



*Life and Love
In Vivid Color
Rhonda Jackson Joseph*

Bad idea. Terrible. Rosalind Davis kicked herself inside for attending the speed dating event that called itself “Mature Mingles”. She’d had no idea when she’d signed up that “mature” actually meant “looking for a caregiver with benefits or a spouse who would become a caregiver”.

She should have known that trying to make a romantic connection at her age would be difficult. Rosalind had only just decided she even wanted companionship and there she was, in a huge mess.

Her lips were exhausted from the effort she had to put into the tight, polite smile. *Ring, buzzer. I’m ready to go.*

She sighed in relief and closed her eyes. *Only one more to go.* She should have indicated that she was interested in meeting females, too. That way she might have at least gotten a good tennis partner out of the deal.

“I’m not trying to get married.” The words tumbled from her mouth before the last man could take the seat across from her.

He sat down and held her gaze. “That’s a relief. I don’t usually propose until the first real date.”

Rosalind flicked her gaze over the ID tag the man wore.

“Sorry.”

“No apology necessary. I’m Darren.”

“Rosalind.”

“I’m glad this is the last stop tonight.” He continued to look directly at her.

She felt the heat rise in her face at his intense gaze. “Me, too.”

“I’m glad for your beautiful mouth.”

“Excuse me?” Rosalind straightened in her chair and glared. She *would* get a bold pervert for the last contact of the night.

“I only meant that if you had to paste that little fake smile on one more time, your lips might crack and fall off.”

The indignant anger leapt out of her and Rosalind laughed, the first genuine chuckle she’d emitted that evening.

“In that case, thank you. You’re right.”

He shrugged. “It would be such a shame to lose it. You might need your mouth later on. To eat or laugh or something.”

She confirmed his observation with another giggle. He joined in, and she noticed how he laughed from his depths, and his smile completely reached his eyes.

“Nice to meet you, Darren.”

“The pleasure is all mine.” Darren held his hand across the table and Rosalind grabbed it. He firmly shook and then released her.

A part of her wanted him to hold onto her a bit longer.