

AN AB DISCOVERY BOOK

# RESETTING RUBY

WHERE BABYING BECOMES CORRECTION

EVELYN HUGHES

# Resetting Ruby by Evelyn Hughes

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## Chapter One: Ruby's Fall

When it arrived, the letter was short, cold, and final.

Ms. Ruby Lennox,

To confirmed breaches of conduct, including theft of shared residence funds and violation of the student agreement, your enrolment is terminated effective immediately. You are required to vacate University Housing within 48 hours. No appeal will be considered.

Ruby had stared at the email for ten minutes before her shaking hands closed the laptop. She already knew this was coming. That didn't make it any easier.

At twenty, Ruby had never really gotten the hang of responsibility. She wasn't lazy exactly, just... scattered, disorganised and very haphazard. She'd always relied on charm, sincere apologies, or just skating by until the next fire had to be put out. But this particular fire had grown too big.

The student council caught her. She had taken a few hundred dollars from the communal kitchen fund, intending to "put it back", of course, once she got her tutoring payment, but then rent happened, and phone bills, and that shameful Uber Eats addiction. One mistake tumbled into another until someone ran an audit, and her sins were quickly discovered.

The worst part wasn't even the theft. It was the bedwetting.

She'd been managing it, sort of. Her roommate knew about it. The laundry ladies also probably knew, but after the scandal broke, someone thought it funny to post a photo of her wet sheets hanging on the residence line. *Baby Ruby*, the caption said. Her name was trending in the very worst kind of way. By the time her mother showed up, red-faced and tight-lipped, Ruby had already packed most of her clothes... not that there was anywhere in particular to go.

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"No. You're not coming home," her mother had said flatly, arms crossed. "I have enough problems. You're not adding yours to the pile." The silence between them was heavier than Ruby's backpack. "But Aunt Helena has agreed to take you in," her mother added, after a moment. "I don't know why, but she has. She's a good woman."

Ruby blinked. "Aunt Helena? But she barely—"

"She remembers you as a sweet child," her mother interrupted, picking up the last box. "She must think she can get that girl back. God help her. We want that girl back too."

*Sweet child.* That girl was long gone. Ruby had tried. She'd gone to university, hadn't she? She'd wanted to make something of herself. It just... hadn't worked. She was tired all the time, behind on everything, and for two years now, she had woken up soaked more often than not.

The ride to her aunt's house was long and quiet. Her mother didn't even come inside. She just dropped the boxes on the porch and left without a hug.

Ruby stood alone, the pale afternoon light stretching across the gravel path. She felt ridiculous, holding a pink plastic tub of toiletries and wearing a hoodie two sizes too big. Her eyes stung, but she'd promised herself: *No crying today.* She wasn't overly sure she'd be able to do that, however. Her life was in pieces, and she was being dumped with an old aunt she barely knew.

The door creaked open.

Helena Lennox hadn't changed much in ten years. She was tall, straight-backed, and neatly dressed in a pink blouse and grey slacks. Her silver hair was tied back in a soft knot, and her green eyes were sharp, but not unkind.

"Ruby," she said softly, and for a moment, Ruby saw something like love pass through her expression. "Come on in, sweetheart. Let's get you settled. Your mum has filled me in on everything, so there's no need to talk about that any more."

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Ruby stepped over the threshold and into her aunt's clean, old-fashioned home. The air smelled faintly of lemon polish and vanilla candles. It felt oddly safe, and yet terrifying at the same time.

"You'll have the guest room at the back," Helena said. "No locks. No phone use after 8 p.m. No staying up past ten."

Ruby nodded.

"There are rules, and I expect them to be followed," her aunt continued gently, but firmly. "And one more thing." She reached into a side drawer and held up a small pack.

It was a pack of disposable pull-ups.

Ruby froze.

Helena looked at her without judgment. "I know about your issue, darling. I know it's not your fault. But in this house, if you wet the bed, you wear protection. No exceptions."

Ruby stared at the pack in her aunt's hand. Her stomach turned. Her throat was thick. But there was nowhere else to go. No one else was left.

"Okay," she whispered.

"Good girl," Helena said, placing the pack on the dresser in Ruby's new room. "Now settle in. Dinner's in an hour. And Ruby?"

"Yes?"

"You're safe now. But you will follow the rules. Every single one. No one will hassle you here if you follow the rules. I don't care about your bedwetting. That's easy to handle."

Ruby nodded again, not trusting her voice to reply without tears.

She unpacked slowly. Folded shirts. Too many leggings. She pulled out the bunny-print pyjamas she couldn't bear to throw out, and a half-used packet of wet wipes, hidden in the bottom of her bag. As the sun dipped behind the trees, she stared at the pull-up waiting silently on the dresser.

*It's just for tonight*, she told herself. Just until I get back on my feet.

But deep down, something in her had already begun to slip. She knew her bedwetting wasn't going away any time soon. It never

really had. It had just eased off enough to hide until a couple of years ago when it returned with a vengeance.



## Chapter Two: A Fresh Start

The first night in her aunt's home was quiet. Too quiet for her. She was used to waking up to the noise of students racing around and yelling.

Ruby lay awake long after the house had gone still, her pull-up crinkling beneath her oversized pyjamas every time she shifted. The ceiling fan spun softly overhead, its rhythm hypnotic. The sheets smelled of washing powder. Everything was clean, too clean. It felt overwhelming. Her entire life was many things, but clean was not one of them. It was messy, confusing, overwhelming and... wet. Wet way too often at night, and even days had their struggles. But at some point, exhaustion pulled her under, and she fell asleep.

She woke to the telltale chill. The pull-up was soaked, soaked beyond capacity.

She sat up slowly, pressing her thighs together, willing it to feel less real. But there was no denying the sag and squish between her legs. It was worse than usual. A full flood, not just a damp patch.

*First night. Great start, Ruby,* she berated herself.

She peeled back the covers and shuffled to the bathroom, careful not to be heard. She stripped off the wet garment and buried it at the bottom of the bin, wrapping it in tissues as tightly as she could. The shame hit harder than usual, maybe because this wasn't a dorm anymore, it was someone's home, her aunt's.

By the time she got downstairs, her aunt was already in the kitchen, humming softly as she flipped something in a skillet. The smell of butter and toast filled the room.

Ruby lingered at the doorway, unsure.

Helena turned. "Morning, sweetheart."

"Morning," Ruby murmured. Her hands clutched the hem of her sleeves.

"Did you sleep alright?"

A pause. "Yeah."

“You’re dry?”

Ruby hesitated. It was a trap. Lie, and she’d probably be checked. Tell the truth, and what? Lose more dignity?

“No,” she said finally, voice barely above a whisper.

Helena didn’t flinch. “Alright. Sit down. Breakfast is almost ready.”

*That was it? That’s all she’s gonna say about bedwetting?*

Ruby blinked and obeyed, sitting carefully at the table in clean clothes. Helena placed a plate of scrambled eggs and toast in front of her, then sat with her own tea. After a few quiet minutes, Helena cleared her throat and slid a folded sheet of paper across the table.

“This is your new daily schedule.”

Ruby read it with rising confusion.

7:30 Wake & breakfast

8:00 Morning check

8:30 Assigned tasks or reading time

11:00 Break

12:30 Lunch

1:30 Nap (mandatory)

3:00 Afternoon chores

5:00 Leisure time

6:00 Dinner

7:00 Quiet activities

8:00 Pyjamas on

9:00 Lights out

“What’s this?” Ruby asked nervously.

“A routine,” Helena replied, sipping her tea. “Structure is the first step toward rebuilding anything.”

Ruby frowned. “But I’m twenty.”

Helena didn’t smile. “You are also unemployed, expelled, without direction, and deeply unsettled. This is what I’m offering you. A full reset. You follow the schedule, you do your chores, you go to bed on time, you wear protection at night, and if you break the rules, there will be consequences. Understood?”

Ruby swallowed. “Consequences?”

"I do not raise my voice," her aunt said calmly. "But I am firm. I believe in discipline."

Ruby wanted to laugh, but couldn't. Something about the way Helena said it made her feel smaller. Seen. Completely disarmed.

"I guess I don't have a choice."

Helena reached across the table and gently touched Ruby's wrist.

"You do. You always do. You're here because I believe you can be better, but you have to want it too. I'm here to help as much as I can."

Ruby stared at the paper. *A nap? Lights out at nine? This was ridiculous.* But so was she, if she was honest. She hadn't earned trust, or independence, or anything remotely adult.

"Okay," she said, almost inaudibly. "I'll try."

"Good girl," Helena said, and the words stung in a strange, echoing way, like she'd just been praised as if she were a little girl.

Ruby spent the rest of the morning doing light dusting and sorting books in the study. Everything in the house was neat, old-fashioned, and tidy, just like Helena herself. But the corners of the home weren't cold. There were soft cushions, warm throws, and framed pictures. It felt lived-in. It felt safe, and Ruby realised that safety was what she had been missing the past two years. Despite her supposed confidence and independence, she had never really felt 'safe' in that truly secure way. If she thought about it at all, and she rarely did, she put her renewed bedwetting down to her still trying to find her way. Except she had never actually found her 'way', at least not yet.

At 1:30, she was told to go lie down.

"I don't nap," she protested. "I'm way too old for that, and I don't even feel tired."

"You do now," Helena replied evenly. "The body needs rest to heal."

Ruby sulked upstairs and laid on top of the bedcovers, arms folded. But the warmth, the silence, and her exhaustion won out. She fell into an easy sleep.

## Resetting Ruby

She woke an hour later, groggy... and wet. Again.

The humiliation burned. *Twice in one day? In broad daylight? What is going on with me? Must be the stress, right?*

She changed quietly and returned downstairs.

"You're quiet," her aunt observed.

Ruby didn't answer. She didn't want to cry. Wetting her bed at night was bad enough, but during a daytime nap?

After dinner, Helena handed her a folded set of fresh pyjamas in flannel, soft, and... pink. With little flowers along the collar. Ruby froze.

"You can wear your own, if they're clean," Helena said, "but I thought you might like these. They're cosy. And," she added gently, "they're yours now."

Ruby took them, her cheeks pink with embarrassment. They were little girl pyjamas.

*Doesn't she know I'm a grownup?*