

TV Show 56

Chapter 56: The Alluring Senior

****Random House.****

****Editor-in-Chief's Office.****

"4% royalties?"

Adam frowned. "Mr. Sef, from what I understand, the typical royalty rate for novels ranges from 6% to 14%. Even as a newcomer, I shouldn't be getting less than 6%, right?"

Besides, you've read *Lord of the Mysteries* yourself. I firmly believe its quality far surpasses that of the average new author's work—otherwise, you wouldn't be interested. So why are you only offering 4%?"

"A newcomer getting 6%?"

Jack Sef cursed inwardly. He despised well-prepared newbies who did their research—so much harder to fool. Still, he was a seasoned veteran, and his expression remained impassive.

"Who told you that? Impossible! No rookie gets a 6% royalty rate right off the bat. Newcomers have no reputation, and their book sales rely entirely on the publisher's distribution channels.

In this situation, the publisher takes all the risk. Do you have any idea how expensive it is to build and maintain those channels?"

Of course, if you're so confident in your book and believe you don't need the publisher's resources to succeed, you can always self-publish. That way, you'd get a higher royalty rate."

"..."

Adam's mouth twitched. He was at a loss for words. That was some classic corporate logic right there.

Who contributes more—authors who write books or publishers who distribute them?

Both sides had their arguments.

Authors believed that the quality of the book mattered most—after all, readers buy books for the content. Without writers pouring their time and effort into crafting a story, would publishers even have anything to sell?

Yet now that publishers had established their businesses and were comfortably raking in profits, they weren't satisfied. They wanted even more—leaving little room for authors to make a living.

On the other hand, publishers believed that in the current era, control over distribution channels was everything. With the right marketing, even a mediocre book could be turned into a bestseller. Under this logic, hiring ghostwriters to produce content was a far more cost-effective and controllable approach than working with independent authors.

There was no winning this argument with words alone. It all came down to power.

And in the end, the publishers' logic prevailed.

Even though Adam knew this was just manipulation, he had no way to refute it directly.

Fortunately, in this era, no single publishing house in America had a monopoly over the entire market.

Even if all publishers tried to exploit new authors with the same tactics, they weren't truly united.

Adam was confident that with the quality of **Lord of the Mysteries**, he could find a publisher willing to take a gamble on him.

Risk and reward go hand in hand.

A little risk could turn a nobody into a star.

And in America—the land where money ruled—there was no shortage of people willing to take that gamble.

That was the source of Adam's confidence in saying "no" to Jack Sef, the editor-in-chief of one of New York's top publishing houses.

If that weren't the case, unless he was willing to forgo publishing altogether, he would have no choice but to sign an exploitative contract—essentially selling off his creative "child" for pennies.

"Mr. Duncan, this is standard industry practice. It's the same everywhere."

Jack Sef smirked internally when he saw Adam struggling to respond.

This was the power of the status quo. When all else failed, sheer force of reality would make anything seem "reasonable."

"Of course, if you're willing to sign over **all** rights to **Lord of the Mysteries**, we can offer you a higher rate—say, 10%, just like veteran authors.

In that case, the publisher would invest more in marketing, increasing your book's chances of success. You, as the author, would also earn more in the long run.

For a new writer, this is the best choice.

Don't focus too much on just this one book. Once you've made a name for yourself, you won't have to deal with these struggles anymore. Every success story requires some sacrifice at the beginning.

This isn't just the publishing industry—it's the same in every field.

Mr. Duncan, you're a Columbia graduate and a talented writer. You're a smart man, so you should understand this is simply how the world works.

If you can't fight the system, you might as well enjoy it."

"What a load of crap."

Adam sneered inwardly but maintained a polite smile. "You make a good point, Mr. Sef..."

"So, you agree?"

Jack Sef was secretly delighted, though he maintained a professional demeanor, as if saying, *You've made the right choice.*

"I'll need to think about it."

Adam smiled.

As if.

He had a clear life plan, and writing novels was just a side endeavor—an optional flower on the roadside. Reading books was fun, but writing them was exhausting.

If all went well, *Lord of the Mysteries* would be his first and last book.

If this debut novel became a hit, he'd make his fortune. Whether Jack Sef's argument made sense or not had nothing to do with him.

Besides, writing more books didn't necessarily mean writing better books.

Many authors peaked with their debut novel.

Their first book was often the product of pure inspiration and passion—a work with real soul. If they sold out early, they might never write something as good again.

They could end up struggling for the rest of their lives, trying in vain to recapture that magic.

And if that happened, there was no climbing to the top—except in their dreams.

Of course, publishers had their counterargument ready: *Are you saying you don't even believe in yourself?*

Writers, as artists, had their pride.

If they admitted they lacked confidence in themselves, what would others think?

But none of that mattered to Adam.

He had no attachment to this industry, so he could walk away at any time.

Without any real stakes, he had the upper hand.

Jack Sef's face twitched again.

Damn it. Were all rookies this difficult to handle these days?

By now, most newcomers would have jumped at the opportunity and signed the contract without hesitation.

He knew how desperate new authors were to see their first book published—it was their dream come true!

But Adam Duncan?

Not even a hint of excitement. No sign of desperation.

If anything, he was acting like a seasoned veteran.

A stubborn one at that.

Still, this wasn't a charity.

Even if Jack Sef saw potential in **Lord of the Mysteries**, he wasn't about to compromise on profits so easily.

Potential was just potential.

And in this business, nothing was guaranteed.

He had seen plenty of promising books flop.

"Of course, take your time."

Jack Sef relented, deciding to let Adam sweat it out a bit. He extended a hand for a farewell handshake and, with perfect courtesy, held the door open. "You're welcome back anytime."

Just as Adam turned to leave, a woman entered from the hallway, accompanied by an editor with an eager, flattering smile.

He vaguely caught the words "3.8 million copies... incredible."

Golden waves of hair. A tight-fitting blazer.

A captivating gaze that could steal souls.

A mature beauty, graceful and alluring.

Until now, Adam had only known the charm of youthful beauty.

But with just one glance, he finally understood—this was what it meant to be truly mesmerizing.