

TV Show 221

Chapter 221: Can't Be Without Women

The next day.

A restaurant near Brooklyn.

"This should be the place, right?"

Adam and his friends arrived together to cheer on Monica at her new job.

Yesterday, she had been proudly declaring that being a stock market genius would be her lifelong career. The next second, she was completely wiped out.

After experiencing such highs and lows, Monica completely gave up on the idea of making money through stock trading.

Then, to make matters worse, she lost the last of her money.

With no other choice, she took a job she found in a newspaper listing.

"Wow."

As soon as they saw Monica behind the bar, everyone's expressions changed.

She was wearing a silver, fluffy wig. Overnight, her chest seemed to have transformed, appearing even more exaggerated than Heather's. On top of that, she had a pair of glasses hanging around her neck.

This was her work outfit.

The original cosplay queen.

"Stop staring. It's all fake. There's nothing inside."

Seeing Adam and Joey staring at her, Monica couldn't help but grab at herself to demonstrate. She smirked and teased, "Adam, you really can't be without women, huh?"

"Ahem."

Adam looked a bit embarrassed.

Before, he never would have reacted like this.

But Heather had been gone for over a month.

And now, with his growing dry spell, he found himself drawn to women's curves more often than he'd like—completely beyond his control.

"I was just lost in thought."

"Yeah, sure!"

The others all scoffed.

"You and Heather really broke up?"

Chandler asked with concern, "Do you want me to have Susie introduce you to someone? With your qualifications, you could be dating actresses."

"Hey!"

Joey immediately got jealous. His eyes widened. "Why are you only introducing girls to him? Have you ever thought about setting me up? I'm single too! And I'm an actor—doesn't that make me even more suited to date actresses?"

"I was going to!"

Chandler quickly tried to backpedal. "I just said 'a few people,' didn't I? Adam doesn't need that many."

"That's more like it."

Joey pouted, then nodded with satisfaction.

"Hey!"

Ross suddenly interjected. "What about me?"

Everyone turned to look at him, then their eyes shifted to Rachel.

"What?"

Rachel looked confused.

"Aren't you upset?"

Monica asked, puzzled.

"Oh, come on."

Rachel shrugged. "You guys seriously think Ross has a shot? He just makes lists and dreams about it. Dating a celebrity? Him?"

"Hey!"

Ross protested. "It's not just a list! If I really met one of them, I would actually make a move."

"Okay."

Rachel laughed dismissively.

"You really think I wouldn't?"

Ross got more agitated.

"What list?"

Adam interrupted.

"It's an 'exemption list.' We can each pick five celebrities, and if we ever meet them, we're allowed to sleep with them—no consequences, no jealousy."

Rachel grinned.

"You guys really... know how to have fun."

Adam gave them a double thumbs-up.

"Please, it's just fantasy. It's never actually going to happen."

Rachel waved it off.

"This is New York."

Adam reminded them, "There's a good chance you'll actually run into the people on your list."

"Who's on your list?"

Chandler asked.

"Chris O'Donnell, John F. Kennedy Jr., Daniel Day-Lewis, Louis St. Louis, and Parker Stevenson."

Rachel rattled them off without hesitation, clearly having fantasized about this more than once.

Adam didn't recognize a single name, but judging from Monica and Phoebe's expressions, Rachel's list was full of heartthrobs.

"What about you, Ross?"

Chandler turned to him next.

"Go on, show them."

Rachel rolled her eyes.

"What? Show what?"

Ross smiled awkwardly, then pretended to be confused.

"Your exemption list."

Rachel smirked. "Don't think I don't know—you not only made a list, you printed it out and even laminated it."

"Pfft!"

The group burst into laughter.

"Are you serious?"

Ross chuckled nervously. "I just wanted to make it official. The lamination was for... durability."

Seeing everyone staring at him like he was crazy, he gave up trying to explain and pulled out a small laminated card from his pocket.

"He carries it with him!"

Rachel mocked. "He's scared that if he ever actually runs into one of them, he won't be able to use his 'perfectly valid excuse' to talk to them."

"Uma Thurman, Winona Ryder, Elizabeth Hurley, Michelle Pfeiffer, Dorothy Hamill."

Joey snatched the card and read the names out loud.

"Dorothy Hamill?"

Everyone turned to look at Ross. She was a famous figure skater, but... not exactly known for her looks.

"Hey! It's my list—I make the rules!"

Ross huffed.

"Uma's gorgeous."

"I like Winona."

Everyone started chiming in.

"You all like Winona?"

Rachel raised an eyebrow, surprised to see Adam nodding too. "One of my college best friends looked exactly like her."

"Seriously?"

Joey gasped.

"Totally."

Rachel nodded confidently. "We were really close. Ross met her too—wait..."

She suddenly paused, then narrowed her eyes at Ross suspiciously.

"Pure coincidence! Just a coincidence!"

Ross' face changed, and he quickly denied everything. "Your college friend? I don't even remember meeting her!"

The group gave him a collective look of judgment, but they didn't press the issue.

Having a crush on your girlfriend's best friend—or vice versa—wasn't exactly unheard of. As long as it didn't cross any lines, it wasn't a big deal.

The conversation eventually shifted back to Adam.

"Seriously, Adam, what happened between you and Heather?"

Rachel asked curiously.

"My guess? Same thing as with Caroline."

Monica scoffed. "She went back to inherit her family estate. Why wouldn't she dump Adam?"

"That's so sad."

Rachel gave Adam a sympathetic look. "Dumped by two women in a row—Adam, are you okay?"

"I'll survive."

Adam forced a smile.

It had been a natural split, but the way they talked about it made it sound way worse.

Still, he had to admit—he needed a woman.

With his endless energy, it was getting hard to keep it in check, especially with Ilyat and Bianca always hanging around him.

It reminded him of an old ad slogan: "Wangzai Milk—keep looking, and I'll drink you up."

Three layers of meaning. Perfect.

The group continued chatting as they ate.

Before leaving, Adam went to the restroom.

As he turned a corner, he suddenly bumped into someone.

The familiar sensation made his heart skip a beat.

"Heather?"

He blurted out instinctively.

But when he looked up, he realized it wasn't her.

Still... he knew this face.

Chapter 222: Girl MAX

Restaurant.

In front of the restroom.

"Hey, buddy! Look closely, it's a bear! Not a volleyball!"

As Adam stood there stunned, the person he had bumped into—a familiar yet slightly youthful face—blurted this out without hesitation. That was all the confirmation Adam needed.

It was her!

It was her!

It was really her!

The sharp-tongued, big-bear MAX!

But at this moment, she still looked a bit younger, and there was a sparkle in her eyes that didn't match the impression Adam had of her. Compared to her appearance in *2 Broke Girls*, she had much more youthful energy.

Her looks were slightly above average—nothing exceptional, and she didn't have long legs. But her one true advantage was so overwhelming that it made everything else insignificant.

"Isn't it?"

Adam couldn't help but tease, "Are you sure?"

Seeing the girl, MAX, crouching on the floor, rubbing the spot where they collided while picking up the books she had dropped, Adam crouched down to help. A quick glance revealed they were college art textbooks, which delighted him.

So, at this point in time, she still had dreams. They hadn't been completely suffocated yet.

There's a joke that goes, I smoke, drink, and have tattoos, but I'm a good girl.

For 99% of the girls who say that, it's just a self-serving excuse.

But for the girl in front of him, it fit perfectly.

Her life had been an absolute mess—filled with hardships and misfortune. Yet, she had remained kind-hearted throughout.

Right now, if Adam wasn't mistaken, she was standing at a major crossroads in her life.

If she took a step forward, she might escape the abyss and find her way into a better life.

If she took a step back, she would stare into the abyss and embrace hell without fear.

Her dream was simple: to be a children's book illustrator.

And if nothing unexpected happened, she would likely hit a roadblock and be forced to take that step back.

But at this moment, Adam colliding with her was the biggest unexpected event of all.

"Huh."

MAX looked up in surprise, lowered the hand that had been rubbing the sore spot, and grinned. "Buddy, I like you!"

Adam didn't read too much into it. He knew that by like, she meant she appreciated his quick-witted humor—one sharp-tongued person recognizing another.

"You work here?"

Adam was curious.

This place was near Brooklyn, but still in Manhattan, separated by a river.

In his memory, she had always hung around Brooklyn.

"If I didn't work here, would I just be standing on the street?"

Even though MAX still had a youthful look, her two signature traits—her sharp tongue and her big presence—were already fully developed. Her snarky, slightly risqué remarks rolled off her tongue effortlessly.

"Well, with assets like those, working the streets could be a solid career choice."

As she spoke, she even cupped her chest slightly.

Adam, with his restless energy, suddenly felt a bit dizzy.

"I see what you mean. That really is a good career option."

MAX laughed at his reaction. "If I ever end up going that route, make sure to support me, alright? Volleyball, bear—whatever you say it is, it is."

"Ahem."

Adam really couldn't handle this level of banter and could only respond with an awkward chuckle.

People always said that when a woman gets raunchy, men don't stand a chance. That wasn't a joke—it was a fact.

"Alright, enough chatting. I gotta get to work."

MAX turned to leave but, after taking a few steps, glanced back at Adam with a smirk. "See that new big-bear chef over there?"

"Yeah."

Adam glanced at Monica and held back a laugh while nodding.

"Know why she dresses like that?"

MAX made an exaggerated hefting the world motion with her hands, causing Adam's head to spin again.

"To attract customers?"

Adam suddenly understood.

"Bingo. Now go check out the name of this restaurant."

MAX smirked. "The waitstaff here make 30% more than at other places—because they match the theme. So, why do you think I work here?"

With that, she pushed open the kitchen door and walked in.

"Holy shit."

That's when Adam finally noticed—the restaurant was called MAX's Restaurant.

Then, following MAX's hint, he glanced at the other waitresses. The average size was at least a C.

By those standards, Monica technically already fit the bill. The only reason she had to wear such an exaggerated outfit was that she worked in the open kitchen, directly facing the customers.

After all, when it comes to color, aroma, and taste, color comes first.

"Wait, you're not leaving?"

Monica, busy preparing food, turned around and was surprised to see Adam still sitting there. "Why are you sitting so far away?"

Her open kitchen had a bar counter in front of it. She made the food and handed it directly to customers sitting at the counter—no waitstaff needed.

Of course, this setup had limitations. She could only prepare simple dishes that didn't require extensive cooking. The rest was handled by the back kitchen.

"I suddenly got hungry again."

Adam didn't sit at the bar but instead chose a table. He smiled and said, "Don't mind me."

Monica was initially puzzled, but when MAX walked out in her uniform and Adam waved at her, she immediately rolled her eyes and muttered, "You really can't live without women, huh?"

Then, she glanced at MAX a few more times, before looking down at her own, more exaggerated curves, and muttered, "I told them it's fake, but they still don't believe me."

Today was Monica's first day on the job, and MAX had just arrived because of her class schedule. The two hadn't officially met yet.

Monica didn't know MAX's background, but after a quick glance at her exaggerated proportions, she instinctively assumed MAX was just another victim of their sleazy boss's questionable hiring standards.

"Sir, what would you like to order?"

MAX, now in her uniform, walked up to Adam's table, holding a notepad and pen, looking all business.

"My name's Adam."

Adam held the menu but didn't immediately order.

"Got it. One braised Adam."

MAX scribbled on her notepad.

"I'll also take one steamed MAX."

Adam grinned.

"Well, well, looks like someone's done their homework."

MAX glanced at the other waitresses and quipped, "Figures. These little bitches love guys like you."

She assumed Adam had learned her name from them.

"You don't?"

Adam, uncharacteristically bold today, decided to push his luck.

"Are you asking me out?"

MAX shot back.

"Do I have that honor?"

Adam smiled.

MAX didn't answer. Instead, she tore off a piece of her notepad, slapped it on the table, and walked off to take more orders.

Adam picked up the slip. On it was her name and phone number.

As expected of MAX—super direct.

Even with her youthful inexperience, her sharp intuition and decisiveness were already impressive.

As MAX passed by again after taking more orders, she paused beside Adam and, with a perfectly straight face, asked, "Sir, are you satisfied with your braised Adam?"

"Very satisfied."

Adam nodded with a smile.

"Good."

MAX kept a straight face. "If you ever need anything else, feel free to call me~"

Monica had been watching the whole thing. Seeing Adam wave the note at her, she rolled her eyes.

Back in the kitchen.

Faced with the envious stares of her female coworkers, MAX puffed out her chest, made finger guns, and pointed at both vital assets.

"That's right, ladies! I'm just like you—I'm a bitch too!"

Blunt as ever.

Her coworkers: "..."

Chapter 223: You Should Be Called MAX

Apartment 520.

"Monica, what are you looking at?"

Chandler pushed the door open and walked in, surprised to see Monica standing by the window, peering outside.

"What else? Adam!"

Rachel, lounging on the couch flipping through a fashion magazine, casually remarked.

"Why?"

Chandler chuckled and teased, "Did he see her naked too?"

Rachel immediately rolled her eyes, recalling the time she had come out of the shower without properly securing her towel, only to be accidentally seen by Chandler. After that, Chandler would sometimes zone out while staring at her—let's just say—her exposed areas.

It had been an awkward situation for both of them.

The genius, Ross, had proposed the "Geller Solution": Look back!

If someone saw you naked, just unzip your pants and let them see you in return.

An eye for an eye—totally fair.

Everyone agreed it was the true Geller family tradition—except for Chandler.

If it had been Joey, he would have simply opened his robe and revealed his underwear... which probably had Ross's face printed on it, letting Rachel take a good long look.

But Chandler, feeling incredibly uncomfortable, firmly refused to go along with it.

Thus, a battle began.

Rachel looked for every possible opportunity to even the score.

For example, she once barged into the bathroom while Chandler was showering, intending to pull open the curtain.

But due to a mix-up, she ended up seeing Joey's dad instead—terrifying her so much that she covered her face and fled.

That incident had left Rachel particularly frustrated.

Now, hearing Chandler joking about it, there was no way she was going to let it slide.

"Okay."

Chandler immediately raised his hands in surrender, sidestepping past Rachel and joining Monica by the window. Mimicking her stance, he also peered into Adam's apartment.

"The target hasn't appeared yet. Level One alert."

"Cut it out."

Monica smacked Chandler lightly and explained, "After you guys left this afternoon, Adam stayed behind and hit it off with one of the waitresses at the restaurant. I heard they're going on a date tonight, so I wanted to see how fast they're moving."

"What?"

Chandler was instantly intrigued. "Already?"

"Hah! Men!"

Rachel scoffed disdainfully.

"So, what does this waitress look like?"

Chandler pried, eager for gossip.

"Absolutely terrifying!"

Monica commented sarcastically.

By now, she finally understood why MAX had the confidence to call herself MAX. Unlike Monica, who had been faking it, MAX was the real deal—no exaggerations whatsoever.

Just thinking about it made Monica feel like the whole thing was ridiculously over the top.

"Like... Heather?"

Chandler quipped.

"Yeah, like Heather."

Monica nodded, then suddenly froze. A thought crossed her mind, and she hesitated before saying, "Do you think Adam might have a... thing?"

"Huh?"

Chandler was confused.

"Both Caroline and Heather own estates."

Monica continued analyzing. "And now MAX and Heather are both... incredibly terrifying. Could it be that Adam chooses his dates based on some kind of pattern?"

"Oh, come on."

Chandler scoffed. "You make him sound like some kind of serial killer. By that logic, most men have patterns—because they all like beautiful women with great bodies."

"I was just saying..."

Monica laughed awkwardly. "I just feel like all of Adam's girlfriends are a little... unique."

"I've felt that too."

Rachel put down her magazine and joined the gossip session.

"What exactly is so unique about them?"

Chandler was still clueless.

"I can't quite put my finger on it."

Monica shook her head. "It's just a feeling."

"Yeah, women's intuition."

Rachel nodded in agreement.

Chandler was speechless.

"They're here! They're here!"

Monica whispered excitedly.

Chandler and Rachel immediately looked over.

They saw Adam walking into his apartment with a very terrifying woman.

"Wow."

"OMG!"

Rachel and Chandler's eyes widened, then they both turned to Monica in sync.

"Don't even look at me."

Monica knew exactly what they meant and rolled her eyes. "Yes, they're real."

"So you're telling me they just met today and this is their first date?"

Chandler watched Adam and MAX skeptically. "Because they sure don't look like they just met. They seem way too comfortable with each other."

"That's because they're both pros."

Rachel quipped. "Seriously, who starts a first date with coffee at home? That's way too fast!"

"Uh... should we really be watching this?"

Chandler asked, noticing that things between Adam and MAX were escalating.

"Yeah... it might be a little inappropriate..."

Monica and Rachel nodded, but their eyes remained glued to the scene.

"Come on~"

Rachel muttered under her breath, "Give us something juicy~"

Chandler hesitated for a moment, then sighed. He gave in and continued watching with them.

Just as the three of them were holding their breath—

Adam suddenly stood up, walked over to the window, and smiled at them—his grin eerily resembling Ross's under UV light.

Then, with a dramatic flick of his wrist, he shut the curtains.

"Aw~!"

The three of them groaned in disappointment.

Duncan's Apartment.

"Why are you wearing a lab coat?"

MAX raised an eyebrow at Adam, who had suddenly put on a white coat.

"Do you want me to grab a nurse uniform or a hospital gown?"

She teased. "Are we playing a cosplay game now?"

Adam didn't answer—he simply pulled out a hospital gown from behind his back.

"Forget I said anything."

MAX gave him a thumbs-up, then cooperated by changing into it.

"So, Mr. Duncan, what happens next?"

"Ms. MAX, I'm going to give you a full-body examination."

Adam grinned.

"Okay."

MAX smirked. "I usually can't afford a hospital visit, but hey, if a hot doctor is making a house call, I might as well save my battery money and call for home service instead."

And with that, Adam entered study mode.

For days, he had been unable to practice certain medical examinations with Iliad and Bianca.

Finally, that problem was solved.

So, he took this very seriously, throwing himself into the process with full concentration.

"Are you sure this is based on medical tapes?"

MAX asked, watching Adam closely. "Because I feel like we might be watching two very different kinds of 'instructional videos.'"

"This is the medical student edition."

Adam replied with a smirk. "Did I not mention? I'm a first-year student at Columbia Med."

"What?"

MAX's eyes widened. "You're actually a real med student? So you're actually studying right now?"

"Of course."

Adam said seriously. "What else did you think I was doing?"

"What did I think?"

MAX tilted her head, deep in thought. Then she said with a straight face, "I mean... I've heard that Japanese videos follow a similar pattern—but only because they have to stall for time..."

Before she could finish, Adam swiftly transitioned to the American pace.

An hour later.

"You should be the one called MAX."

MAX lay there, slightly dazed. "If my restaurant ever hires male waiters, I'd definitely recommend you."

"Thanks for the compliment."

Adam looked refreshed, accepting the praise without the slightest humility—because he had earned it.

Meanwhile, in his mind, he was comparing MAX and Heather, noting their similarities and differences.

Then, once again—

He flashed that UV-light Ross Geller grin.

Chapter 224: Suffocating from Dreams

For the next two weeks, Adam frequently invited Max to study.

Max admired hardworking students the most, so she naturally agreed without hesitation.

During breaks in their schedules, Adam, using his knowledge of psychology, subtly guided Max into venting about her past and present.

More than just studying, he wanted to help this girl, who had barely reached adulthood yet was already emotionally and physically scarred.

But this kind of help had to be given subtly, like gentle rain nourishing the soil.

Otherwise, given her personality, she would absolutely resist it.

She had already developed the habit of relying solely on herself—unwilling to depend on others, even afraid to.

After all, the last person she relied on was her mother.

And that had been a nightmare she'd rather not revisit.

This personality of hers had both advantages and drawbacks.

The upside was that she accepted Adam's views on relationships more easily than Caroline or Heather.

The downside was that she had a hard time opening up, and once she did, it was difficult for her to close back up again.

This was where Adam's skills would be put to the test.

He wanted to help her walk a completely different path and achieve her dreams.

At the same time, he needed to maintain enough distance—making sure she understood their boundaries and didn't fall too deep.

Heather's departure had made him realize something about himself.

Deep, exclusive love was definitely not for him.

Nora, Caroline, Heather, Max... They were all just parts of his journey.

Maybe one day, he would settle down and start a family—but that day was definitely not now.

For the next ten, maybe even twenty years, he would remain a wanderer.

This was yet another example of how the Miller family tradition had shaped his worldview.

Iron Man was like that, wasn't he?

A reckless playboy in his youth, then one day, after some deep self-reflection, he reformed, settled down, and won it all.

Adam liked that template.

As a protagonist of his own story, he was no worse than Iron Man!

In fact, if he were to compare, his quality of life far exceeded Iron Man's.

Because the reason Iron Man reformed wasn't just that he matured or wanted emotional fulfillment—there was also the fact that he physically couldn't keep up the lifestyle anymore.

After all, with that giant hole in his chest and a youth of reckless indulgence, his body had broken down by middle age. If he didn't settle down, what was he supposed to do? Follow the path of Japanese sci-fi or *The Big Bang Theory's* Howard, relying on armor and robots for *assistance*?

That would've been the ultimate irony—turning himself into a literal cyborg.

No way he would ever go for that.

So, naturally, settling down and reforming had been the best choice for him.

Adam, on the other hand, had no such concerns.

With his constantly improving abilities, his physical condition would only get stronger.

If he ever chose to start a family in the future, it would be out of emotional need—not because his body forced him to.

"...I'm currently a sophomore at Green Lawn Community College. I'll be graduating this year."

After an intense study session, Max felt fulfilled and relaxed. Under Adam's subtle guidance, she started sharing her story.

"Why did you choose art?" Adam asked.

"Don't laugh at me, okay?" Max warned. "After graduation, I want to find a job in illustration—ideally in children's books. When I was little, my favorite book was *Mechanical Doll.* She lived in a loving and happy family.

"I knew it was fake, just a lie for kids, but I still thought it was a good kind of lie. At least it helped me get through the hardest times..."

"That's a great dream. I believe you can achieve it," Adam said sincerely.

"Don't try to comfort me. Even if you did, it wouldn't work. I only relax for real under *very* specific circumstances—unless you like lifeless corpses."

Max, being Max, dropped a bombshell of a comment. "I heard that some people are into that. Especially doctors like you. You see bodies all the time, so you must get bored of them, right? Only the extreme stuff excites you anymore."

"..."

Adam's mouth twitched.

TV shows had seriously ruined doctors' reputations. He wasn't sure if some screenwriter had once been mistreated at a hospital or was just bitter about medical bills, but they seemed determined to slander doctors at every turn.

Then again, given that this world was a mix of American TV shows and movies, he couldn't even argue against it.

Because, knowing this world, Max *probably* wasn't wrong...

"So, how do you feel about Green Lawn Community College? Have you thought about transferring to another university?" Adam asked, changing the subject.

American colleges weren't just divided into public and private institutions; there was also a distinction between community colleges and full universities.

Community colleges were somewhat similar to technical schools in the East, but with some differences.

There were often no age or academic restrictions—if you wanted to learn something and paid the tuition, you could enroll.

Low barriers to entry, affordable tuition, flexible schedules—community colleges were a common option for those who couldn't attend a full university.

Sheldon's older brother, Georgie, and his twin sister, Missy, both attended community college. Even Penny, later on, took classes there in an effort to close the educational gap between her and Leonard.

But it hadn't helped much.

Penny's papers were a disaster, and Leonard couldn't stand it—so he rewrote them for her. In the end, the only thing left unchanged was the title.

Penny, deeply wounded in her pride, chewed Leonard out. But in the end, through her **own** efforts, she miraculously earned a B+.

She had been thrilled, slamming the paper onto Leonard's face in triumph.

But as soon as she got home, she turned around and threatened Bernadette and Amy—who had secretly written her paper—not to spill a word.

Bernadette and Amy eagerly agreed, actually excited by the whole thing. In their school days, they had never been close to a **queen bee** like Penny.

After that, Penny got ambitious, hoping to get an A on her next paper so she could flex even harder.

And then... nothing happened.

Not because Bernadette and Amy couldn't get her an A, but because they had to intentionally hold back. If her grades jumped too much, it would be suspicious. After some careful balancing, they landed on a *believable* B+.

Penny thought about it and ultimately gave up on her dream of straight As.

Because if she ever actually got an A, Leonard might be even prouder than she was. And if he bragged too much, and someone asked about her work and she couldn't answer, she'd end up embarrassing herself instead.

That was community college.

A two-year program.

If you performed exceptionally well, you *could* transfer to a full university, with your community college credits counting toward your degree.

It was a relatively flexible system.

But opportunities were scarce, and a lot depended on whether your community college had connections with full universities.

Max was set to graduate this year, hoping to land a job in illustration with just a community college degree.

That wouldn't be easy.

This was probably the point where she had completely given up hope.

Dreams were beautiful, but reality was harsh.

She wasn't the type to give up on herself, yet reality kept hitting her harder and harder.

No matter how tough she was, no matter how strong her defenses were, constant blows like that wore her down.

Eventually, she just gave in—became indifferent to everything.

At some point, she stopped dreaming and started just *existing.*

And isn't that what most people do?

She was just becoming part of the majority.

Chapter 225: Play Dead When Necessary**

Duncan's Apartment.

"Further education?"

As soon as Max heard this, he shook his head vigorously. "Come on, don't joke around."

"Why not?"

Adam smiled.

"I'm just not cut out for it."

Max spoke with a hint of self-doubt. "I didn't even get my high school diploma. Attending community college is already a stretch for me, and now you're talking about a real university?"

"You can always get your high school diploma later."

Adam toyed with Max's ****Maxam****, encouraging him, "The key question is—do you love drawing? Do you still dream of becoming a real children's book illustrator?"

"Of course, I do."

Max answered without hesitation.

"Then that settles it."

Adam grinned. "With just what you're learning at community college, it'll be hard to land your dream job. So why not go to a university, refine your skills, and become so impressive that no one can doubt you?"

"But..."

Max was tempted, but he still shook his head. "I just can't. I like drawing, but that doesn't mean I'm good at it. There are plenty of students at Greenfield Community College who are way better than me. There's no way I could get into a university."

"Talent is definitely important."

Adam nodded.

"See?"

Max let out a sigh of relief, but deep down, he felt a tinge of disappointment.

After all, this was the first time someone had encouraged him to chase his dreams.

"But speaking of talent..."

Adam played with ****Naxan****, teasingly saying, "Who could be more gifted than you?"

Over the past two weeks, Adam had secretly compared Max with Heather.

In terms of looks and figure, Max was no match for Heather.

But when it came to natural talent, they were neck and neck.

However, when it came to driving, Max was in a league of his own, far beyond any competition.

Sometimes, Adam himself couldn't keep up and could only admire Max's skills, jokingly calling her a "master driver."

And to think—she was only 19, barely an adult.

That alone spoke volumes about the kind of life she had lived before.

"Oh, come on!"

Max, now ****Naxan****, gasped and smacked Adam hard. "Are you insane? This isn't a balloon, but it can still explode!"

Seeing Adam laughing mischievously, Max rolled her eyes and complained, "People always say big boobs mean no brains. Just look at me—I couldn't even graduate high school. Isn't that normal? And you think

I should go to university with *this* kind of talent? Should I bribe my way in? Or are you suggesting I sleep my way up?"

"Alright then, let's forget about talent."

Adam changed the subject. "A lot of times, hard work is more important than talent. You're studying art, which is all about technique—something you can master with enough practice. It's not like math, where if you don't understand a formula, you're just stuck."

"Says who?"

Max argued, "Even top-tier artists rely on talent and inspiration. If hard work alone was enough, there wouldn't be so few masters."

"Well said."

Adam nodded with a smile. "So... your goal is to become a master?"

"..."

Max froze.

How could he even dare to dream of becoming a master?

He just wanted to be a decent illustrator, to one day create a great children's book. That would be more than enough.

And that, he realized, didn't require innate talent—just hard work and persistence.

"We don't need to become masters."

Adam spoke gently. "It's enough to work hard and become a great illustrator, don't you think?"

"Oh, is that so?"

Max smirked. "Well, I think I've had enough rest. Can you keep up or not?"

She shot Adam a provocative look.

"Heh."

Adam chuckled. He knew she was just trying to change the subject, but he decided to play along and let her off the hook.

When it's time to play dead, just play dead—never bite off more than you can chew.

****Two hours later.****

Adam sat up, leaning against the headboard, and picked up a medical book to read. Out of the corner of his eye, he glanced at Max and couldn't help but smile.

Earlier, Max had deliberately provoked him to avoid the conversation. But now, she was staring blankly at the ceiling, wearing the same dazed expression that Amy had after Sheldon finally drove for the first time on their eight-year anniversary night.

Adam knew Max had achieved her goal of changing the subject.

It wasn't that he had forgotten or lost interest—it was just that even if he had the energy to keep asking, Max had absolutely no strength left to answer.

In fact, with her classic "Amy look," Max didn't want to say a single word. She just lay there, staring at the ceiling.

This time, she didn't even need to play dead.

Before long, she completely passed out.

****The Next Morning.****

****Morning jog.****

"Hey, how are things going with Max? When are we all getting together for dinner?"

Monica asked.

Ever since she went back to work, she had rejoined the morning jogging group.

Although she found cosplay costumes annoying, she had gotten used to them. It was just part of the job.

Sometimes, people need to work—it gives them a sense of purpose.

Just like how everyone longs for weekends and holidays during work, but when the break lasts too long, they start itching to get back to work.

Since returning to work, Monica—though still a bit annoyed—was clearly more energized.

The ambitious and ever-caring Monica was back.

"Let's wait a little longer."

Adam smiled. "By the way, when you go to work today, can you call in for her? She won't be able to make it."

"What happened?"

Monica asked with concern. "Is she sick?"

"You don't get it?"

Chandler smirked knowingly.

"Get what?"

Monica was confused.

"Normally, even if she had something going on, wouldn't she call in herself?"

Chandler wiggled his eyebrows. "So why is Adam doing it for her this time? Think about it."

"You mean..."

Monica covered her mouth, eyes wide in shock.

"Of course! Adam, am I right?"

Chandler asked, grinning.

"She had a bit of trouble sleeping last night, went to bed really late. She probably won't be waking up until at least 9 or 10."

Adam described it subtly and smiled. "I figured I'd let her rest. No point in exhausting herself."

"Well, aren't you considerate."

Monica scoffed. "That's a bit over the top, don't you think? Are you even human?"

People say it's never the field that's overworked—it's the bull that's exhausted.

But that's not always true.

What if the bull is **a demon king**?

"You played a role in this too."

Chandler added, twisting the knife. "Your seven-step combination method is seriously amazing."

"Ugh, stop it."

Monica rolled her eyes. "If Susie hadn't personally thanked me, I'd honestly regret ever sharing it with you guys—especially **you**, Adam!"

No one understands women better than other women.

Monica had carefully devised a seven-step combination method, and Susie had given it a glowing five-star review.

When she experienced it firsthand, she had grabbed Monica's hands in heartfelt gratitude.

"You don't have to worry."

Adam smirked. "I haven't even had the chance to use *your* method yet."

Monica: "..."

Chandler: "..."

Chapter 226: I Have Some Hormones That Need Balancing**

Duncan's Apartment.

It must be said, ever since Adam started studying medicine, his understanding of the human body had become increasingly precise.

MAX slept straight through until ten o'clock. When she opened her eyes and saw the bright daylight streaming in, she immediately panicked. She was about to jump up and rush to work—only to realize that her entire body felt weak.

Then, she instinctively reached for her waist.

"Ow, damn you, Adam!"

Lying on her side, MAX groaned in pain and cursed under her breath.

To be fair, this wasn't entirely Adam's fault.

She had always had a weak lower back—after all, carrying so much weight in the front took a toll.

After lying still for a while, she finally started to feel a little better. Her eyes landed on a note resting on Adam's pillow. She reached for it, read it, and discovered that Adam had already called in to get her shift covered.

"So experienced... He's definitely done this plenty of times before."

MAX muttered to herself, "No wonder he keeps saying he doesn't want a relationship—just something more than friendship but less than love. Probably because no one actually wants to be his girlfriend."

She let out a sigh, still holding her waist as she lay flat on her back, staring at the ceiling in silence.

"I should probably keep my distance from him."

MAX mumbled, "If this keeps happening every day, who could handle it? What a freaking maniac..."

After venting her frustrations, she couldn't help but reflect on the real reason she was in this state—it was entirely her own fault for provoking him.

And just like that, she fell into the same dilemma she'd faced the night before.

She was moved by Adam's encouragement.

But at the same time, she felt inferior—unworthy of imagining a better future.

Of course, she could feel Adam's feelings for her. Otherwise, she wouldn't have shared so much of her past with him.

Wanting to keep her distance wasn't just about getting "taught a lesson" after provoking him—it was more about the anxiety she felt as he got closer.

As an experienced player, she wasn't afraid of physical contact.

But even the slightest emotional connection? That terrified her.

Over the Next Few Weeks

To her relief, before she even had to make an effort to keep her distance, Adam had already started holding back.

He no longer brought up the dreams that had once made her anxious.

And those intense, over-the-top physical interactions? He toned them down to a more reasonable frequency and intensity.

At MAX's Diner

"You know what? I just realized that all of last year, I only went on dates with Richard and Julio."

Monica complained to Adam, "Didn't you always say that your med school class is full of hot guys and beautiful women? You need to hook me up! Help me get back into the dating scene—I'm begging you!"

"It's not that I don't want to help..."

Adam hesitated. "It's just that none of my classmates are right for you. Trust me, even if they're ridiculously handsome, you wouldn't enjoy dating them."

"I know, I know."

Monica sighed, "You guys are insanely busy, with no time for relationships. But I'm not looking for something super serious right away. I just want a hot guy to help me get back in the game. You know, like you—something more than friends, but not quite lovers. That'd be perfect."

Adam gave her a strange look.

"What?" Monica shot him a glare. "You mean to tell me you can go months without 'clapping' and just stare at my fake boobs all day, but I can't have a little hormone imbalance that needs fixing?"

"I didn't say that. You do you—I support you."

Faced with Monica's bold declaration, Adam could only give her a thumbs-up.

"Tell me what kind of guy you're looking for, and I'll see what I can do."

"My standards aren't that high."

Monica finally smiled, rubbing her hands together. "He doesn't have to be super hot—just someone I find attractive."

"Does it have to be him?"

Adam teased.

"Of course not."

Monica shot back, "But if you're willing to hand MAX over to me, I'd take her."

"Sure."

Adam grinned. "I don't mind—you do whatever you want."

He wasn't Ross Geller—he wouldn't have a meltdown over finding out his wife was into women.

A real man wouldn't react that way... right?

"..."

Monica was speechless at his shamelessness.

A Customer Calls for Monica

"Excuse me."

Monica dragged her feet over to the customer's table. "What can I get you?"

"A slice of cheesecake."

The customer was counting his tip money but looked up and smiled. "And another date, if possible?"

"We've already been over this."

Monica clearly knew this guy. She chuckled, "You only want to date me because I'm blonde, well-endowed, and serve you food."

"Of course not."

The customer smirked. "If that were the case, I could just date my aunt."

Cough cough.

"In America, that's illegal."

Adam couldn't help but chime in.

"I was joking."

The customer clarified.

"So was I."

Adam studied the guy's face—it seemed familiar. He extended a hand. "I'm Adam, Monica's good friend. And as you may have just heard, Monica has outsourced her dating life to me, so..."

"So, I need to win you over first?"

The guy was quick on the uptake and shook Adam's hand. "Peter Burke, pursuing Monica."

Adam frowned.

"I feel like I've seen you somewhere before."

"You into comics?"

Peter raised an eyebrow.

"Uh... comics?"

Peter had thought Adam recognized him—but then Adam suddenly changed the topic.

"They're okay, I guess."

"Ever read *Iron Man*?"

Adam asked.

"You think I look like Iron Man?"

Peter stroked his mustache, looking pleased with himself.

At that time, Iron Man wasn't yet an A-list superhero, but his playboy billionaire lifestyle definitely appealed to the wealthy crowd.

Just like how good-looking guys relate more to the "average-looking" protagonists in novels, Peter—being rich himself—felt a certain connection to Iron Man.

"No."

Adam said with a straight face. "I think you look like Happy Hogan, Iron Man's bodyguard. If they ever make a live-action movie, you should totally audition for the role."

"..."

Peter's face fell.

Happy Hogan?

Who the hell is that?

Should he just fund an *Iron Man* movie himself and cast himself as the lead?

"Adam!"

Monica shot Adam a glare.

"Don't get me wrong."

Adam explained, "This is a compliment. Happy might just be a bodyguard, but he's Iron Man's closest friend and trusted confidant. In the end, he inherits a fortune and even marries Pepper Potts. Total life winner."

"Really?"

Peter hesitated.

He'd read some *Iron Man* comics but wasn't well-versed in every storyline. Marvel and DC were notorious for constantly rebooting timelines and creating parallel universes—it was impossible to keep track of everything unless you were a hardcore fan.

But if what Adam said was true, then Happy Hogan really was a winner in life.

Comparing him to Happy wasn't an insult at all.

"Yeah."

Adam nodded. "You know why he beat Iron Man and won over Pepper? Because he genuinely loved and cared for her.

Compared to a 40-something billionaire still partying all the time, the guy who's always there for her? That's the real deal."

"Now that you mention it..."

Peter's lips curled into a small smile. *That's exactly the kind of guy I am. Maybe I should audition for Happy Hogan if they ever make a movie... or better yet, just produce it myself. That could be fun...*

Watching Peter's reaction, Adam nearly burst out laughing.

Because Peter was *literally* Jon Favreau—the real-life director of *Iron Man* and the actor who played Happy Hogan.

Well... at least they had the same face.

Chapter 227: The Young Lady of the Channing Family

MAX Restaurant.

"Heh."

After Peter left, Monica picked up the check he had left as a tip, glanced at it, and couldn't help but laugh.

"What is it?"

Adam asked curiously.

"Take a look at this."

Monica handed the check to Adam. "He's got quite the sense of humor."

"Wow, a \$20,000 tip? He must be loaded."

Adam took the check and whistled when he saw the amount written alongside Peter's phone number.

"He must be joking."

Monica waved dismissively.

"Not necessarily."

Adam waved the check slightly. "At the very least, this check is likely real. It just depends on whether you want to cash it or not."

"What?"

Monica was stunned. "Are you saying this check is legit?"

"Writing a bad check is illegal."

Adam reminded her, "Didn't you notice his outfit? Low-key yet elegant—definitely someone with money."

"Then what is he trying to do?"

Monica's expression darkened. "What does he take me for?"

"Don't be mad. Just look at what you're wearing..."

Adam was about to joke further but suddenly sensed danger. He quickly leaned back in a tactical dodge, narrowly avoiding Monica's incoming pink projectile. He chuckled and said, "I was just kidding!"

He picked up the pink weapon and handed it back to her. "We're still at work. If the boss sees this, your paycheck might take a hit."

Monica snatched it back angrily and stuffed it into her clothing, restoring symmetry in an instant.

"He's actually being pretty clever about this."

Adam quickly changed the subject. "Think about it—he probably knows you're not that kind of woman. That's why he left such a big tip. He's betting that you won't cash it but instead go to him for clarification. That way, you'll have to meet him again. And I'm guessing you won't be wearing this uniform next time, will you?"

"Are all rich people this devious?"

Monica considered Adam's theory. She was actually a little pleased, but she kept up the act of being mad.

Unfortunately for her, Adam was an expert at reading people.

He glanced at her sideways and pretended to rip up the check. "Yep, rich people are the worst. You definitely shouldn't fall for this. Here, let me tear it up for you—"

"Stop!"

Monica quickly snatched it back. Seeing Adam's teasing look, she felt a little guilty and snapped, "I'm cashing this check right after work. That'll teach him!"

"Great idea."

Adam gave her a thumbs-up.

If he kept teasing her, she might actually decide not to meet up with Peter. Then she'd be pestering him to introduce her to someone instead, which would be an even bigger headache.

The Next Day

Morning Jog

Adam knocked on the door of Apartment 520.

"Come in."

Monica assumed it was for her and called out to Adam, "Give me a sec."

"I'm here for Rachel."

Adam walked straight to Rachel's bedroom door.

Knock knock knock.

"Rachel?"

"Who is it?"

Rachel's groggy yet slightly irritated voice came from inside.

Unlike Monica, who was diligent, Rachel still hadn't shaken off her laziness even after living on her own for three years. She was just as bad about getting up as ever.

"It's me, Adam. I need a favor."

Adam said with a smile.

"What kind of favor?"

Hearing it was Adam, Rachel suppressed some of her irritation, though she didn't bother opening her eyes.

"Do you feel like going shopping?"

The moment Adam finished speaking, the bedroom door flew open. Rachel, still in her pajamas, stared at him with bright eyes. "Shopping? Yes!"

Not a trace of sleepiness remained.

"Ahem."

Adam glanced at Rachel's pajama top and couldn't help but remind her, "Rachel, you might want to, uh, cover up a little..."

"What's the big deal?"

Rachel looked down at the obvious marks showing through and shrugged. "Who wears a bra to sleep? Anyway, tell me about this shopping trip."

Okay, sure—people don't wear bras to bed. But I've never seen you wear one when you're awake either...

Adam grumbled internally.

Ever since Rachel started dating Ross, she had become increasingly casual about this stuff. Toward the later seasons, she basically showed up braless in almost every scene. Who even knew why?

"There's a big party next week, and I need to bring Max as my plus-one."

Adam explained, "But she's never attended anything like this before. She doesn't have the right outfits, and she isn't familiar with proper etiquette. So, I was hoping you could take her shopping for dresses and shoes, help her get styled, and give her some tips on these kinds of events."

"Of course!"

Rachel agreed immediately. "Whose party is it?"

"Caroline Channing's coming-of-age party."

Adam's smile was a little mysterious.

"Caroline Channing?!"

Rachel and Monica exclaimed in unison. "The daughter of Martin Channing? That billionaire heiress?"

"You both know her?"

Adam laughed.

"Are you kidding me?"

Rachel was practically shaking with excitement. "She's the It Girl of the fashion world! A true golden child! There's not a single person in America who doesn't know her!"

"I heard she has an \$800 million trust fund."

Monica chimed in. "OMG! I can't even imagine having that much money!"

"How did you get invited?"

Rachel suddenly turned to Adam with suspicion.

"...?"

Adam's smile twitched. "Why wouldn't I get invited? Do you not think I'm worthy?"

"No, no!"

Rachel denied it, but her eyes were still filled with doubt. "It's just that... a Channing family party? The guest list must be full of billionaires—or at least people worth hundreds of millions. Are you that rich?"

"Not all guests have to be ultra-wealthy."

Monica added, "Top-tier socialites get invited too. Maybe Adam got in because he's a famous writer?"

That was actually half-correct. But why did it sound like she wasn't totally convinced?

"That's right."

Adam nodded. "Caroline happens to be a fan of my books, so she personally invited me."

"Ohhh, that makes sense."

Rachel and Monica finally understood, their eyes filled with envy.

But what annoyed Adam was the hint of 'you got lucky' in Rachel's gaze.

"So this is really happening? You're actually going to the Channing heiress's coming-of-age party?"

Rachel murmured.

"AHHHHHH!!!!"

Before Adam could respond, Rachel let out a high-pitched scream—like nails on a chalkboard.

"Take me with you, Adam! Please, please, please!"

Rachel threw herself at him, clinging like a koala as she begged.

"You really want to go?"

Adam smirked.

"Yes!"

Not just Rachel—Monica also looked tempted.

Clearly, high-society luxury was incredibly alluring, even in America. The "tiny times" phenomenon wasn't exclusive to China.

"You really want to go?"

Adam asked again.

"More than anything!"

Rachel confirmed without hesitation.

"Sorry, I already have a plus-one."

Adam pried her off and gave a helpless shrug.

He was loving this.

The more she wanted to go, the more satisfying it was to turn her down.

That's what you get for doubting me earlier.

Chapter 228: 2 Broke Girls

520 Apartment.

"Please, please, please..."

Rachel clung to Adam, begging persistently.

For a moment, Adam felt like he was looking at Sheldon and thought, What a shame.

If Rachel were a guy, he could use some outrageous tactics—like making them parade around in drag—to scare them off.

But unfortunately, she was a girl. Adam had plenty of ideas, but he could only keep them to himself.

Otherwise, it wouldn't just be a prank; it would be straight-up harassment.

Regardless, there was no way he was taking Rachel with him.

After all, they were talking about Caroline Channing—the future best friend of Max.

The two of them...

Max had stared into the abyss and never feared hell.

Caroline had fallen straight into hell and never lost sight of who she was.

If *2 Broke Girls* had ended the way it should have, they would've walked down the aisle together...

Since meeting teenage Max, Adam had already decided to lead her down a completely different path.

That way, Max would suffer far less and have a bright future. But this also meant her destined encounter with Caroline had been completely disrupted.

Chandler once joked that his most daring experience was taking a walk around Brooklyn at night and making it back alive.

That joke existed because Brooklyn, as a neighborhood with a high concentration of Black communities, was notoriously chaotic and dangerous. Getting mugged at night there was practically a standard procedure.

Carrying a few bucks in cash in your wallet could sometimes save your life—because if you got robbed and had nothing on you, a frustrated mugger might just shoot you out of spite.

Even the righteous Captain America was born in Brooklyn, and before enlisting, he was beaten up and robbed so often that he coined the classic line:

"I can do this all day!"

When Caroline Channing hit rock bottom in the future, she chose Brooklyn precisely because it was a place that Upper East Side elites would never set foot in.

She didn't want her former friends, acquaintances, and socialites to witness her downfall.

So, even knowing how dangerous it was, she still went there without hesitation.

Thankfully, she knew better than to sleep on the streets. Otherwise, she wouldn't just get mugged—she'd disappear altogether.

Smart as she was, she carried a taser and kept herself alert, sleeping on the subway where there was constant foot traffic—until Max took her in.

If she had stayed out a few more days, even a taser wouldn't have been enough to fend off the criminals eyeing her.

A tall, blonde bombshell dressed in designer brands? A walking jackpot.

Now that everything had been thrown off track, if Adam didn't guide things carefully, Caroline and Max might never meet.

That's why he wanted to make up for it—by creating an opportunity for them to cross paths.

Right now, Caroline was still a princess. With an \$800 million trust fund, she was more of a princess than any of those broke European royals.

Without hardship, she probably wouldn't even spare Max a glance.

But at least this would be a start.

Knowing someone is always better than never meeting at all.

As for whether they would truly become close? That was a different matter.

Just because they were meant to be best friends didn't mean Max had to go through the same struggles, scraping by in Brooklyn.

As long as they met and had some interactions, then one day, when Caroline lost everything, she might just knock on Max's door.

She had already tried six places—six former best friends, boyfriends, and close acquaintances.

Not a single one of them let her in.

That was truly tragic.

Adam was convinced that even if Max and Caroline didn't become best friends, if Max saw Caroline in that state, she wouldn't pretend not to hear the knocking, like the others did.

And knowing how smart Caroline was, in desperate times, she might just remember Max—the kind-hearted, lovable girl who had shown her kindness.

That's why, no matter how much Rachel begged, Adam wasn't going to agree.

Even though he didn't want to admit that Rachel and Monica were right, the truth was, given Caroline's current status, she was indeed out of his reach.

This opportunity was pure luck.

If he missed it, finding another chance would be difficult.

"Ahem!"

Ross walked in and, upon seeing the scene, his eyes turned green with jealousy.

He coughed awkwardly and forced a smile. "What's going on here?"

"Perfect timing."

Adam shoved Rachel toward Ross. "Here, take your girlfriend. Hold on to her."

"Rachel!"

Ross saw Rachel trying to pounce on Adam again and immediately grabbed her tightly.

"What are you doing?!" he demanded.

"I'm trying to go to Caroline Channing's debutante ball!"

Rachel, unable to break free, turned to Ross with a pitiful look.

"Help me convince Adam, please?"

"It's just a debutante ball, is it really that big of a deal?"

Ross was baffled.

This was where the difference between men and women became obvious.

Even though he understood the Channing name represented immense wealth, he couldn't care less about attending some coming-of-age party.

"This is a real heiress's ball!"

Rachel's eyes sparkled with longing.

"It's the kind of event I've dreamed about my whole life!

I've never had the chance to experience it—or even witness it.

And now, when such a golden opportunity presents itself, Adam won't take me?!"

"I'm taking Max."

Adam reminded her, "She's my date."

"I could be your date too!"

Rachel protested.

Adam frowned.

She had a point.

Given Max's insecurities, getting her to attend was already a challenge.

If Rachel kept pushing, Max would probably just give in and refuse to go.

That wasn't the outcome Adam wanted.

"One Chanel bag."

"What?"

Everyone froze.

"I really want to take Max."

Adam smiled.

"But if you help me convince her, I'll let you pick any Chanel bag you want. My treat."

Given his relationship with Leonard, he technically should be taking Rachel.

Leonard had helped him a lot, and this was the first time Rachel had ever asked for something so passionately.

But Adam still wanted Max to go.

Whether it was as compensation for Rachel or as a way to keep her from messing things up, if he could settle this with a designer bag, it was a price worth paying.

At this moment, Adam finally understood why rich guys casually gifted women luxury handbags.

Spending a few grand on a handbag?

Adam had blown that much on a single fancy dinner before.

It was basically skipping one meal.

"A Chanel bag..."

Rachel hesitated.

One was a fantasy experience—an unforgettable, extravagant night.

The other was long-term satisfaction—owning a piece of luxury.

It was truly a tough choice.

"Take the bag."

Ross whispered.

"Otherwise, you'll get nothing."

As an outsider, he could tell Adam had made up his mind.

There was no way he was taking Rachel.

"Deal!"

Rachel quickly accepted this unexpected gift.

"Here's my credit card."

Adam handed his card to her.

"Max is your responsibility now. And as for the bag? Pick whatever you want and put it on my tab."

"No problem!"

Rachel took the card and kissed it.

"Baby, did you miss Mommy?"

Ross twitched.

"Ahem! Rachel, don't you think that's a bit much?"

"This is your fault!"

Rachel glared at him.

"If you hadn't egged me on three years ago and made me cut up all my cards, do you think I'd have gone three whole years without a proper shopping spree?!"

Ross looked guilty.

Back then, he had cheered the loudest—for very selfish reasons.

Adam ignored them.

Instead, he was already thinking about how Max and Caroline's first meeting would go... and how he should step in.

Chapter 229: Why Are Formal Dresses Always Single-Use?

That Night.

Duncan's Apartment.

"What?!"

The moment Max heard Adam mention the coming-of-age party, she couldn't even maintain her classic post-reaction expression like Amy's. She shook her head repeatedly. "I'm not going!"

"Don't worry, it's just a party."

Adam reassured her. "You can't seriously let me go alone, right?"

"Just a party?"

Max exclaimed, "This is a party hosted by the daughter of a billionaire! I've never even been to a millionaire's party. If I go, I'll embarrass myself to death."

"It's not that dramatic."

Adam laughed. "Whether it's a millionaire or a billionaire, they're all just people. Besides, I've already handed you over to Rachel—she'll help you pick out a dress and give you a few pointers. I'll be with you almost the entire time. All you have to do is look stunning and exude confidence like a queen. Just do me this favor, alright?"

"Exuding confidence like a queen? Now that I can do."

Max smirked, then added in her usual sarcastic tone, "But doing you a favor? No thanks. The last time you said that, I took a day off, and your kind of favor isn't easy to help with."

"You're really just throwing it back at me now."

Adam teased, "You were the one who challenged me first, and now you're acting like I tricked you."

As he spoke, he explained the reference to *My Own Swordsman*, where a character described "eating and then throwing up" as a metaphor.

"That's such a guy thing to say, always thinking wishfully."

Max rolled her eyes. "Throwing up after eating actually makes sense scientifically. Just because I didn't go to a 'real' university doesn't mean I don't understand science. Trying to use science to fool me? Unless you demonstrate it in person."

"..."

Adam's mouth twitched. He suddenly didn't feel like talking anymore.

Max's level of wit was too high—even he couldn't handle it.

The Next Evening.

In the end, Max was dragged out shopping by Rachel.

Monica had originally planned to join them, but she got invited on a date by Peter instead.

Meanwhile, Chandler finally recognized who Peter really was.

It turned out that Peter had been a programmer who developed a successful software and started his own company. Almost overnight, he became a millionaire, posed for photos with the President, and secured his status as a rising star in the tech world.

Note: American millionaires and Asian millionaires are not the same.

In America, the numerical system isn't as segmented as in Asian. After thousands, the next jump is to millions, then billions.

So, an American millionaire starts at one million and can go all the way up to just under a billion. This category includes what would be called multimillionaires or even lower-tier billionaires in Asian, making it a broad range.

An American billionaire, on the other hand, starts at ten figures—meaning ten billion, a hundred billion, and so on.

Most of the time, people don't bother distinguishing between millionaires and multimillionaires, but if needed, they can.

For example, a Asian multimillionaire or billionaire would be categorized in America as a tenfold or hundredfold millionaire.

Adam was a tenfold millionaire.

Peter, on the other hand, was a hundredfold millionaire and a rising tech entrepreneur—someone with far more influence than Adam. Hugging the President for a photo op? Just another day for him.

After learning Peter's true identity, Monica initially refused to acknowledge it, but her actions betrayed her words as she took the \$20,000 tip check and went to confront him.

Peter casually tore up the check...

And just like that, Monica accepted his explanation and agreed to go on a date.

It wasn't about materialism—Monica had already liked Peter before. This new information just amplified those feelings.

It's the same as when a good person does good deeds all their life—no one is particularly surprised.

But when a bad person suddenly does one good thing, everyone takes notice. Some people even get emotional, feeling moved and eager to redeem them.

Villains, bad boys, and rebels always seem more attractive.

Because they either have power, money, or looks.

A person with none of those things? They don't even get to be the villain. It's not a joke—it's just reality.

This is human nature.

Nothing more, nothing less.

Late at Night.

Rachel and Max finally returned home.

Clearly, someone had gone overboard with shopping.

But the results were spectacular.

There was a reason Rachel always wanted to work in fashion.

Having been pampered since childhood, she had her own unique understanding of style.

With her help, Max's dress perfectly highlighted all her best features.

The result?

The dress barely lasted the night before it got ruined—clearly, the quality was awful.

So, Adam simply called the store and had them send over a few more, ensuring Max would have something to wear to the coming-of-age party in a few days.

The Next Day.

Monica finally returned.

(At this moment, please imagine a totally random and nonsensical promotional text in between!)

"You look like someone in a great mood."

Chandler teased, "That smile looks familiar. Oh, wait—has Peter also been 'undisclosed' for two years?"

"Haha."

Adam immediately burst out laughing.

Back in the day, Monica had fallen for a bartender's sob story about not having 'done the deed' in two years, leading to a one-night stand. The aftermath, where she ranted about all men, was still fresh in everyone's minds.

Of course, Monica caught the reference and hurled her handbag at Chandler.

"So, where did you two go on your date?"

Adam quickly changed the subject.

"Yeah, tell us how a hundredfold millionaire plans a date."

Chandler caught the handbag and grinned.

"We just had pizza."

Monica smiled sweetly.

"Just pizza?"

Chandler scoffed, "That's kind of cheap, isn't it?"

"Hold on."

Adam chuckled knowingly. "I bet it wasn't just any pizza."

"You're right—it was in Italy."

Monica's grin widened. "And I paid for it. Only \$0.60 a slice—cheap and delicious. I wish I could eat it every day."

"Well, once you factor in the airfare, I doubt you'd still want to."

Adam joked, "That might be the most expensive slice of pizza ever."

"Rich people sure know how to have fun."

Chandler quipped, "Flying all the way from New York to Italy just for a \$0.60 pizza."

"That's what you call 'romance.'"

Adam explained, "There's an old saying: 'If she is innocent to the world, show her its splendor. If she is weary of the world, take her on a carousel.'"

Monica isn't materialistic, nor has she been through a lot of hardship—she's more of a hopeless romantic. Spending a fortune to fly her somewhere exotic, but making her pay for something small? It creates the illusion of equality, which is the most powerful strategy.

Plus, a flight from New York to Italy takes eight or nine hours. Once you're there, you don't just fly right back, do you?

You wait for the next flight. And while you wait, you find somewhere to rest...

In that kind of atmosphere, the usual 'third-date rule' goes out the window. This is Italy—the land of romance."

At this point, Adam stopped talking.

Because Chandler and Monica were both staring at him.

Especially Monica—her eyes practically burned with fire.

"Ahem."

Adam coughed awkwardly. "I'm just saying, maybe that's not what he was thinking..."

His only response was a flying pillow.

Chapter 230: Deeply Disturbing—Ruining Childhood Memories

520 Apartment.

"Why do you know so much about this?"

"Jerk!"

"You've ruined my beautiful memories!"

"I'm going to fight you!"

Adam casually commented on something, not expecting that his words would provoke Monica to the point of fury. She immediately chased after him, determined to make him pay.

Even though Adam explained that what he said didn't necessarily reflect Peter's thoughts, it didn't calm Monica down in the slightest.

Some things just shouldn't be overanalyzed.

Like those childhood cartoons—once reinterpreted from a new perspective, they instantly become part of the "childhood-ruined" series.

And then, those once-familiar and cherished memories could never be the same again...

There are countless examples of this.

Certain passages, poems, idioms, or even just a single word—many times, the author didn't intend any hidden meaning. But that doesn't stop others from reading into it.

After all, we live in an era where people say, "It's not about what you think, it's about what I think."

Adam could understand this all too well.

Because in his past life, he had experienced it firsthand.

One incident left the deepest impression on him: he once read a forum post that asked—

"What exactly is the relationship between Akira and Sakura?"

Curious, he clicked on it.

And then—his worldview was shattered. He even began to question whether the author really had those intentions...

Because, surprisingly, the arguments weren't baseless. Every point was backed by direct quotes from the original text, making seemingly logical inferences.

For instance:

Why did Sakura, upon first meeting Akira, react so strangely to his scent—her heart fluttering and her mind instantly conjuring up an image of a wedding night?

Why, on Peach Blossom Island, did Sakura choose to teach Akira literature instead of martial arts?

And how did Akira end up becoming a well-read and effortlessly charming rogue who had an uncanny ability to captivate female warriors—leading to the infamous saying, "Meeting Akira once ruins a lifetime."

When Akira flirted with women, he recited extraordinarily refined love poems.

But here's the real question—this was ancient times. There were no phones, no internet. Without a teacher, he wouldn't have had access to such things. So who taught him these poems?

And why?

Why was Sakura so aggressively against Akira's relationship?

On the surface, she claimed she was worried that Akira would be shunned by the martial arts world.

But her father was Kuroku—the notorious "Eastern Heretic"—who had always defied conventions. Young Sakura herself had been called a "little demon girl" and had never cared about right or wrong, good or evil. She only became a righteous heroine.

Would someone like her really care about upholding tradition?

If not, then why did she become the leading force in breaking up a teacher-disciple romance?

But in the end, when she searched for him across the world, growing old alone, he refused to see her even once...

Okay, most of these points were classic examples of taking things out of context. There were other explanations.

But still, thinking about it too deeply could be terrifying and utterly mind-blowing.

Similarly, Adam's casual remark didn't necessarily reflect Peter's thoughts.

But in Monica's ears, it was impossible not to think in that direction.

In the end, to make amends, Adam had no choice but to stand still and let Monica punch him as much as she wanted.

Of course, Monica wasn't Hu Yifei, and Adam wasn't some martial arts master. Her punches felt more like a massage than actual pain.

But this time, Adam was smart enough to pretend he was in unbearable agony, dramatically shouting in pain.

Only then did Monica finally calm down.

A Few Days Later

On the Night of the Channing Family Heiress's Coming-of-Age Party

"Ahhh!!!"

Rachel groaned in frustration.

"Max can go, Monica can go, but why can't I?!"

Monica and Peter had officially started dating after their Italian pizza trip. And with Peter being a billionaire a hundred times over, it was no surprise that he was on the guest list.

Wealth, like power, follows a pyramid structure—the higher you go, the fewer people there are.

In a supercity like New York, millionaires are everywhere. But those worth over a hundred million? Those are the big shots.

Even for a prestigious event like the Channing heiress's coming-of-age party, having Peter willing to attend was a huge honor.

"I can't go either," Phoebe raised her hand.

"Yeah, yeah," Rachel muttered, not even pretending to care.

Ross buried his head in the newspaper, avoiding eye contact with Rachel.

The reason was obvious—her boyfriend just wasn't high-status enough.

If he spoke up now, Rachel would definitely use him as a punching bag to vent her frustration.

And as a dignified PhD holder, Ross was way too smart for that.

"How about I ask Peter to bring you along?" Monica teased.

"Really?!" Rachel's eyes lit up.

"Of course not."

Monica smirked. "This is a Channing family event. You only get one chance in a lifetime to attend something like this."

"Ugh!!"

Rachel groaned even louder, now more upset.

Just then, Adam and Max walked in.

"Wow!"

"You look stunning!"

Chandler and Joey couldn't help but compliment them.

"Wait, Max, isn't this the dress I picked for you? The color looks different."

Rachel frowned.

"This color looks better," Adam said quickly.

"No way," Rachel shot back. "The one I picked suited Max perfectly."

"I know," Max nodded eagerly. "Don't listen to him—he loved your choice so much that the same night, he, uh... ripped it apart."

"OMG!"

Everyone's jaws dropped—half in shock at Adam's wild behavior, half at Max's blunt honesty.

"Ahem."

Adam laughed awkwardly. "Not my fault. The dress was poor quality."

And it was true.

Evening gowns like these were often designed to be worn just once—hardly built to last.

They were extremely form-fitting, nearly impossible to put on or take off easily.

And let's be honest—events that required such dresses usually led to certain activities afterward.

No one wanted a dress that killed the mood by being too hard to remove.

So brilliant designers had long accounted for that, ensuring these gowns looked elegant but could be easily disposed of when necessary.

What's more convenient—or more fun—than a dress that rips off in one go?

So really, it wasn't that Adam was too strong...

"Then what about my jeans?!" Max added, twisting the knife.

"..."

Adam fell silent.

Alright, that was definitely going too far.

At that moment, Peter finally arrived, saving Adam from further embarrassment.

As Rachel watched with envy, Adam and Max, along with Peter and Monica, elegantly made their way downstairs.

Below, Peter's stretch Lincoln was already waiting.

The moment they stepped in, the driver smoothly pulled away—heading straight for the Channing estate.