”}

With that, she walked away.”

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Leda was waiting at the exit, waving at Roseanne as she emerged.§

“Still hungry? You look pale,” she asked.§

Feeling drained, Roseanne pinched her nose. “Leda, I want to go home.”

“It’s only three o’clock. We’ve barely been here a few hours!” Leda’s eyes widened in dismay, grabbing her arm. “Come on, stick around a bit longer with me. I’ve queued us up on the app.”}

She blinked innocently. “It’s the most popular attraction in the park, the Haunted Village.”N

Roseanne raised an eyebrow. “Aren’t you scared of ghosts?”

While Leda was typically bold in her work and personal life, she had a surprising fear of heights and ghosts, even trembling at the mere mention of horror movies.}

Leda put on a bold face. “No way! With you by my side, I’m totally at ease.”}

Roseanne sighed, resigned. They decided to go.

At the entrance of the haunted house, the employer reminded, “Electronic tickets, please.”

Leda whipped out her phone, scanning it at the gate, and they were in with a beep.

## Chapter 36

“Come on in,” the staff member announced, stepping aside from the split curtains that fluttered eerily with the draft coming through, revealing a pitch-black corridor.

Screams echoed intermittently, making Leda swallow hard and tighten her grip on Roseanne’s hand, hesitatingly stepping inside.

Almost dragging her along, Roseanne couldn’t help but chuckle at Leda’s timidity. “We could always bail, okay?”

“No way! We’re already here!” Petrified yet unwilling to admit it, Leda bravely pulled Roseanne forward.”

Suddenly, a ghastly figure jumped out.

ਅੱਖਾਂ ਟੱਕਣ ਦੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ

“Ah! Anne, help me!”}

Murray whipped around, sure he’d heard someone call out Anne?}

But a glance around yielded no sign of the familiar face, causing him to frown in frustration.

Oblivious to Murray’s distraction, Millie clung to him with a look of utter fear. “Murray, I’m scared. You’ll protect me, won’t you?” Murray snapped back to reality, offering a noncommittal grunt.

The darkness was broken only by intermittent red lights. Millie clung to Murray’s arm for dear life, too terrified to venture ahead on her own.)

When a ghostly figure, its face half-peeled and blood-streaked, suddenly appeared, Millie screamed in terror, refusing to let go of Murray. "Is it... is it gone, Murray?" Millie stammered, with her face buried in his chest.

Murray patted her back dismissively. "It's over. Don't worry."

He couldn't understand how anyone could be scared by such amateurish attempts at horror.

Roseanne wouldn't have been. That name unexpectedly crossed his mind, making Murray stiffen. Why did he keep thinking of her, especially when he'd been eager to move on?

"Murray?" Millie looked up, catching the fleeting shadow of depth in his eyes, puzzled.]

"Shall we continue?" Murray suggested, masking his emotions.

Leda had tried to steel herself before entering. But the sight of a corpse suddenly opening its eyes in a coffin sent her into a panic, causing her to flee, leaving Roseanne bewildered at her disappearing figure.]

Leda had headed toward the exit, but once she passed through, the door shut behind her, leaving Roseanne to find another way out. Wandering around, she accidentally locked eyes with a coffin-dwelling NPC whose tongue prop comically fell out, eliciting a mix of pity and amusement from her. She stepped forward and tucked it back in place.

NPC thought, "You're kind, huh."

Lost in a maze with three exits and dim lighting, it wasn't long before Roseanne admitted to herself that it was less of a haunted house and more of a labyrinth.

An alarm blared overhead as she considered the absurdity of constructing such a confusing escape route.

Roseanne couldn't help but think, "Is my luck this bad?"

The fire alarm set off a wave of panic, with people desperately pushing toward the exits. With less of a crowd around her, Roseanne tried to keep pace but soon found herself struggling to breathe in the cramped space, forcing her to slow down and navigate through the chaos at her pace.

## Chapter 37

Suddenly, Roseanne was alone in the room. The alarm had gone off, making the lights brighter than before. With a few steps forward, she spotted a guide sign.

After breezing through the second challenge, she heard a crowded commotion not too far ahead. It seemed the exit was jam-packed with people.

Just as she hesitated to push through the crowd, another wave of people surged from behind, leaving her nowhere to go.”

In the chaos, someone pushed her to the side and stepped on her foot, causing her to gasp in pain as she got pressed against the uneven wall.

Then, she felt a gaze on her and instinctively looked up to meet the eyes of a man.}

Murray’s heart ached when seeing Roseanne in such a mess, yet he was annoyed, too. It was indeed her. The “Anne” he thought he heard wasn’t imagined.}

But then, it struck him odd that she’d be enjoying a haunted house adventure, seemingly living it up after their breakup.

“Murray?” Millie anxiously tugged at Murray’s arm, shooting a defensive glance at Roseanne.}

Avoiding further interaction, Roseanne pushed back into the crowd, aiming to follow the others out.

The flickering lights and the chaotic crowd added to the tension until a scream pierced the air. A faux wooden sword hung precariously above, threatening to fall right where Roseanne stood.

“Watch out!” Without a second thought, Murray let go of Millie and fought through the crowd, pulling Roseanne to safety as the sword crashed to the ground with a loud thud. It turned out to be a metal sword painted to look wooden. The potential danger was apparent.

Shaken, Roseanne felt Murray’s grip on her hand. He hadn’t let go, but she quickly pulled away.

“Thanks,” she said, her voice distant.”

Murray’s deep eyes clouded with a mix of feelings. “Is that all you have to say to me?”

She looked puzzled. What more was there to say between them?}

“Why did you block me?” Murray stepped closer, his voice low and husky.}

Roseanne was stunned.

Blocking each other during arguments wasn't new, but she always reached out first, but not this time."

Her smile came with irony. "Isn't removing an ex the normal thing to do?"

Murray frowned, caught off guard. "And when were you planning to add me back?"

Her response was soft but firm. "Maybe... never."

Frustration bubbled in Murray at her subdued demeanor. "How long do you plan to keep this up? Don't test my patience."

Her sarcastic laugh disappeared in the crowd as they got pushed apart again. Murray reached for her hand again but got swiftly taken by someone else.

From a short distance, Millie watched with jealousy consuming her. She pushed through the crowd to Murray's side, clinging onto him. "Babe, let's get out of here. It's so dark and scary. I almost fell looking for you. I'm scared. Don't leave me alone, please..." Her voice trembled with fear, eliciting sympathy.

At that time, an announcement came through, indicating they had the issue resolved and asking the visitors to exit in an orderly fashion. Roseanne didn't spare another glance as she walked out swiftly, with Murray following behind.

Millie bit her lip. "Murray, wait for me."

Outside, Leda had been anxiously waiting. Hearing about the potential danger inside, she was relieved to see Roseanne safe. "Are you okay? I was so worried when I heard the alarm."

Roseanne smiled at her. "I'm fine. Let's go home. I'm exhausted."

But Leda had other plans. Seeing Murray and Millie emerge made her blood boil. "Not going home just yet. Men are a dime a dozen. Let's go have some real fun!"

Roseanne was puzzled but followed Leda into the vibrant nightlife of a bustling bar. Amid the smoky and perfumed air, with neon lights flashing, Roseanne felt out of place in her casual attire.

The live band played, and Leda ushered them into a private booth, ordering whiskey and a cocktail for Roseanne, who hardly had strong drinks.

Feeling the alcohol's warmth, Roseanne excused herself to the restroom, only to bump into Corley.

Chapter 37

Their acquaintance was through Murray, and their interaction was brief.

“Small world,” she greeted him politely.

Corley was out with friends and didn't expect to run into Roseanne.}

“Alone?” He asked, eyeing her flushed cheeks.

Roseanne answered lightly, “No, with a friend.”

“Murray?”

Roseanne's smile faded as she replied, “Nope. You guys have fun. I'm heading out.”}

“Anne.” Suddenly, Corley called after her.

That nickname made Roseanne frown, but she kept a smile. “Something else?”}

Corley asked, “Is it for real this time? You and Murray?”

Roseanne shot back. “Ever heard of a fake breakup?”

Corley's gaze was deep, and after a long pause, he finally nodded. “Fine, got it.”

As Roseanne turned to leave, he impulsively lifted his phone and snapped a photo of her retreating figure.

Then, he opened WhatsApp, found the group chat with their mutual friends, and hit send.}

[Photo]

[Guess who I bumped into]

Cliff: [Holy cow! Roseanne? For real?]}

York: [At the bar?]}

Cliff: [Do you even have to ask? It's our usual spot]

Corley: [Why the silent treatment?]

Chapter 38

Murray was enjoying a candlelit dinner with Millie at an upscale steakhouse when his phone buzzed with a message. His face darkened instantly.}

Seeing the sudden change in Murray's demeanor, Millie asked cautiously, "What's wrong?"

Murray held his breath, not making a sound, then replied to the message tersely. [None of my business.]}

On the other end, Corley couldn't help but smirk with a knowing look as he texted back, [Looks like it's truly over between you and Roseanne, huh?]

Murray glanced at the message and clenched his jaw, but his reply was indifferent. [Yeah, so? Got a problem with that?]}

Corley responded with a surrendering emoji, [No, wouldn't dare to have an opinion.]}

Then he added, [So, you wouldn't mind if someone else starts chasing Roseanne?]}

York interrupted out of nowhere, [What's the deal? You're after her now?]}

Corley's reply was a cheeky GIF that said, 'Oh yeah.'

Cliff burst into laughter. [Hahaha, that's rich!]

York added, [You've got guts, man.]}

No one took it seriously.

Murray saw the GIF but didn't care, typing back, [Sure, go ahead and chase her.]}

Corley put away his phone, satisfied. He wondered if Murray would regret it later.

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Millie smiled. "Babe, thank you for making my birthday the happiest yet."

It was 9 PM when Murray dropped Millie off at her dorm.

She held his hand, reluctant to let go. "I hate that we have to part so soon." Her smile was radiant, revealing two cute dimples as she pouted playfully. "You seem so calm. Don't you hate to see me go?"

Her eyes were bright, her smile sweet, her voice soft and teasing like a gentle breeze.}

Murray's gaze softened as he looked at her upturned face, reaching out to ruffle her hair. "You have class tomorrow. You've had a long day. Better head back and rest."

Millie bit her lip, a fleeting look of disappointment, but she nodded, “Okay, I’ll head back then.”

The brief delay had them lingering for over half an hour.

Leaving the Grandstone Institute, his home was to the left, but the image of the photo Corley sent flashed through Murray’s mind. Impulsively, he turned the steering wheel right.

As he drove, a drizzle began, droplets forming on the windshield, blurring the lights into a kaleidoscope of colors.

In the rearview mirror, a plaid cashmere blanket could be seen lying on the backseat, forgotten by Millie when she got out.

It reminded Murray of how Roseanne used to complain about the air conditioning in his car being too cold, leading them to buy a light brown plaid blanket together. After their breakup, the blanket remained untouched on the backseat until today.

The honk of a horn snapped him back to reality as the traffic light turned green. He accelerated away. Arriving at the bar, Murray tossed the keys to the valet and went inside, a regular among regulars.

“Where’s Corley?” he asked the manager, who greeted him promptly.

“They’re upstairs in the VIP lounge,” the manager replied.”

Ignoring the manager’s eagerness to please, Murray headed straight for the stairs.

Inside the VIP lounge, the group was drunk, their laughter and conversations slurred.§ Murray scanned the room. Roseanne was absent, but Corley was relatively sober.

“What are you doing here?” Corley looked surprised, “Weren’t you with your girlfriend?”}

“Just dropped her off at her place,” Murray replied indifferently, then found a seat among the group.

## Chapter 39

Corley didn’t pry further, his lips curling into a grin. “A glass of freshly opened Burgundy?”

He poured half a glass and passed it over.

Murray took it, sipping lightly. “Not bad.”

After a pause, he asked casually, "Didn't you say Roseanne was here, too? I haven't seen her around."}

"You didn't come here just to see her, did you?" Corley swirled his wine glass, a teasing smile on his face."

"Huh," Murray's expression softened, "Just thought I'd stop by for a drink, and since I heard she was here, figured I'd ask. Is that a crime?" Corley shrugged. "I ran into her in the hallway. She was here for a drink and probably went back home already."}]

Murray didn't reply, but his demeanor visibly relaxed. That was typical Roseanne, not one for these scenes.

He set down his glass and stood up. "Got work tomorrow. I'd better head out. Put this one on my tab."}]

As he left, Corley's gaze deepened slightly. After a moment, he sighed softly, "Sorry, buddy."

...0

Less than an hour in the private room, Leda was out like a light, having downed half a bottle of wine.

A bit drunk, Roseanne couldn't drive and called a ride service to return to her apartment. Then, she took a cab from the building's entrance back to her rental. It started pouring halfway. It was late, and the cab driver only agreed to drop her at the end of the lane." Without an umbrella, Roseanne braced herself to run through the downpour."

"Roseanne!" A clear voice stopped her, and turning, she saw Owen approaching through the misty rain, umbrella in hand. "Were you planning on running through the rain?"

He dressed more casually, lacking his usual formality, which made him seem less stern.

Roseanne hesitated, then nodded. That was indeed her plan.

"Use this," he insisted, thrusting the umbrella into her hands.

Roseanne frowned, asking, "What about you?"

What she meant was they could share.

"I'll borrow one from the store," he said before dashing to the diner across the street to borrow a telescopic umbrella from the owner. Roseanne blinked in surprise. The diner's

owner was notoriously grumpy, rarely giving customers the time of day. How did he manage to borrow it?

“Helped him fix a wiring issue a while back,” Owen explained. As the rain slightly eased, he opened the umbrella and stepped into the rain.}

Roseanne watched him for a moment before following. The old neighborhood was dimly lit, and the rain only made it gloomier.

Suddenly, lightning flashed across the sky, and the wind howled, shaking the trees violently. Roseanne tightened her grip on the umbrella handle, quickening her pace.

Despite the downpour, she noticed Owen maintaining a distance of ten feet between them, not too far, yet not too close. Was he slowing down because he knew she was scared?}

Then, Owen ahead turned back. “Everything alright?”}

Roseanne paused. “Yeah.”}

“Keeping up?”

“Yep.”

The rain was relentless. Roseanne got back, finding her pants soaked.§

Quickly changing her wet clothes and having a hot shower, she put on pajamas. Fearing a cold, she had a hot cocoa.§

With the sweet taste lingering, Roseanne couldn't help but think of the man with the umbrella, his tall, broad silhouette offering a sense of security just by being there.

## Chapter 40

Studying was monotonous and dull, yet Roseanne found herself surprisingly accustomed to it.

Another day of studying came to an end.#

Returning home, she rubbed her shoulders, planning to rest early, but she received a call from Madeleine.

Madeleine first inquired about how her review was going. Roseanne gave a brief update on her progress. Madeleine didn't probe further, seemingly confident in Roseanne's abilities.

Roseanne chuckled and heard Madeleine say, "Come by my place early tomorrow morning."

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With that, Madeleine hastily ended the call, fearing a second's delay would lead Roseanne to refuse.

The following morning, Roseanne got up early, spending half an hour preparing breakfast, and of course, she didn't forget to prepare an extra portion for her neighbor, Owen

She hadn't heard any noise from next door until she went to bed the previous night, guessing Owen must have pulled an all-nighter in the lab again.

Opening the door, she indeed bumped right into Owen, who was just returning. It had been two weeks since their encounter on a rainy night. Fresh from the lab, the usually neat and meticulous man had wrinkled sleeves, and the fatigue between his brows couldn't be more apparent.

Recalling the conversation she overheard last time, Roseanne guessed he must have encountered some trouble in the lab.

Without prying, she lifted the lunchbox in her hand. "I made some oatmeal for breakfast. It's good for someone who's been up all night and might have a stomachache.

Owen hadn't felt discomfort from pulling consecutive all-nighters before, but irregular meals had left his stomach slightly in pain. The oatmeal she brought was what he needed. "Thank you."

"The night you walked me home, I should be the one saying thanks," she said with a slight smile.

Owen raised an eyebrow. "We're neighbors. It was just on the way."

He then asked, "Heading out?"

Roseanne nodded. "Ms. Payne told me to stop by her place, probably something important."

Checking her watch, she noted it was about time to leave. "I should get going. Don't forget to eat the oatmeal and eggs."

"Will do." Watching her disappear around the staircase corner, Owen entered his apartment

Uncapping the lunchbox, a fragrant aroma wafted out. The oatmeal, with added almonds and blueberries, had a perfect sweetness mixed with the wholesome scent of the grains.!

The egg was a simple fried one, which he usually didn't care for, but when feeling its warmth, he slowly ate it. Hmm, it wasn't as bad as he had imagined.

On a weekday, the subway was so crowded that there was hardly space to stand. When Roseanne finally extricated herself from the crowd, she nearly thought she'd get squashed into a pancake. Thankfully, her quick reflexes saved her from that fate.}

She had registered at Madeleine's place, so the security guard let her in.

Ringling the doorbell, it wasn't Madeleine who answered but a boy.

"Huh," he expressed, spotting Roseanne as if he'd remembered something. "Oh, it's you!"

Carlisle was there to pick up some documents and came to the door when hearing the bell. Seeing Roseanne, he couldn't shake the feeling of familiarity.

Soon, he remembered the girl who had rushed up to him at the school gate, anxiously inquiring about Madeleine's health, an image of her nearly in tears still vivid in his mind.

Roseanne paused, recognizing him, and was about to speak when Madeleine's voice came from inside. "Is that Roseanne?"

Carlisle stepped aside to let Roseanne in.!

"Ms. Payne" Roseanne carried a box of muffins, a specialty she picked up on the way, and stepped into the foyer to change her shoes "You're just in time. I was going through some documents. Can you help me see if I've got the right ones?" Wearing reading glasses, Madeleine gestured for her to come closer!!

Roseanne set aside what she brought, approaching to find a book on genetic sequencing in a foreign language sprawled on the table. touching on the expansive field of bioinformatics.8