


A NOVEL BY
MARCIA ROSE

Author of *ADMISSIONS*

*Daddy's girls—
his beautiful daughters,
his loving wife,
his devoted secretary—
and a lifetime
of secrets...*

**ALL
FOR THE
LOVE
OF DADDY**



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OF DADDY*

MARCIA ROSE

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*ALL
FOR THE
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OF DADDY*

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the love of
our daughters:
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About the Author

Marcia Rose is not a real person. She is *two* real persons—two women who met as young mothers and began to write books together (much to their surprise) eleven years ago.

Marcia of *Marcia Rose*, a divorcée, has two daughters, and lives in a co-op apartment in Brooklyn Heights, NY. She enjoys good music, theater, and the company of people with the initials HC.

Rose of *Marcia Rose* is married, has two daughters, and lives in a hundred-year-old house in Brooklyn Heights. She enjoys travel, skiing, and theater.

They both love a good laugh, a good cry, and a good book.

Marcia and Rose have written every word of their novels together. After so many years as a team, it no longer comes as a surprise when they think of the same thing at the same time, in the same words. What *is* a surprise is that something that is so much fun has turned out to be a full-time career.

MARCIA ROSE

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Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1985

Her mother's kitchen on Thanksgiving Day, Deena Berman thought, could be a stage set for a play about a well-to-do Jewish family getting ready to sit down to dinner in one of those high-ceilinged, sprawling old luxury apartments on Central Park West.

Yes, all the props were in place: bubbling pots on the stove; china bowls lining the counters, sterling silver platters at the ready. There was the round butcher-block table with its load of casseroles. There were the platters in the pantry, heaped with enough fresh fruit to feed a small country. There was the tea cart, every square inch covered with succulent desserts. There were the baskets of breads and rolls and biscuits. And, as seen through an oven door darkly, the obligatory enormous turkey, browning.

The scene was all set for the curtain to go up, and when it did, there they would all be: the women of the cast, all cooking, all busy, all intent. Easy, comfortable, intimate, funny, loving. The four Strauss girls, as Daddy liked to call them. In her head, Deena arranged the cast list, in order of appearance.

The mother, Sylvia Weinreb Strauss, aged sixty-nine. Next, the oldest sister, Elaine Strauss Barranger, forty-five. The youngest sister, Marilyn Strauss, M.D., thirty-six years old and, oh, my God, still single. And last but not least, of course, her very own self, Deena Strauss Berman, wife, mother, middle child. Age? Oh, hell, forty-three.

Of course, this wasn't a play; and it certainly wasn't a stage set. It was her childhood home, with her own family. And the kitchen smelled just as it always had smelled on Thanksgiving, ever since she could remember: a blend of butter, honey, oranges, sage, cloves, turkey, onions, apple pie, and pumpkin pie . . . delicious. And familiar. That's what made it really wonderful. Deena stopped where she was, in the middle of the room, balancing the tray of delicate crystal, and took a deep and satisfied sniff. Everything was sweetly familiar, here in her mother's kitchen, on this day of the year. Sylvia did not believe in messing with a good thing; consequently, there was a place for everything and everything was in its place—and its place hadn't changed for forty-seven years. Deena could still find her way around this room in pitch darkness, get the box of Mallomars from the right hand side of the third shelf of the pantry, and make her way back into her old room—and never bump into a single thing.

"Watch your back!" Her sister Elaine laughed and edged past her. She was hefting a big platter of beautifully prepared raw vegetables. "Excuse me, I've been chosen to bring in the crudités." She gave the last word its French pronunciation.

"Crudités," Deena echoed. "Remember when they used to be just plain raw veggies?"

"Just before chicken soup became consommé." That was Marilyn, her younger sister, working busily on stuffing balls at the counter by the big wall ovens.

"After the glasses became goblets . . ." Elaine chanted.

"And chocolate pudding turned into mousse . . ."

"Oh, my God, remember?" Deena began to laugh. "The first time Sylvia announced we would be having mousse? The look on Marilyn's face . . . remember? Sheer panic!"

"We've all heard this story five thousand times, Deena," Marilyn said.

"You couldn't see the look on your face . . . it was hilari-

ous! We all knew what you were picturing, we all could imagine right along with you . . . a platter with a big moose draped over it, antlers pointing at the ceiling.”

“Well, you were America’s sweetheart, as usual. Whispering in my ear, ‘Don’t worry, Mommy took the fur off!’”

Now Elaine began to laugh. “Oh, God, it *was* funny. But you were easy to get, Moo. Very literal-minded . . .”

“Unlike the rest of this family of stand-up comics and dramatic Sarah Heartburns. Oh, the pain of my childhood, you can’t even imagine! Do you know, I was ashamed to bring my friends home, I was embarrassed by all of you.”

“And still are?” Deena teased. When Marilyn turned and shot her a look, she quickly added: “Just kidding. Just that . . . well, it took you long enough to bring this guy home!”

“Nobody loves a wiseass, Deena,” came the dry reply.

“Girls,” their mother remonstrated. “Stop that! Marilyn is a doctor!”

“Oh, Sylvia! My daughter the doctor? Is that what you’re pulling?”

“Never mind! Just stop picking on your little sister!”

Deena, bending to peer at her mother’s profile as she worked busily on the fruit cocktail, stemming and pitting and cutting and chopping, was sure she caught sight of a secret smile twitching at the corners of her mother’s mouth. Marilyn, meanwhile, cautiously gave her sisters the finger—behind their mother’s back, of course. Sylvia Strauss was of the old school. It was possible that she would feel perfectly justified in sending them all to their rooms—rooms they had not inhabited for more than twenty years.

Still chuckling, Deena hefted the tray again, hipping open the swinging door into the dining room. As always on state occasions, the table was covered with Grandma Strauss’s white damask cloth, set with Grandma Weinreb’s sterling, and the entire room was redolent of furniture polish. Earline, Sylvia’s weekly help, had done an extra-special job yesterday. When Deena came by with her contribution, the pumpkin pies, it was already past six o’clock and there was Earline, big and brown and corseted, polishing the brass doorknobs. “Earline!” Deena had protested. “The sky won’t fall if every bit of this apartment doesn’t shine and sparkle. Don’t you have your

own Thanksgiving to think about?" Earline had chortled and, finishing the doorknob, said, "I'm goin', I'm goin'. No hurry. My grands are doin' all the cookin' for us this year!" She crowed with delight. "That should be *some* dinner!" Deena could only agree; of Earline's seven grandchildren, four were working chefs. "Yes," Earline said, "We are a family of cook-in' fools."

And the Strausses, Deena couldn't help thinking now as she carefully put down the tray of glasses, were a family of eatin' fools. There was going to be enough food today to feed them all four times over; there was always too much to eat and drink. If Sylvia had one fault, it was her tendency to excess. Even the china, her best, her favorite, was overly ornate. It didn't need gold fleur-de-lis *and* quadruple bands of gold overlying triple bands of maroon encircling a giant bouquet of wine-colored roses with gilded petals. But Sylvia knew only that it was English bone china and the most expensive pattern in Altman's and that it had plenty of decoration. Actually, Deena had adored this china when she was little and had longed to have it for her own when she grew up. Now, of course, she couldn't imagine why. It was overdone, she thought, but ultimately lovable. Just like a lot of her mother's stuff. And furthermore, should she ever arrive here on a major holiday and discover different china on the table, all tasteful and restrained, she would feel cheated. The table, in this dining room, was *supposed* to look heavy, laden, rich: in other words, exactly the way it looked . . . yes, even including the gilt cornucopia centerpiece from Czechoslovakia filled and overflowing with fresh fruits and dried fruits and unshelled nuts.

Yes, other things in this world could change: and, in fact, everything did, sometimes in ways Deena didn't particularly like. In ways, in fact, she didn't even want to think about, especially on Thanksgiving Day. Let everything else change, but not her mother's house! She eyed the table again. The water goblets were now in place and yes, they looked wonderful. All that was left for her to do was the wineglasses.

As she went back through the swinging door, she caught sight of her dim, wavery reflection in one of the glass-fronted pantry doors. It caught her by surprise. She looked good, by

God. Her new shorter haircut was flattering, fluffing around her face as it did, and now you could see the diamond studs Daddy had given her on her fortieth birthday. Luckily, she had the Weinreb high cheekbones; she only wished she had the Weinreb big round blue eyes; but no, she got hazel. Oh, hell, it was enough to be sexy, right? She laughed at herself. Sexy! Nobody was ever going to call her that, not anymore. Well, she wasn't. She was forty-three-year-old Deena Strauss Berman, mother of four, housewife, part-time guidance counselor at the Clayton School, and recently, sometime college student.

Before reaching for the wineglasses, she gave herself one more look. She was doing a lot of that lately: checking herself out. As if she might have changed noticeably within the last couple of minutes. She'd have to stop. Besides, what did she think she was looking for? She gazed at the somewhat distorted image in the glass. Attractive. She'd give herself attractive. Not bad for an old babe. No sagging under the chin, no dark circles under the eyes, no tiny wrinkles. Come to think of it, she actually looked younger than Marilyn, even though she was seven years older. Marilyn looked awful, she thought, all raw and creased and timeworn like those pictures of mountain women. But maybe that was unfair. Marilyn was a natural blond; she used no makeup, and she didn't bother about being stylish. She didn't bother about the way she looked, period. Today, for instance, she was wearing pants and a man's sweater. For Thanksgiving dinner! And her pale curly hair was just piled up and loosely held with a pair of wooden chopsticks. Why didn't she care? Why did she make herself almost defiantly plain? It certainly wasn't the way she had been brought up. Hell, no . . . even the thought made Deena laugh a little. Hadn't *she* been brought up by the same exacting standards? A lady didn't laugh too loudly; a lady didn't put her elbows on the table; a lady didn't let a boy touch her in the wrong places (and there were no right places); and a lady always, always, always was careful about what Sylvia called Very Good Grooming.

It was a shame about Marilyn. She might be a doctor, but she didn't look very happy and fulfilled. Of course, she was smaller, thinner, and paler than the rest of them. When she was a little girl, it had made her seem golden . . . a blonde

in the midst of all these dark-haired, vividly colored, big-boned women! Back then everyone said Marilyn was going to be a real beauty. What they secretly meant was that Marilyn was going to look like a shiksa, a gentile, a WASP. Well, she did, but not in any wonderful way. She just looked worn down.

And then Deena had to smile at her own hyperbole. First of all, Marilyn didn't look *that* bad. And if you were going to go in for overstatement, you might as well save it for the most overstated of all of them, Elaine. Elaine Barranger, the tallest—nearly five feet nine—the best-looking, with her wonderful cheekbones and her aquiline nose, her big blue eyes, her thick black shiny hair with a dramatic white streak along one side. And the biggest of all. Elaine was, to put it nicely, statuesque—forty pounds overstatuesque was the way she liked to put it. It didn't seem to make a difference, men still tended to follow her down the street. Not that it mattered to Elaine; she was all business. Elaine looked the most like Sylvia, but Sylvia was on a much smaller scale and didn't give off those same vibrations of superpower, personality, and pizzazz.

And me? Deena thought. What do I give off? Practically nothing. Yup, she was a typical middle child in every way: middling slim, middling smart, middling satisfied, not so gorgeous as Elaine, not so plain as Marilyn . . . dammit, even her hair was not as curly as Marilyn's, not as glossy as Sylvia's, not as black as Elaine's.

But enough of this. It was getting to be annoying, this habit of woolgathering at all odd hours of the day or night. The other night, at three A.M., she had awakened and found herself thinking about her children when they were babies and was suddenly flooded with enormous anger at Michael, who had been largely absent through those difficult years. God, she was tired, she was tired of her life. Tired of taking care of four kids who were now old enough to take care of themselves . . . not to mention a husband so busy with his law practice and his Nazi-hunting meetings that she hardly saw him anymore.

She shook herself, impatient with her own fussiness, and began to collect the wine goblets from the cupboard. It soothed her just to handle them, they were such an integral part of her childhood memories of special occasions. She re-

remembered vividly the year she was finally trusted to have a real wineglass by her plate instead of her blue Shirley Temple mug. Now that she thought of it, where was that mug, was it still in the little cabinet next to the refrigerator? Probably. Sylvia was not one for throwing *anything* away.

Oh, hell, she thought, what is all this meandering down memory lane! Quickly she loaded the tray and, quickly set out the wineglasses and marched herself back into the kitchen. And just in time, because Sylvia was calling: "Deena! It's three oh nine!"

"I'm here, Syl, you don't have to yell."

"Well, it's time . . . past time." Deena knew what that meant; the work schedule for the day was neatly printed and posted on the wall next to the stove. Her green beans almon-dine were on the list for three o'clock. She laughed to herself. That Sylvia! The Schedule Queen of the Upper West Side and probably the known universe. As she went to get the bundle of beans, both her sisters had stopped what they were doing and were looking at their wristwatches, loudly counting off the seconds.

"Three-ten, Sylvia," Elaine said. "Ten minutes late. Shall we send Deena to bed without any dinner?"

And Marilyn, "At least the punishment would fit the crime."

They all laughed. Mildly, her back stolidly turned to them, Sylvia said, "You want to know the big problem around here? Everyone's too busy talking back to their mother to do their job." Then she laughed. "I don't think that's good English."

Deena looked at her mother's straight back, smoothly en-cased in pink cashmere from Saks, her capable hands continu-ing with whatever they were doing. Bless her, she always did her job, and did it on time. It could be a royal pain, particu-larly when she was pushing *you* to meet her schedule. It might be Daddy who told all the funny stories and created most of the laughter and pinched the cheeks, and handed out the silver dollars. Daddy might be the star of the show—and he was, he was—but he'd never be able to do it without Sylvia hustling everyone into place. Deena found her mother's skill at this sort of thing a wonderment. Where the hell did she find the energy? And, right in the middle of all her tight, perfectionis-

tic timetables, she was very likely to make a lighthearted little crack. It suddenly struck Deena that her mother actually *enjoyed* all this work and all this organizing and all this hustle and bustle . . . yes, the very things that drove her daughters crazy.

Impulsively, she went to the sink and put her hands on Sylvia's shoulders. "Tootsie," she said, "I want to go on record as saying you are a genuine wonder." She leaned forward to give her a kiss, but Sylvia said, "That's nice darling. Later. The beans, the beans."

There was no use protesting. The beans were slated to be done by 3:30 and that was that. Which meant she had exactly eleven minutes and thirty seconds to do them. How nice, she thought, somebody had already put out the serving dish for her. But when she reached over, it had something in it, something strange and new, something that looked suspiciously like tofu and black Chinese mushrooms.

"Whose casserole is this?"

"Which one?"

"The one that looks a lot like tofu and mushrooms."

"It *is* tofu and mushrooms," Marilyn answered. "And it's mine. What's that look, Deena? Don't worry; I've taken the fur off."

They were still laughing when the door swung open and immediately the large airy kitchen seemed crowded. Jack Strauss had arrived, letting the door bang against the wall, charging in, a whirlwind of energy, already in the middle of a sentence. Deena loved her father's voice, which was deep and just a bit gravelly from all the years he'd smoked big black cigars. And she loved his booming laugh, his extravagant gestures. Had he ever in his life sidled into a room? Slipped into a room? Even just plain *walked* into a room? Probably not. The dramatic way was the Jack Strauss way.

" . . . And here they are, right where I thought I would find them, in the kitchen . . . eight of the most beautiful legs in New York City!"

"Eight of the tireddest legs," Marilyn countered. "And anyway, Daddy, our *legs* are not the issue."

"My little feminist!" Jack boomed. "I'm sorry I noticed you all have gorgeous legs. So do me something! I'm a leg

man, always have been. That's how I picked your mother. There she was . . .”

“We've heard it, we've heard it,” his wife said. “The Staten Island ferry. The wind. My skirt. My legs. Enough, Jack!” But she was laughing and her cheeks were pink with pleasure. How nice, Deena thought, to be affected like that by your husband after so many years.

“And anyway,” Jack was going on, some of his words piling over his wife's, “don't tell me *tired* legs, Marilyn. You, the skier, the hiker, the mountaineer! How many Alps did you climb last summer? Twelve?”

“Two. And it's not a joke, Daddy.”

“Joke! Joke? Who's joking? Do you see me laughing? Look, look at me, like a judge, like a rabbi, like a professor, serious . . .”

They all, obediently, almost automatically, turned to look at him. Deena smiled. At seventy, he looked years younger. Well, he took good care of himself, watched his weight, worked out twice a week at the gym, went under the sunlamp, walked to work. And he looked terrific; no paunch, no flabbiness, built like a block, thick-chested with heavy muscular legs and a big head with a lot of pure white hair only recently beginning to recede slightly from the broad forehead. His hair was his great vanity; he still took himself downtown every two weeks to Sal for his haircuts.

Gazing at her father today, his hair gleaming against the omnipresent tan, resplendent in gray cord pants and a deep red cashmere sweater, Deena thought, not for the first time, how lucky her mother was. They were both still full of pep, still traveled, still joked around, probably still made love. Most of his friends were already like little old men, bent and fussy and ready to give up. How lucky they all were, the Strauss girls!

“What do you want, Jack? Come on, we have work to do.”

“First, a kiss from the prettiest girls in the room.”

“Oh, Daddy . . .” This was an old, old routine. He went to each of his daughters, holding his cheek at the ready, and got smooched by each of them, as noisily as they could manage.

“Best for last,” he said—this, too, was in the script—and bent to his wife, planting a solid kiss on her neck.

“Oh, Jack!” She wriggled away from him. “Not while I'm