

TV Show 101

Chapter 101: Monica, the Skeptic**

Central Perk Café.

"I want a million dollars!"

Seeing how Ross had just shouted about getting married, only for a bride to magically appear, Chandler, the king of sarcastic commentary, immediately made a wish with a deadpan expression.

"Rachel."

Monica, however, recognized the newcomer right away.

It was her high school best friend—the one she had run into at a bar a year ago. That time, after hearing Rachel's insincere *"We should definitely grab coffee sometime!"*, Monica had bet herself she would never see her again in this lifetime.

Thinking of this, she instinctively glanced at Adam. He raised his hand and made a subtle *money-counting* gesture. Monica's head immediately started throbbing.

500 bucks!

Dear God!

Why had she been so confident when raising the bet?

If she had another chance... Well, let's be honest—she probably would've still gone for it.

"Monica!"

Rachel's eyes landed on her, and the next second, she came rushing over, wrapping a bewildered Monica in an enthusiastic hug.

"Oh, thank God! I'm so glad you're here!" Rachel chattered excitedly.

A server approached. "Would you like a cup of coffee?"

Monica quickly interjected, "Decaf!"

She seriously suspected Rachel was high on something.

"Everyone, let me introduce you. This is my high school friend, another survivor of Lincoln High—Rachel Green!"

Monica pulled Rachel toward the group.

"Hi!"

"Hi~"

The first greeting, a normal one, came from Adam and Phoebe.

The second, more drawn-out and suggestive one? That was Joey and Ross.

A year ago, Chandler had unsuccessfully tried to use his pool skills to impress Rachel, only for her to label him as the kind of guy you'd have a *crazy one-night stand* with and then never see again. Now, he just gave a small wave, looking slightly awkward.

Rachel's gaze quickly landed on Adam. There was something about him—familiar yet unfamiliar.

Monica continued introducing the group. "This is Chandler, Adam, Joey, Phoebe, and my brother, Ross. Remember him?"

"Of course."

Rachel reluctantly tore her gaze away, pausing briefly on Chandler—something about him felt familiar too. Had she seen him somewhere before? She couldn't quite place it. But she didn't dwell on it and instead turned to Ross with a polite smile, ready to give him a friendly hug.

"Hi~"

Ross, still reeling from the shock of seeing his *high school crush* walk in wearing a wedding dress, was already flustered beyond belief. The fact that Rachel was now approaching him for a hug? His brain short-circuited.

He instinctively reached out to shake her hand—but unfortunately, he was still holding his umbrella, which awkwardly blocked her. Panicked, he froze up entirely, gave up on doing anything, and just plopped back into his seat, mentally cursing himself.

"So... what exactly is going on?"

Once Rachel was seated, Monica teased, "Should we be expecting four soaking-wet bridesmaids to show up too?"

"It all started thirty minutes before the wedding..."

Rachel began recounting her dramatic escape.

Apparently, she had been in the gift room unwrapping presents when she came across a beautifully designed spice rack. She played with it excitedly for a while before suddenly realizing—she was more interested in this spice rack than in her fiancé, Barry.

Panic set in.

Then, another thought hit her: Barry kind of looked like *Mr. Potato Head*.

And from there, it spiraled into a full existential crisis.

"Who am I? Why am I doing this? Who am I doing this for?"

So... she ran.

"...I didn't know where else to go. I know we've drifted apart, but you're the only person I know in this city..."

"Who wasn't invited to the wedding," Monica added dryly.

"Oof."

Rachel cringed. "I was hoping that wouldn't be a *thing*."

Adam, quietly analyzing the situation with his recent dive into psychology, sensed that Rachel's explanation wasn't the *full* truth. There had to be something deeper—a real trigger that set off this chain of events. Maybe it was too personal, or maybe even Rachel herself wasn't fully aware of it yet.

"Of course it's not a problem," Monica said warmly, ever the generous friend. Without hesitation, she brought Rachel back to the apartment.

While Rachel was on the phone explaining everything to her father, Monica dug through her pockets, counted her cash—only **\$69**—and reluctantly handed it to Adam.

"Here's sixty-nine. The other **four hundred and thirty-one**... I'll, uh, pay you back later. Eventually."

As a chef, Monica's salary wasn't *bad*, but she was someone who enjoyed a *certain standard of living*. She even had a set of fine china *just in case* the Queen ever decided to visit. So saving money? Not exactly her strong suit.

That's why, when she lost her job for a period, she ended up having to borrow money from her parents—a move she had absolutely *dreaded*.

If she had any other option, she wouldn't have asked them for a dime.

Especially since her parents—*her mother, in particular*—were *constantly* criticizing her. It was her biggest sore spot.

Whenever they visited, she prepped the apartment like she was staging a military inspection. Even the couch pillows had to be fluffed *just right*. The level of obsessive tension in the air once even freaked out her old roommate, Phoebe.

Why?

Because she refused to give her mother a *single reason* to criticize her.

"Monica, why do you owe Adam so much money?"

Phoebe's curiosity was piqued.

Loaning money between friends was always awkward—no matter what country you were in.

There's a reason people say: *Talking about money ruins friendships, talking about friendships ruins money.*

That's why friends should avoid borrowing from each other *whenever possible*.

"I lost a bet," Monica grumbled.

In America's credit card-driven world, **500 bucks in cash** was *a lot*. She genuinely didn't have that kind of money lying around.

"What bet?"

Chandler, who had been quietly smirking the whole time, clearly knew the story. This only made Phoebe more determined to find out. She *hated* being left out.

"What bet?" she pressed.

"Nothing important," Monica said, eyeing Rachel—who was still on the phone. She wasn't sure if she wanted to bring it up again.

"*What bet?*"

Phoebe refused to let it go, even scooting closer to Monica to nag her directly.

"If you don't tell me, I'm just going to keep asking. What bet? What bet? What bet?"

"Okay, okay!" Monica surrendered, raising her hands.

"Last year, we ran into Rachel at a bar. She said, *'Let's get coffee sometime!*' I bet Adam that I'd never see her again within **two years**. The bet went up to **500 bucks**. And now? Not even a full year later—BAM! Here she is! *Damn it!*"

As Adam grinned and pocketed the money, Monica's competitive streak kicked in again. She wasn't about to let this go.

"Let's bet again!" she said, grabbing Adam's arm.

"Oh?" Adam smirked. "On what?"

Monica thought for a moment, then her eyes landed on Rachel's wedding dress.

"I bet that Rachel and her ex-fiancé will **never** make it back to the altar. ****500 bucks. Two years.****"

Adam raised an eyebrow. "Are you **sure**?"

"Absolutely!" Monica declared with full confidence.

A runaway bride **going back** to the guy she ditched? In front of all the guests she embarrassed? No way.

She was **definitely** winning this one.

Adam grinned. "Wanna raise the stakes?"