

TV Show 371

Chapter 371: This Is a Condition—It Needs Treatment!

New York Medical Center.

"Dr. Burke, here's the patient's CT," Adam reported. "There's clearly a growing bulge in the patient's bladder."

"A tumor?" Dr. Burke asked, startled. He took the CT scan and studied it. "Look at these edges—it doesn't seem like a tumor."

"No, it's not a tumor," Adam confirmed, handing over the biopsy report. "Based on the chromosome analysis, the DNA in the patient's body comes from two different embryos. It fused in the womb. That ovary-shaped bulge? It's an actual ovary."

"What?" Dr. Burke exclaimed, floored. "Bill's got an ovary in his bladder?"

Adam couldn't help but marvel too. Sure, medical textbooks mention cases of hermaphroditism, but seeing it in real life? Mind-blowing.

Dr. Burke reviewed the biopsy report, double-checking that Adam wasn't pulling his leg or misdiagnosing. Nope—his good buddy really had an ovary.

Through the glass window, Dr. Burke locked eyes with Bill in the hospital room and forced a smile.

Maybe it was his imagination, but suddenly Bill looked... prettier? More refined?

It's like when someone hands you a random gift—you don't think much of it at first. Then they show you the price tag, and under the dazzling glow of its value, everything changes.

Damn it! Dr. Burke cursed under his breath.

But there was no getting around it. As Bill's attending physician, he had to break the news face-to-face.

"Go get Dr. Knox from gynecology," Dr. Burke instructed. "We've got an ovary here that needs removing."

Adam nodded and headed off.

Everything went smoothly. Dr. Knox was the best in gynecology, and normally, booking her for surgery took forever. But when the acting surgical director said jump, even her packed schedule got rearranged.

The already-scheduled patients? They'd just have to wait.

Plus, Dr. Knox usually operated on women. Now, cutting an ovary out of a guy? No ambitious doctor—gynecologist or otherwise—would pass that up.

How do you build experience? How do you make a name for yourself? Sure, nailing routine surgeries helps, but it's the rare, wild cases that stack up your résumé.

If no one else has done it—or knows how to—you've got the edge.

Outside the room, Adam peeked through the glass, watching Dr. Burke talk to Bill. He figured it was best to hang back for now.

"The tissue we found isn't a tumor," Dr. Burke started.

"That's good, right? Anything's better than cancer," Bill said, lighting up.

Dr. Burke looked down, bracing himself to drop the bombshell.

"What? You're saying I'm a guy with an ovary?" Bill blinked, totally thrown.

It's like telling a girl she's secretly a gun-toting badass. Well, okay, a real badass would already know. Maybe it's more like a guy who loves cute girls seeing one whip out a pistol...

"It's super rare. Think of it as a glitch when God was putting you together," Dr. Burke said, trying to soften the blow.

Bill went quiet for a sec, then asked shakily, "I'm still a man, right?"

"Absolutely," Dr. Burke shot back without hesitation. "Manliest of men! Pure testosterone! You didn't even know this was in there. We cut it out, and you're good as new. I've already lined up the best gynecologist. Surgery's happening ASAP."

Bill nodded, his face a mix of emotions. A guy like him getting surgery from a gynecologist...

If Adam could hear his thoughts, he'd probably say, "Big deal. Back in East Country, battered husbands go to the Women's Federation for help."

Seeing Dr. Burke wrap up and Bill agree, Adam stepped inside. "Dr. Burke, Dr. Knox is ready whenever you are."

"Great," Dr. Burke said with a nod.

The surgery got scheduled fast. As the resident overseeing Bill's case, Adam joined Dr. Burke and Dr. Knox in the OR.

It went off without a hitch—mostly. There was one unexpected twist, though.

"Keep this under wraps," Dr. Burke said as they stepped out of the operating room.

"Got it," Adam agreed instantly.

Dr. Burke rubbed his temples and walked off, looking like he had a headache brewing.

One mess down, another popping up. Finding an ovary in his buddy's body was bad enough. But during the surgery, they'd discovered Bill's vas deferens had been blocked all along—and his wife was five weeks from giving birth...

It was lunchtime. Adam hit up the cafeteria.

"Just you two?" he asked, spotting only George and Meredith at the table.

"Liz went to check on Alex," Meredith said with a smile. "As for Cristina, no idea. She's been acting all secretive lately."

"Yeah," George chimed in. "This morning, she even asked me to cover her shift."

"What?" Meredith gaped. "Cristina asked you to cover for her?"

"Sounds like something big's up," Adam said thoughtfully.

Cristina was the ultimate workaholic. The hospital was basically her home—she ignored the mandatory 5-6-6 rest rule like it didn't exist. Even with a cold or fever, she'd drag her shaky self to work. Always the first to snag a surgery.

And now she was asking for a shift swap?

"What about Liz, huh? Is she nuts?" George said, shifting gears to vent to Adam. "Alex treated her like crap back in the day, and now she acts like they're besties. She's always running off to see him whenever she's free. And he's still a jerk to her! What's going through her head?"

Alex had been saved, sure, but he'd also "entered the palace"—a polite way of saying he'd been fully castrated. Back in ancient East Country's Forbidden City, that'd be a sweet gig: snipped clean and thorough, no need for the every-three-years "minor tune-up" or every-five-years "major overhaul."

But Alex? He'd been a playboy. Now, "surrounded by a harem of gorgeous women," he could only look, not touch. That kind of torture...

Sure, with everything gone, he wouldn't feel that pent-up frustration from a botched job. But testosterone doesn't just come from down there—your adrenal glands pump out some sex hormones too.

No unbearable pressure, maybe. But if the stimulation's strong enough, Alex could still get... ideas. Ideas he couldn't act on. That's a recipe for a mental breakdown.

Liz, though? She didn't hold a grudge—she was doubling down on being nice. Alex swung between touched and pissed off, while Liz just kept at it, loving every second.

"She's got a condition. Needs treatment," Adam said, shaking his head.

There's a type of person out there with an oversized urge to care for the sick or "defective"—way more than they'd give a normal person. Kinda like survivor's guilt. Often, it's because they've dealt with some flaw of their own.

So, what's Liz's deal?

Chapter 372: A Friend's Wife – Off Limits?

Medical Center. Self-Service Cafeteria.

"Liz isn't sick—she's just dumb!"

George, being the loyal bestie, wasn't thrilled with Adam's take.

"Alright, fine," Adam said, not bothering to argue. He grinned. "Let's call it dumb, then. Maybe this is just the start of her dumb phase. Trust me, there's probably worse to come."

"No way, really?" George said, wide-eyed.

"I studied psychology," Adam reminded her. "I've seen cases like this before. One of them was a lot like Liz right now—another female doctor. Guess what she ended up doing?"

"What'd she do?"

Meredith's attention snapped back from daydreaming about her magical weekend with Mr. Dreamy last Sunday.

"She married a cancer patient so he wouldn't die alone," Adam said, cutting straight to the punchline.

"What?!"

George and Meredith blurted it out at the same time, jaws dropping.

Everyone was floored.

If the female doctor had just dated the cancer patient to give him some happy final memories, they could wrap their heads around that.

After all, offering some physical comfort? Not a big deal around here.

But marriage? To Americans, that's still kind of a sacred thing.

How do you mix up caring for a patient with the kind of love that comes with marriage?

Imagine being a bride, only to face your husband's death right after the wedding. How brutal would that be for her?

For the rest of her life, it'd feel like a piece of her heart was carved out, quietly aching.

"She went way overboard," Meredith said, frowning.

"Liz wouldn't do that, right?" George asked, suddenly worried.

"I hope not," Meredith replied, her expression shifting.

Then it hit her—Liz's situation might actually be worse than that doctor's. Alex had only been castrated, not diagnosed with cancer. He wasn't dying anytime soon. If Liz pulled the same move as that doctor, she'd be signing up for a lifetime of misery.

That was terrifying to think about.

"You think that's the end of the story?" Adam said, smirking at them.

"What happened next?" George and Meredith asked in unison again, leaning in.

"The first part's a fairy tale. The second part? That's reality," Adam said with a sigh. "After they got married, the bride-doctor, now a wife, sparked her dying husband's will to live. He started cooperating with her treatment plans. She poured her heart into saving him, and luckily, his best friend was there by her side, helping her through it..."

At that point, George and Meredith's faces twisted into something weird.

They didn't need him to finish—they could guess where this was going.

A friend's wife, off limits?

Sorry, not here!

This is America—follow your heart, do what you want. That's freedom, baby.

"They fell in love?" Meredith asked, her expression a mix of curiosity and unease.

"Dunno," Adam said, shaking his head. "In the case study, the bride-doctor said she fell for the best friend and felt like they were in love. But I put two question marks next to that."

"Two question marks?" Meredith tilted her head, confused.

Sure, the best friend might've just been caught up in hormones—whether he actually loved her was questionable, so one question mark made sense. But what was the second one for?

"I don't think the bride-doctor really loved him either," Adam said with a chuckle. "Just like I don't think she loved her husband. If it's all 'love,' doesn't it feel like love comes way too fast and leaves just as quick? Makes it seem kinda cheap, right? I'd bet she didn't even know what love is—just got swept up in a moment of emotion and impulse and called it love."

He was reminded of that line from *How I Met Your Mother*. Robin once said: "I'm like this all the time—one minute we're head over heels, the next minute, he's dead to me."

Ted, her boyfriend at the time, heard that and felt his heart sink. He just stared at her, stunned, while she kept calling him "honey" and insisting he was the exception. He forced a smile and nodded along—but deep down? Yeah, right.

"So how'd it end?" George, being the guy, couldn't help but think of the real leading man in this messy love triangle. "What about her husband?"

"He died," Adam said with a sigh.

"The bride-doctor was so 'emotional' she sucked at hiding her feelings for the new guy. I mean, she didn't exactly take her time before impulsively marrying a cancer patient, right? Her husband probably figured out she was 'in love' with his best friend before he died. Makes you wonder—if he had a do-over, would he still choose this ending, or would he rather die alone?"

George went quiet.

Meredith, though, piped up. "I think he'd pick this ending. At least in his final days, he had some happiness—even if it ended badly. It's still better than dying alone. Maybe he even blessed them in the end."

Adam's lips twitched into a half-smile.

In some cultures—like back in the East—falling "in love" and then betraying someone before they die? That's straight-up revenge. Think Empresses in the Palace or The Moon Embracing the Sun. Emperors like Yongzheng or kings like Qin nearly died with their eyes wide open in shock.

Of course, you could also argue they "blessed" the couple, wanting to see them happy together in their final romantic moment...

"The doctor lived with guilt ever after," Adam said flatly, sticking to the facts.

Meredith fell silent.

What was there to argue? Why the guilt? The answer was obvious.

Her husband didn't exactly pass away with a smile on his face.

That's a normal guy's reaction, honestly.

"Now that you've said all this, I'm even more worried about Liz," George said, his voice heavy with concern.

Reality was brutal.

He didn't want Liz going down the same road as that doctor.

"Adam, what should we do to help her?"

"Nope, nope, nope," Adam said, shaking his head. "Don't drag me into this. Stuff like this is always a thankless job—I'm not touching it. My advice? You shouldn't get too involved either. Give her a heads-up and leave it at that. Like you said, Liz is just dumb, not sick."

"..."

George looked a little embarrassed.

He'd only been trying to stick up for his bestie earlier, but now? Adam was totally right.

His bestie wasn't just dumb—she was sick. Like, needs-treatment sick!

Adam finished his food and bolted.

Dr. Burke trusted him to look after his friend, and he wasn't about to let that trust—or that favor—go to waste.

Having a chief physician in your corner opens a lot of doors.

No way was he wasting time trying to talk sense into Liz, who was probably too far gone already.

He didn't even need to see her to know how she'd react—likely going on about how she was doing something noble, how it was her freedom and her belief, and how anyone trying to stop her was either infringing on her rights or discriminating against Alex.

On his way back to the ward, a thought hit him.

It was already noon—where the heck was Elizabeth?

Chapter 373: Who's the Master of Hardcore Flirting?

Medical Center, Ward 2

The patient, Bill, still hadn't woken up.

Adam checked all the data—everything looked normal.

Then, glancing at Bill sleeping soundly on the hospital bed, Adam couldn't help but feel a strange sense of absurdity. Bill was born infertile, yet his wife was about to give birth any day now.

No kidding!

What made it even weirder was that this couple had always struck Adam as genuinely lovey-dovey from the first moment he met them.

Who would've thought... uhh...

No wonder Dr. House next door was always ranting about his deep distrust of human nature, constantly testing people and never being surprised by the results. Humanity's weaknesses were just too many, and its bright spots? Way too few.

Spend enough time in a hospital, and you'd see every flaw imaginable laid bare.

Adam figured if he stuck around long enough, the next time he saw a "happy couple" like this, his first instinct wouldn't be admiration—it'd be skepticism.

Is this real love? Or just a show? What ugly secrets are hiding beneath the surface, waiting to disappoint?

"Your marriage is a total sham."

Just then, Dr. Burke's voice, thick with suppressed anger, drifted in from outside the room.

Looks like Burke had mulled it over and decided he couldn't just sit back and let his best buddy live in this fake, "good enough" happiness. He wasn't about to play the "it's not my place to judge" card and pretend he didn't know.

"We're happy right now," Bill's wife, Holly, shot back. "We've wanted a kid for ages. Why do you have to ruin his joy like this?"

"Does he know you cheated?" Burke cut straight to the point.

Holly froze for a second, then softened her tone. She dropped the righteous act and switched to pleading. "Preston, this is between me and my husband. Please, just forget about it. Why can't you let it go?"

"Because Bill's my best friend, and he doesn't know the kid isn't his," Burke snapped. "Holly, you need to tell him!"

"Tell him what?!" Holly dropped the begging and went full-on furious. "I'm not letting your morals wreck my life! If you're really his friend, you wouldn't say a word! As long as he doesn't know, he won't get hurt. You telling him? That's you wanting him to suffer!"

Burke: "..."

Adam: "..."

What flawless logic!

She sounded so dang confident about it, too!

If Holly weren't a patient's family member—and a pregnant one about to pop, at that—Adam would've marched out there and given her a piece of his mind. This wasn't even his mess to deal with, but still!

"Your morals"?! Burke's stance was basic human decency, not some warped personal code. It's the kind of thing any normal person should stick to.

Otherwise, why would Burke even bother asking her first, giving her a chance to come clean? He could've just spilled the beans to his buddy right away and left her with no room to squirm.

That's Burke playing by the rules of common decency.

And if Holly thought those values were such trash that they'd "ruin her life," why was she begging Burke to keep quiet for his friend's sake? Caring about your buddy's feelings? That's the same damn decency she was trashing!

So, when it worked in her favor, she was all for it. When it didn't, it was garbage.

Adam could see echoes of some "powerful" figures in her attitude...

"Whatever!" Burke finally muttered after a stunned pause. He let out a cold laugh. "Maybe a friend shouldn't say it, but I'm still his doctor. And a doctor doesn't hide things from their patient!"

With that, he turned and stormed off, refusing to spare "buddy's wife" Holly another glance.

Holly just stood there, her face a mess of emotions.

One second, she was glaring daggers at Burke.

The next, she was wallowing in self-pity.

Then she rubbed her belly.

In the end, she didn't even step into the room—she just took off.

Adam watched, jaw practically on the floor.

What kind of move was that?

No explanation, no attempt to smooth things over—just bolting out of there like her life depended on it?

Wait a sec... was this some classic American divorce playbook? Bill's still stuck in the hospital, so she runs off to consult a top-notch divorce lawyer and lock down the best deal? It actually didn't sound that far-fetched.

Take The Big Bang Theory—that entomologist Sheldon and Howard went to for advice? While he was out doing fieldwork, his wife cleaned out everything he owned and ran off with some guy. And "ran off" didn't even mean fleeing—she just left, and he knew exactly where she and her new fling were living it up. Couldn't do a thing about it, though, because she'd probably done it all legally.

That's the power of planning ahead and getting a good divorce lawyer.

No wonder lawyers and life-saving doctors were neck-and-neck as the go-to middle-class gigs.

One saves your life.

The other saves your money.

Adam couldn't help but glance at the patient again.

Right then, Bill stirred awake.

"You're up?" Adam asked.

"Dr. Duncan, looks like the surgery went well?" Bill managed a weak smile.

"Dr. Knox is the best OB-GYN around, and Dr. Burke was right there assisting. It went perfectly," Adam replied with a grin.

"Thanks," Bill said, beaming. He glanced around. "Where's my wife?"

"Uh..." Adam hesitated, then got up to check the monitors. "I'm not sure. Want me to grab Dr. Burke for you?"

"Thanks," Bill said, not thinking much of it.

"Dr. Burke, the patient's awake," Adam said when he found him.

Burke's face twisted with mixed emotions. After a moment, he nodded and headed toward Ward 2.

"Is Holly there?" Burke asked.

"Nope. Bill was just asking about her," Adam replied, playing dumb.

This wasn't exactly a shining moment for anyone involved.

He figured Burke didn't want him in the loop anyway. The surgery was done, the results looked solid, and Adam had pretty much nailed Burke's request. That was enough.

He followed Burke to the ward's entrance, and when it seemed like Burke didn't need anything else, Adam took the hint and peeled off.

Ring ring.

His phone buzzed.

Adam checked it, and his eyes narrowed.

Here it comes.

"Alright, I'm on my way," he said into the phone before heading toward the outpatient clinic.

"Dr. Duncan," a young nurse said, nodding toward a closed room.

Adam got the message, pushed the door open, and sure enough, there was Elizabeth Plimpton, standing there looking as lively as ever.

"Dr. Plimpton," he greeted.

"Dr. Duncan," she replied, her eyes lighting up. She didn't bother pointing out that he didn't need to be so formal—yesterday, she'd told him to just call her Elizabeth.

"Something wrong?" Adam asked.

"Well..." Elizabeth glanced at the nurse who'd followed him in. "Can we talk alone?"

"No can do. Hospital rules," the nurse said flatly.

"Your hospital has a rule like that?" Elizabeth wasn't your average person—she smirked at the excuse.
"What about patient privacy?"

The nurse's face stiffened.

"It's fine, you can step out," Adam said after a beat. He figured he'd handle this quick, send Elizabeth on her way, and save everyone the hassle. Broad daylight, hospital setting—what's the worst she could do?

The nurse huffed and shuffled out.

"So, what's up?" Adam asked with a smile.

"My heartbeat feels off," Elizabeth said softly.

"Alright, let's check it out." Adam turned to grab a stethoscope. He was a surgeon, not an internist, so he didn't have one dangling around his neck 24/7.

When he turned back, stethoscope in hand, his mouth twitched.

"What are you doing?"

"Helping you listen," Elizabeth said innocently.

Adam shifted to the side, avoiding a direct look at "clueless, innocent" Elizabeth.

"Put your shirt back on. I can hear your heartbeat through clothes just fine."

"Oh, really?" She grinned. "Mine, or yours?"

Adam: "..."

Chapter 374: Adam, the Iron-Willed

Medical Center. Outpatient Ward.

"Dr. Duncan, come over here!"

Elizabeth was really into it. "Is there something wrong with my heart? Why aren't you coming over to listen?"

"Dr. Plimpton, please put your clothes back on," Adam said, swallowing a flood of mental commentary. He turned slightly, his face serious. "I don't know what Leonard told you, but I'm not the kind of guy you're imagining."

"I know you're a proper gentleman!"

Elizabeth's grin was practically spilling over. She stepped forward, reaching for his hand, trying to force him into giving her a stethoscope check-up.

"You're the doctor—I'll do whatever you say!"

"..."

Adam's mouth twitched. He dodged her hand, locked eyes with her, and said firmly, "I'm serious—this isn't some cosplay game!"

Elizabeth froze, then studied him closely. It sank in—she'd gotten the wrong idea.

"Sorry about that," she said, quickly slipping her clothes back on, her face apologetic. "Leonard told me... I thought you were, like, my kindred spirit or something..."

"It's all Leonard's fault," Adam said with a wry smile. "He's got a thing for you, so he probably exaggerated a bit. You get it, right?"

"Yeah, I get it," Elizabeth said with a nod, though a flicker of disappointment lingered in her eyes.

Clingy and desperate?

Come on, no way!

Sure, she loved diving into Fifty Shades-level cosplay games, but she was still a brilliant, accomplished scientist.

That stuff was just a hobby—not her whole life.

So, seeing Adam's no-nonsense vibe, she bounced back fast.

"I'm good now," she said with a smile. "Thanks for the 'treatment,' Dr. Duncan."

"No problem," Adam replied, genuinely impressed by how she handled it.

Elizabeth left.

The nurses nearby shot Adam looks of pure admiration.

Everyone said Dr. Duncan was a flirt.

But here was this classy, gorgeous woman—practically throwing herself at him with obvious intentions—and Dr. Duncan stayed cool as a cucumber, solid as a rock.

Wasn't he basically the poster boy for a good guy?

Next time someone tried to trash-talk their Dr. Duncan as a player, they weren't letting it slide.

Adam didn't pay much attention to their stares.

At a corner of the hospital hallway, there was a little cart selling food and drinks for the staff.

Doctors swung by now and then to refuel.

As Adam passed, he spotted George, Cristina, and Meredith huddled around it, munching on bread and sipping coffee.

"Adam, grab something to eat!" George called out, all enthusiastic.

Adam glanced at the cart. No fancy braised pork knuckles or anything tempting—just basic stuff. He shook his head. "Nah, I'm good. Not hungry."

Cristina and the others ate while dishing out gossip.

Adam, as usual, hung back and listened. It was a good way to pick up on new cases and stay in the loop about hospital buzz.

But today, he was a little distracted.

Couldn't help it!

Ever since leveling up to super-genius status, that high-def, photographic memory he'd "borrowed" from Sheldon had fully kicked in.

It was a huge boost for studying and work, sure, but it came with some side effects.

Like right now—his mind kept replaying crystal-clear images of Elizabeth from earlier, and they wouldn't quit.

"She's a pro cosplay player, alright," he thought to himself. "Coming to the hospital in broad daylight, going full commando under there—was that for convenience?"

She'd been so into it, Adam seriously wondered if he hadn't been such an upright stick-in-the-mud, she might've actually staged a daytime "doctor-patient" scene right there.

Talk about commitment!

Adam sighed inwardly, zooming in on the mental details despite himself. "Well, can't let her trip here be a total waste. Might as well give her a quick once-over, rule out any issues—it's the least I can do."

Guess even a tough guy like him had a soft spot.

Cold on the outside, warm on the inside.

"Adam! Adam!" Cristina's voice snapped him out of his mental diagnosis.

"What's got you so zoned out?" she asked.

"Nothing," he said with a casual smile.

"Heard you did an ovotesticular removal today?" Cristina said, her tone laced with envy. "And Burke personally tapped you for it?"

"Yeah," Adam said, giving her a teasing look. "Don't be jealous. If you hadn't been tied up with your 'big stuff' lately, Burke probably would've picked you instead."

Cristina was the next best after Adam, hands down.

If she hadn't been dodging Burke these past few days—intentionally or not—her ambiguously flirty vibe with him might've made Burke think twice between her and Adam.

"What 'big stuff'?" Cristina said, avoiding his gaze, playing dumb.

"Oh, you've definitely got something going on," Meredith chimed in, borrowing Adam's logic.

Cristina's eyes flickered, giving her away.

"Hey, you guys smell that?" George suddenly leaned in close, shooting them a sneaky look.

"Smell what?" Cristina jumped at the chance to change the subject.

"Over there—the anesthesiologist, Dr. Taylor," George said, nodding toward a middle-aged guy standing nearby. "I think he's been drinking."

"As long as it's not during work hours, who cares if he drinks?" Meredith said, annoyed. "Don't we all knock a few back to unwind after shifts?"

"We drink," Adam teased. "You binge."

In America, binge drinking was basically a national pastime—AA meetings were everywhere.

Meredith was definitely leaning that way.

Get her a few drinks deep, and her pants were halfway down before anyone could stop her. Blacking out? Routine.

So, of course, she'd push back on George.

"I mean during work hours," George said, lowering his voice. "Dr. Shepherd's got that kid patient, right? I'm the resident on the case, and I swear I smelled booze on Taylor. That's why I asked if you guys noticed."

"Nope," Meredith said, shaking her head.

"George, don't stir up trouble," Cristina warned. "Taylor's the best anesthesiologist here. Piss him off, and you're out of the OR. Any surgery he's on? You're banned. Trust me."

"But that's messed up!" George said, torn. "The patient trusts him. Shouldn't I say something?"

"The patient trusts Dr. Shepherd, the attending," Adam pointed out, glancing at him. "Shepherd's the one who picked Taylor. If you really think it's a problem, don't make a scene—just quietly tip off Shepherd. After that, it's out of your hands. It's his surgery, his call."

George could be a total simp around his crush, Meredith, no question.

But normally? Dude had a strong sense of justice.

Otherwise, why would a lowly intern even think about snitching on the hospital's top anesthesiologist?

If he ticked Taylor off, Cristina wasn't exaggerating—no attending would stick their neck out for a tattletale intern over a star like Taylor.

So, Adam figured he'd throw him a bone with some advice.

Chapter 375: The Anesthesiologist Loses It

After grabbing a quick, messy bite to eat, it was apparently afternoon tea time.

Everyone drifted away from the snack cart.

Adam swung by Ward 2 to check on Bill. The guy's mood was obviously in the dumps—Burke must've dropped the truth bomb on him.

There wasn't much Adam could say about it.

That's just the harsh reality.

Bill would have to tough it out on his own.

Still, Adam told the nurse to keep an extra eye on him and call him immediately if anything came up.

Then he hightailed it to the observation room.

That afternoon, Dr. Shepherd had a hemispherectomy lined up—a big-deal neurosurgery.

The patient was a two-year-old girl with Rasmussen's encephalitis. Half her brain was normal; the other half was pretty much toast.

The surgery meant cutting out all the damaged tissue—basically, removing the bad half of her brain.

Good thing she was only two. Her brain hadn't fully developed yet, so after the spinal fluid filled the empty space, the remaining neurons could regenerate and compensate.

In theory, if the surgery went well, she'd grow up living a normal life.

Adam really wanted in on this one.

But this time, Shepherd had specifically tapped George to assist, leaving Adam out in the cold.

For one, George was the girl's admitting doctor.

For two, Shepherd was clearly using this surgery as a bribe.

George was Meredith's roommate, and with Shepherd practically living at Meredith's place these days, he had to smooth over George's hostility somehow.

And what better way to win over an intern like George—making him drop the grudges and shout "heck yeah!"—than handing him a fancy neurosurgery?

That's power for you. Even a romantic rival gets turned into this.

Can you really blame people for doubting it's "true love" and calling it a shady power-play-slash-unmentionable-deal instead?

Get real.

In the observation room, overlooking the scrub area outside the OR:

"Here you go—double espresso, nice and warm," a surgical nurse said, handing Shepherd his coffee.

"I could kiss you for this," Shepherd replied, thanking her before downing it in one go.

This surgery was going to drag on for hours. He needed to stay razor-sharp.

Adam smirked at the sight.

Every lead surgeon has their go-to team.

Anesthesiologists, surgical nurses—if the vibe's good, they stick together for years.

Take that old nurse who'd come in with pancreatic cancer, waiting to die. She'd been Meredith's mom's dedicated OR nurse for a solid 18 years! They knew each other's quirks inside out, totally in sync.

It got Adam thinking—once he became a lead surgeon, he'd need to build his own crew.

What would his team look like?

Kinda exciting to imagine, honestly.

"Hope you brought a fresh crossword," Shepherd said, tossing his empty cup in the trash and casually greeting Dr. Taylor, the anesthesiologist he'd been working with since joining the medical center.

Dr. Taylor patted his chest pocket, where a crossword booklet was tucked away. "Always got it on me."

Anesthesiologists have it pretty chill compared to the rest. They just hang out in the OR the whole time, keeping an eye on the patient's sedation.

For a pro like Taylor, it was a cakewalk.

Which led to a little problem.

Picture an experienced driver cruising down an endless, empty highway—after a while, they might just nod off.

Anesthesiologists spend most of their time in the OR sitting around, waiting.

So how do they kill time?

On the surface, Taylor's thing was crosswords.

Under the table? A little nip of booze to take the edge off.

Adam, up in the observation room, raised an eyebrow.

Judging by this, George hadn't said a word, huh?

Right then, George glanced up, locking eyes with Adam for a split second before dropping his head and heading into the OR.

"Heh," Adam chuckled out loud.

Guess that sense of justice couldn't hold a candle to the sweet smell of a high-level neurosurgery—especially with the risk of getting on Taylor's bad side down the road.

"Welcome to the real world," Adam sighed to himself.

If George had picked up on it, did Shepherd and the nurses—who'd done tons of surgeries with Taylor—really not notice? Were their noses permanently stuffed up or something?

No way!

In fact, Adam had already heard the gossip from a nurse.

Everyone knew about Taylor's little habit.

There was even a running joke: Taylor was the best anesthesiologist in the center—if he ever got so plastered he couldn't do his crosswords, then they'd have a problem.

What else is there to say after that?

"Big day today, kid. Congrats," Taylor said warmly, giving George a friendly nod.

To Taylor, if Shepherd was bringing George into a surgery this major, it meant George was one of Shepherd's people. A little goodwill was cheap and easy.

"Thanks," George replied, his smile a bit forced. He couldn't help glancing up at Adam in the observation room again.

Adam shot him a friendly grin.

George gritted his teeth, looked away, and stared straight at Shepherd.

"What's up?" Shepherd asked casually, catching the blatant stare.

"Don't you smell..." George trailed off.

"Smell what?" Shepherd laughed, pointing at his mask. "I've got this on."

Up in the observation room, Adam winced. Oh man, I was just smiling like a normal, nice guy—no mocking intended! Don't overthink it, George!

Too late. Young and hot-headed, George was already worked up.

He glanced at the anesthetized little girl, then couldn't hold back anymore. "Sorry, Dr. Taylor, but... have you been drinking?"

"Say that again?!" Taylor's face darkened, his eyes boring into George.

The OR went dead silent. Everyone stopped and stared, disbelief written all over their faces.

This little intern—had he lost his mind?

Talk about guts!

"Can't you smell it?" George was freaking out inside but doubled down, sniffing the air dramatically. "I smell alcohol."

"How dare you ask me that?!" Taylor exploded.

These surgeries were fully recorded. If he admitted it on tape, it'd be a disaster.

"George, you're out of line," Shepherd warned.

"There are hospital rules," George said, fully committed now. "Rules exist for a reason. There's a two-year-old girl on that table—we can't just exploit someone's vulnerability like this..."

"No snot-nosed intern gets to lecture me about risk!" Taylor sneered. "Get him out of here, Shepherd!"

Shepherd locked eyes with Taylor, steady and unreadable.

"Shepherd?" Taylor prompted again.

"George, go," Shepherd said, making the obvious call.

George walked out of the OR in a daze.

"Taylor, you'd better be on your game," Shepherd muttered under his breath.

"Wouldn't be standing here otherwise," Taylor replied coolly.

As the top anesthesiologist in the center, he and Shepherd were equals—Taylor didn't have to kiss anyone's ring.

Shepherd gave him a long look, then turned to a nurse. "Page Dr. Duncan. Tell him to get down here now."

This was a teaching hospital.

With George booted, a spot had opened up for another intern.

First pick would've been Meredith, naturally.

But with this mess unfolding before the surgery even started, Shepherd wasn't sure how Meredith would react to Taylor's boozy breath.

Plus, things were already off to a rocky start.

Better safe than sorry—he went straight for the steadiest, sharpest option: Adam.

Chapter 376: What Does an Intern Know About Anesthesia?

Observation Room

The moment Dr. Shepherd spoke, Adam overheard him.

Though he couldn't help but admire George's fiery sense of justice, Adam didn't hesitate. He jumped up and bolted toward the operating room.

Borrowing a line from Sheldon: Who told him to be so weak?

Scrub in, disinfect, gown up.

It was all so smooth, like clockwork.

By the time Adam stepped into the OR, Dr. Shepherd was momentarily stunned.

No surprise there—it was fast.

But Dr. Shepherd didn't comment. Having his orders carried out with such efficiency was a good thing, and it softened some of the irritation he'd felt earlier over George and Dr. Taylor.

"Alright, let's get started."

Dr. Shepherd gave Adam a nod, officially kicking off the surgery as the lead surgeon.

The drill whirred to life.

Second-Floor Observation Room

George, who'd been kicked out, stood in the corner with his arms crossed, leaning against the wall. His face was blank as he stared down at the OR.

Did he regret it?

Of course he did!

Especially after leaving the OR and walking alone to the observation room. Once the adrenaline faded, regret hit him like a ton of bricks—he practically felt sick about it.

What had he done?

For the sake of a risk that might not even happen, he'd pissed off the hospital's top anesthesiologist!

And it wasn't just Dr. Taylor.

Most doctors had their quirks—did he really think they'd take kindly to an intern who dared to call them out in front of everyone?

The answer was obvious.

George felt like his future was crumbling.

It was a dark, unethical thought, but right then, a single idea kept creeping into his mind:

If only the surgery went wrong because of Dr. Taylor's screw-up...

But then the little girl's adorable smile flashed in his head, and George shoved the thought away, ashamed of how twisted it was.

Adam, meanwhile, didn't have time to care about George's inner turmoil.

He was focused on two things:

One, assisting Dr. Shepherd—handing him tools, watching him operate, and soaking up every explanation he offered.

The other, keeping an eye on the monitors and Dr. Taylor, the anesthesiologist.

That's right.

George might've been a little hot-headed and not exactly smooth about it, but his concern wasn't baseless.

Even the best anesthesiologists could slip up—especially one who'd been drinking.

Since Adam was in the OR, he'd use every advantage he had to minimize risks and, once again, prove what he was capable of.

Think about it: if Adam hadn't already shown how good he was, why would Dr. Burke have picked him for his friend's case?

How would this surgery have landed in his lap?

Americans didn't mess around with moderation—winner takes all, that's the game.

Two Hours Later

"In a frontal lobectomy, we'll encounter the anterior cerebral artery..."

Dr. Shepherd was operating and teaching at the same time when he suddenly noticed something off. "Dr. Duncan, what are you doing?" he asked, surprised.

"There was an abnormal spike in the blood pressure and heart rate on the monitor just now," Adam explained.

He placed his hand on the patient's radial artery, feeling the pulse directly while continuing, "Blood pressure's up, heart rate's climbing—Dr. Shepherd, the anesthesia's getting light."

Sometimes, you couldn't rely too much on the monitors.

They were just tools sampling the body's data, and sampling meant errors could happen.

A doctor's hands-on observation? That was more accurate, more dependable.

"You know anesthesia too?"

Dr. Shepherd almost laughed in disbelief. "That's Dr. Taylor's job. Yours is to assist me and learn."

"Dr. Taylor seems to be asleep," Adam pointed out. "We should wake him up and check the patient's anesthesia."

"No way..."

Dr. Shepherd started to scoff, then froze. It hit him—there was a chance.

Dr. Taylor, sitting with his back to them, hadn't reacted at all to their conversation.

"Dr. Taylor!"

"Dr. Taylor!!"

"DR. TAYLOR!!!"

Three calls, each louder, each angrier.

"Ah! Sorry, sorry, I'm here!"

Dr. Taylor jolted awake, fumbling to cover it up. "Just dozed off for a sec."

"Dr. Duncan says the anesthesia's light. Check it, now," Dr. Shepherd said, barely holding back his frustration, his face a mask.

"No way!"

Dr. Taylor snapped back instinctively.

As the medical center's top anesthesiologist, he was fiercely confident in his expertise.

"What does an intern know about anesthesia?!"

Then it sank in—who was questioning him? Another damn intern. That sent his temper through the roof.

Were interns this ballsy now?

One after another, publicly undermining him?

"I actually do know a bit," Adam said earnestly. "At the very least, I know anesthesia's a field where we still don't fully understand how the drugs work. It's all about experience—watching the patient's reactions and adjusting on the fly."

"Dr. Taylor, I suggest you check the patient's status right now. If she wakes up, it'll be a disaster."

Imagine it: a two-year-old girl, skull drilled open, half her brain being removed, waking up from general anesthesia too soon. The thought alone was horrifying.

"Knowing a little and trying to tell me what to do..."

Dr. Taylor's temper flared, fueled by the alcohol still in his system.

Normally, he'd have checked without hesitation.

But now? He glanced at the monitor and doubled down, convinced his work was flawless.

Adam didn't argue further. He just looked at Dr. Shepherd.

"Dr. Taylor!"

This time, Dr. Shepherd didn't hold back. "Check it now!" he barked.

Seeing the lead surgeon lose it—and worried the surgery might actually go south—Dr. Taylor finally got serious and checked.

And there it was: the anesthesia was light.

As he grabbed the syringe to adjust it, he saw the little girl's eyelids twitch. Panicked, he injected the anesthetic fast.

"My bad, Shepherd. Won't happen again, I swear," Dr. Taylor said, trying to brush it off. "Steve, get me some coffee."

"It won't happen again—not here," Dr. Shepherd replied, stone-faced. "Steve, call Dr. Pellington. Hopkins, you take over until she gets here."

Dr. Pellington was another anesthesiologist at the hospital.

"Yes, Doctor," the two nurses responded instantly.

In the OR, the lead surgeon's word was law.

"George was right," Dr. Shepherd said, glancing at a stunned Dr. Taylor. "Go sober up."

Dr. Taylor stormed out, his face dark with fury.

Getting kicked out of the OR? For a doctor, it was pure humiliation—especially for someone like him, the medical center's so-called anesthesia king.

Second-Floor Observation Room

George watched it all unfold, his expression a mess of emotions.

Adam had not only stopped a potential disaster but stayed in the OR, getting to assist and learn on this high-level neurosurgery case.

It was the perfect outcome George had secretly hoped for.

So why did it have to be Adam pulling it off instead of him?

Chapter 377: That Makes Perfect Sense! Observation Operating Room

After the anesthesiologist, Taylor, got kicked out, the surgery went on.

Dr. Shepter operated for a bit before he couldn't help glancing at Adam. "Dr. Duncan, do you actually understand anesthesia?"

"A little," Adam said with a grin. "Modern surgery basically grew up alongside advancements in anesthesiology. As a surgeon, I figured it'd be smart to know a thing or two, so I cracked open some anesthesia textbooks."

It's simple logic—how do you do surgery without anesthesia? Not everyone's a tough guy from the old stories. Even Guan Yu only scraped a bone to heal it. Try asking him to drill into a brain and see how that goes!

"..." Dr. Shepter looked away and got back to work, too lazy to respond. You caught the patient's anesthesia wearing off early, and you call that 'a little'?

Adam didn't say more either. He quietly played first assistant, his super-genius brain letting him multitask like a champ—being a perfect tool for Dr. Shepter while still keeping an eye on everything else. Saying he knew "a little" was just him being humble, of course.

If he got too honest right now, he worried his brilliance might freak people out. In the U.S., being good is fine—you can show it off whenever. But being too good? You've got to rein it in a bit. After all, anti-intellectualism runs deep here.

Not that the folks working in a hospital are the main crowd for that, mind you. Still, the gap between a super-genius and a smart person is way bigger than the gap between a smart person and your average American. Better to play it safe.

Adam's mind wandered to Juno and Karen. That little spiel earlier? Juno was the one who first said it to him. Thanks to her nudge, he'd started paying attention to anesthesiology early on. Back when they were hunting and dissecting in that woodland cabin, he'd studied and practiced it for real. Juno had been super into it—enough that Adam once thought she might want to be an anesthesiologist herself. Then he brushed the thought aside. Little Red Riding Hood studying anesthesia? Makes sense, I guess.

Compared to surgery, anesthesia practice doesn't differ as much between humans and animals. Dosage variations? You can adjust those based on what's in the books. If it weren't for not having an anesthesiologist license, Adam could totally pull it off.

"Dr. Duncan, how'd you figure out Dr. Taylor fell asleep?" Nurse Steve broke the silence after a while, unable to hold back. Everyone turned to look.

They were all dying to know. During the surgery, Taylor had been facing the monitors, back to the team. No one else noticed a thing, but Adam did.

"Because Dr. Taylor held that same position for 3 minutes and 27 seconds," Adam explained.

"3 minutes and 27 seconds?" The team exchanged looks.

"You kept track of that?" Dr. Shepter said, incredulous. "While assisting me, no less?"

He'd felt Adam was totally focused as an assistant—hands-down the best intern he'd ever worked with, whether it was helping with the surgery or answering his questions.

"It's not a big deal," Adam said with a modest smile. "You know I've got that high-def photographic memory. I caught Dr. Taylor's stillness out of the corner of my eye, flipped back to when he started holding that pose, did the math, and there you go."

Everyone: "... 'Not a big deal,' he says!

"Didn't you notice Dr. Taylor was asleep way earlier?" Dr. Shepter's eyes glinted. "If the monitor data hadn't started fluctuating, would you have even said anything?"

"Of course not," Adam shot back. "I noticed the monitor data acting up first, then realized Dr. Taylor might've dozed off."

The room's vibe shifted—everyone's looks turned weird. Sure, Adam denied it, but they weren't dumb. They knew he'd never admit it outright. The bigger likelihood? Exactly what Dr. Shepter suspected.

That realization made their feelings about Adam more complicated, though mostly positive. There's an unspoken rule among doctors: don't call people out. Nobody likes a busybody crossing lines—nobody wants to be the one exposed.

Adam pointing out Taylor's screw-up in front of everyone had prevented a surgical disaster. The proof was right there, and they couldn't argue with it. Still, deep down, some of them grumbled a little. That's just human nature.

But if Dr. Shepter's guess was right? Then Adam's approach was flawless. He'd given Taylor plenty of face. The team picked up on that kindness and flashed him smiles. Adam smiled back.

Truth was, he'd been watching Taylor the whole time and clocked him dozing off within ten seconds. But he didn't say a word. If the anesthesia held steady, what did it matter if Taylor was playing word games or snoozing till the end? No way Adam was going to burn a bridge with a top-tier anesthesiologist over that.

Second-Floor Observation Room

George, listening in, felt his whole world crumble. Same deal—pissing someone off—yet Adam got all the praise and support, while he got the side-eye from everyone? He couldn't forget those looks when he got booted from the OR—shock, confusion, like he was some clueless punk who didn't know his place.

Both interns, so why the double standard?

Anesthesiologist Dr. Pellington swooped in soon after, taking over the rest of the job—monitoring blood pressure, heart rate, oxygen saturation, end-tidal CO₂, airway pressure, BIS values, ready to tweak things on the fly. Luckily, once Taylor was out, the drama spotlight faded. Everything went smooth.

Dr. Shepter, the lead surgeon, declared the surgery a success and stepped out to break the good news to the patient's parents waiting outside. Big surgeries like this came with a hefty price tag. Shepter made a point to give them the VIP treatment when he could. Most times, it'd be a resident or even an intern delivering the update.

Over in Japan, even the hospital director might personally meet the family pre- or post-op, delivering the news themselves. There, it's normal for families to offer a fat "thank you" gift. Here in the U.S., though, Shepter's a contracted attending—he splits the bill with the hospital. The family's gratitude? Baked into that sky-high surgery fee already.

After Shepter left, the anesthesiologist got busy. Their job's a bit like a pilot's: pre-op visits are like inspecting the plane for takeoff, making sure everything's good to go. Post-op recovery's like watching the runway, ensuring a safe landing. During the surgery? Autopilot—smooth sailing unless something goes wrong, then it's all hands on deck.

The patient got wheeled to the recovery room to wake up. Adam, meanwhile, headed to Ward 2 to check on Bill's condition.

Chapter 378: The Truth Really Matters! Ward 2.

As Adam approached the door, he heard muffled sobs coming from inside.

He peeked through the small glass window above the door.

Sure enough, there was Bill, his head turned into the pillow, his body trembling as he cried.

"Man..." Adam sighed to himself.

He stood outside for a good ten minutes, waiting until Bill's crying finally stopped.

Only then did Adam push the door open and step inside.

"Dr. Duncan," Bill said, wiping the tears from the corners of his eyes and forcing a smile as a greeting.

"You holding up okay?" Adam asked gently. "You just had surgery, so take it easy. Don't want to risk reopening that wound."

"Thanks, Doc. I know," Bill replied, managing another shaky smile.

"Want me to get Dr. Burke over here?" Adam hesitated. "Maybe you'd like to talk things out with him?"

"Preston's already been by," Bill said, squeezing out a grin. "I'm fine. Just need some time to heal—same as this wound."

As he spoke, he touched the spot where they'd cut him open and stitched him back up.

"If you need anything, just have the nurse call me," Adam said with a nod. He started to leave but paused at the door and turned back.

"What's up, Dr. Duncan?" Bill asked, looking at him.

"There's something I probably shouldn't say..." Adam stood by the bed, mulling it over. "But I'm gonna anyway. Try to keep an open mind. Sometimes the truth really does matter."

As Bill's attending doctor, Adam didn't want him spiraling into grief and risking his recovery. If that wound reopened, no matter the reason, Adam would feel like he'd dropped the ball. Sure, he didn't love getting tangled up in patients' personal drama, but for the sake of nailing this case, he figured he'd make an exception and give Bill a little emotional nudge.

"Thanks, Dr. Duncan," Bill said, caught off guard for a second before smiling. "I get it. Preston's my buddy and my doctor. He told me the truth because he's looking out for me."

"Want to hear a real story?" Adam asked, pulling up a chair and sitting down.

"Sure," Bill said, happy to go along.

Even though he was hurting inside, he didn't take it out on anyone. Guy had some real class—that's one big reason Adam was willing to go the extra mile here.

"There was this young couple, barely twenty," Adam began slowly. "Husband was white, wife was Black. Childhood sweethearts. But the husband's dad was dead-set against them—so much so that he'd yell and hit him over it. They ran away from home young, stuck together through thick and thin, and got married early."

"They must've really loved each other," Bill murmured.

"Yeah," Adam nodded. "The kind of love where you'd die for each other. One day, they're eating at a restaurant when some robbers bust in. Not only do these guys want money, but one of them sets his sights on the wife. Even with a gun to his head, watching this creep try to mess with her, the husband steps up—though she stops him."

"What happened next?" Bill asked.

"Well, the guy trying to get at her suddenly starts feeling sick, coughing like crazy," Adam went on. "The husband sees the other robber get distracted, so he knocks one out cold, tackles the creep going after his wife, and just lays into him. But then his wife collapses, clutching her throat, gasping for air."

"The coughing guy had something contagious?" Bill guessed.

"That's what everyone thought," Adam said. "The husband loved her so much that, even though they were dirt poor and usually wouldn't dream of calling an ambulance, he didn't stop people from dialing one this time. It wasn't like a broken leg or something..."

Bill couldn't help but chuckle. He caught the sarcasm in Adam's tone. Growing up Black in the projects, he totally got where the young husband was coming from.

Back in school, a kid in his class broke his leg once. A rich classmate offered to call an ambulance for him, but the kid freaked out when he heard that. After figuring out what was up, he shouted, "I'm fine! I'm fine! Don't call an ambulance!" A single ride could cost a grand—gone in a flash. Forget poor families; even middle-class folks would think twice. Same deal with fire trucks—\$700 a pop, usually two or more showing up. Sometimes you'd hear about a house on fire, fire trucks rolling in, and the owner just standing there with the firefighters, watching it burn. Why? If the house is gone, it's gone. But putting out the fire? That bill's too steep to pay. Might as well let it burn out.

"When they got to the hospital, they couldn't figure out what was wrong with her at first," Adam said, getting back to the story. "She was critical for a while. To find out what she had, the husband—who started showing the same symptoms but wasn't as bad off—gave up his own treatment. He let his condition get worse, enduring insane pain, letting doctors biopsy his brain and test drugs on him, all to give them a shot at saving her."

"That's real love..." Bill said, floored.

"Yeah," Adam agreed. "And it paid off. Right before she died, they figured it out: hereditary angioedema, a super rare genetic disorder. Treatable, thankfully."

"That's good—wait, hold up," Bill said, relieved at first, then frowning. "You said the husband had the same symptoms. Isn't that a rare genetic thing? Unless..."

"Remember how I said his dad was dead against them being together, to the point they ran away?" Adam said. "When the hospital reached out to the dad, they found out he'd killed himself."

"But he's white, she's Black?" Bill muttered. "Mixed, maybe?"

"She was mixed—light-skinned," Adam said flatly. "Blonde hair, blue eyes, just like him. Turns out they were half-siblings. His dad had an affair with her mom next door but never told them."

Bill froze. He finally got why Adam was telling him this story.

"What happened after that?" he asked.

"After that, the love was gone—just endless pain," Adam sighed. "She couldn't even look at him anymore; it made her sick. He was terrified their kid—if they had one—might be deformed. Even if they split up, that kind of pain sticks with you forever. That's why I say the truth matters. You can't mess around with bloodlines."

"I get it," Bill murmured. "You're right. The truth really does matter."

Adam studied him for a moment. Seeing the shock but no more gloom in Bill's eyes, he felt relieved. He decided against telling another wild story he had up his sleeve.

Chapter 379: 100% Drunk and Dropping Pants

In the blink of an eye, it was already time to clock out.

Locker room.

"Hey, Adam, wanna hit the town with us tonight?"

Bald Chris threw out the invite with a grin.

"Yeah, man, I promise it'll be a blast!"

White Fatty Stu chimed in, his smirk dripping with sleaze.

"Nah, you guys go have fun," Adam said, shaking his head with a smile.

"Come on, don't be like that! Check this out—what do you think this is?"

Stu pulled a thick wad of cash from his pocket, all \$1 bills.

"You're heading to the strip club," Adam said, catching on instantly.

Those small bills were perfect for tipping—strip club standard. One big note could get you a pile of ones to toss around.

"Adam, you sound like a pro," Stu teased, giving him a knowing look, like he'd just cracked some big secret.

"I've been before. It's not that exciting," Adam replied casually, not bothering to play coy.

Back in the day, he'd dragged Chandler along to distract him from Joey's girlfriend. But for someone like Adam, who'd seen bigger things, those places were kind of a yawn.

"Alright, fair point. With Adam's game, does he even need to go there?"

Bald Chris cut off whatever Stu was about to say next.

His invite was just a formality anyway—he'd known all along Adam wouldn't tag along.

"Fine, whatever," Stu muttered, shooting Adam a look that screamed you don't know what you're missing. He threw on a jacket over his blue scrub shirt—didn't even bother changing—and bolted out with Chris, who was rocking the same look.

Adam couldn't help but wonder if it was on purpose.

To paraphrase the golden-armored warrior Zhang Yida: If you rip off the price tag, how's anyone supposed to know if you're wearing designer threads or thrift store junk?

For Bald Chris and White Fatty Stu, hitting the strip club with a stack of small bills was one thing—but what screamed "charm" louder than a peek of that blue surgeon's shirt?

Don't underestimate a broke kid's hustle.

Who knows? Maybe some sharp-eyed stripper would spot their potential and decide to foot the bill herself.

Then again, it probably had something to do with the fact that interns like them made peanuts, spent a ton, and were perpetually strapped for cash.

If they had real money, they'd slap a few hundred bucks on the stage and watch the dancers flock their way.

Adam changed out of his scrubs and headed to the hospital lobby. There, he saw Meredith—dressed in casual clothes—walking over to Dr. Shepherd, who was lounging on a sofa in his own off-duty gear.

Shepherd stood up, adjusting Meredith's coat with zero hesitation. The vibe was so cozy it was practically a neon sign screaming, We're a couple!

Okay, fine.

The whole hospital already knew about them anyway.

Word had spread like wildfire. Meredith had even caught hell from Dr. Bailey over it—days of grunt work, the dirtiest, most mindless tasks thrown her way as punishment.

But she'd toughed it out. At one point, she'd even snapped at Bailey: "This is true love. It's my choice. You don't get a say. Bring on whatever punishment you've got—I can handle it."

Dr. Shepherd outranked Bailey, after all.

Bailey made her point and let it drop. She wasn't about to go full throttle on the boss's girlfriend—unless she wanted Shepherd to turn the tables and make her life miserable too.

So Meredith "won." Bailey was "touched" by her true-love speech, and that was that.

Now, this public PDA was Meredith's silent victory lap.

Look at us! Out in the open!

They spotted Adam.

Meredith flashed him a smile.

Dr. Shepherd gave him a nod.

Adam nodded back with a polite grin—then saw Shepherd's face freeze. Weird.

Next thing he knew, a tall redhead strutted in, rocking sky-high heels, heading straight for the happy couple.

"No way," Adam muttered to himself. "This can't be that cliché, right?"

"Meredith, I'm so sorry," Dr. Shepherd said, his voice stiff as he glanced at his girlfriend with an apologetic look.

Meredith just stood there, totally lost.

What the hell was happening?

"Addison, what are you doing here?" Shepherd asked, turning to the redhead now planted in front of them, one hand on her hip.

"If you'd bothered to pick up my calls, you'd know why," she shot back, her presence commanding the room. Then she extended a hand to Meredith—who was still clueless but already sensing something awful—and said, "Hi, I'm Addison Shepherd."

"Shepherd?"

Meredith nearly lost it.

Same last name as her boyfriend, but this woman sure didn't look like his sister.

"So, you're my husband's little side piece?" Addison added, her tone smooth and generous, shattering Meredith's last shred of delusion.

"I'm the other woman..."

That thought echoed in Meredith's head like a broken record.

She'd risked being ostracized, taken Bailey's punishment head-on, and boldly declared her true love with the boss's boss, Dr. Shepherd.

And now? She was just some naive mistress.

Addison's mocking stare was the final straw. Meredith turned and bolted.

"Meredith!"

Shepherd reached for her, but she yanked her arm away, her glare full of loathing. It stopped him cold.

"Adam!"

Spotting Adam—who'd had his fill of the soap opera and was about to slip away—Shepherd called out, "Keep an eye on Meredith for me."

Adam sighed inwardly but nodded. Off he went after her.

Shepherd dropping the formal "Duncan" for a straight-up "Adam" wasn't a request—it was an order.

Adam when there's a favor, Duncan when there's not.

Shepherd was nothing if not practical.

Sure, Adam could've said no to this personal mess.

But it was just one night of babysitting, making sure Meredith didn't do anything stupid in her emotional spiral. Whether as her friend or to score points with an attending physician, Adam wasn't about to turn it down.

Across from the medical center.

Joe's Bar.

Adam saw Meredith charge inside and exhaled in relief.

Drowning her sorrows in booze? Classic Meredith.

He followed her in and watched as she plopped down at the bar, slammed back a whiskey in one gulp, and flipped the glass upside down with a loud thwack.

Joe, the bartender and owner, refilled it without a word.

Thwack!

Thwack!

Thwack!

Three shots down in a row before she finally slowed down.

Adam winced. This drinking pace was scary.

Especially since Meredith had a legendary knack for "100% drunk and dropping pants."

Once she got wasted and started acting out, a guy like Adam was in serious danger.

And even if he held firm and said no, she'd probably just turn her sights on some other dude.

Watching someone else unwittingly gift Shepherd a green hat?

As for that favor from Shepherd—uh, yeah, that could get complicated.

Adam started sifting through his mental database of Dr. Shepherd intel, seriously weighing the odds of how this night might play out.

Chapter 380: A Perfect Day Joe's Bar.

"Such a shame."

Adam tapped into his memory database, ran a serious analysis, and concluded that Dr. Shepard probably didn't have a cuckold fetish. With a sigh, he pulled out his phone, ready to make a call.

In a situation like this, it was safer to call Christina, Liz, or one of the others.

Bang!

The bar door swung open.

Speak of the devil, and they shall appear!

George stormed in with a dark look on his face, followed by Christina, her expression blank as a board.

Adam perked up, pocketed his phone, waved at them, and slid into the seat next to Meredith.

"Gimme a beer!"

George plopped down, barked his order, and as soon as the bottle hit his hand, he started chugging.

"How about a game?" he suggested. "Let's see who's the unluckiest."

Meredith's eyes gleamed with a mix of haze and madness. "I'll win. I always win!"

"You don't wanna play this with me," Christina said, her face still deadpan, like some untouchable master issuing a warning.

"Let's make it the four of us—whoever loses picks up the tab!" George shot Adam a sideways glance and shouted.

"I'm in!"

"I'm in!"

Meredith and Christina turned to Adam in unison, chiming their agreement.

"Alright, I'm in too," Adam said with a shrug.

It was obvious they'd been stewing over his recent "look at me" antics, and with each of them clearly dealing with their own crap, tonight was going to cost him some cash.

But Adam didn't mind. It was just a few drinks.

Go ahead and try to drink me broke, he thought.

"Joe, you heard 'em!" Meredith laughed loudly. "When the time comes, bring out the good stuff—make him regret it!"

"I heard ya," Joe said, glancing at Adam. Seeing Adam nod, he chuckled in agreement.

But Joe wasn't the type to overdo it. He'd been running this bar for over a decade, building a reputation and a business—he wasn't about to fleece Adam like some sucker. The drinks he brought out later were just a step up, nothing outrageous.

"I'll go first!"

Meredith slammed back another drink, then turned to the group. "Derek's married."

"Pfft!"

George, mid-sip, spewed beer out of his mouth and nose.

"What?!" he sputtered, wiping himself off, wide-eyed.

But amid the shock, Adam caught a fleeting glint of glee in George's eyes. Compared to the frustration of pissing off a top-tier anesthesiologist—or maybe some other doctor—earlier today, this juicy tidbit about his goddess was a jackpot. Meredith had been stabbed in the back, her defenses down. It was prime time for a backup guy like him to step up and make his move.

"Told you I'd win," Meredith said, giggling with a drunken smirk.

"You didn't," Christina replied, unfazed, sipping her drink with the coolness of a seasoned pro.

"Didn't you hear me?" Meredith snapped, annoyed. "I said that stupid, cheating jerk is married. Nothing you say can top that—I'm the biggest loser here!"

"I'm pregnant," Christina said flatly, taking another sip.

"..."

Meredith was instantly speechless.

"Burke's?" Adam cut in.

"Not yours," Christina shot him a look.

"How did you guys even..." Meredith, momentarily forgetting her own mistress status, stammered in shock. "You're both doctors—didn't you use protection?"

"The first time was spontaneous. Who's got time to dig around for a condom in a moment like that?" Christina grumbled. "Not everyone's like Adam's gimpy friend, carrying a whole string of them in his pocket—and even then, he doesn't always use 'em, or he wouldn't have caught that STD."

She left out the part where it all started: assisting Dr. Burke in surgery, blown away by his skill, then tracking him down afterward, cornering him in the on-call room, and locking the door behind her.

"..."

Adam's lip twitched.

Anyone unfamiliar got labeled as "Adam's gimpy friend"—Barney. With Barney's wild reputation, he was always the talk of the town, dragging Adam's own image down with him.

"So after that, you used protection?" Meredith pressed.

"Of course," Christina said, downing another gulp, clearly irritated.

"One shot, one kill," Adam mused.

"You planning to keep it?" Meredith asked, shooting Adam a glare before turning to Christina with concern.

"Do I even need to answer that?" Adam interjected. "Look at how she's pounding those drinks—she's not keeping it. Wednesday's the day, right? That's the big thing we've all been guessing about."

"Ohhh," George said, the pieces clicking. "No wonder you asked me to cover your shift."

"Christina, are you sure?" Meredith urged. "Maybe think it over?"

"What, you gonna pull a 'let's talk it out' like my appointment doc?" Christina chugged more beer and sneered. "Raise it myself or give it away? Either way, I'd have to carry it for nine months first! I'm a surgical intern! I'm aiming to be a badass surgeon like your mom. Where am I supposed to find the time for that? What would you do?"

Meredith froze.

She'd become a doctor partly to spite her mom, who didn't think she could hack it as a top surgeon, and partly because, deep down, she idolized her mom's legendary status in the field.

Being a decent surgeon was hard enough. Adding a kid to the mix? Impossible.

Her silence said it all.

"See?" Christina took another swig and smirked coldly. "I never hesitated for a second."

"Have you checked it out yet?" Adam asked. "What if it's ectopic?"

Christina's face shifted.

An ectopic pregnancy was no joke—ruptured tubes, massive bleeding, maybe even losing a fallopian tube. Worst case, it could kill you.

"I'm fine! Surgery's the day after tomorrow. Then it's back to normal," she insisted, raising her glass again, but Adam snatched it away.

"What the hell?"

"Back to the hospital. Get an ultrasound," Adam said, yanking the drink from her hand. "If I remember right, you smoke too, don't you? That already ups your odds of ectopic, and you're basically living at the hospital 24/7. I'm worried you won't make it to Wednesday."

"I'm not going to the hospital," Christina protested.

She'd booked her procedure at a different place to keep it from her colleagues.

"Then we'll go somewhere else," Adam said, turning to the others. "Meredith, George, what are you waiting for? Grab her—let's go!"

"Oh—oh!"

"Christina, listen to Adam!"

George and Meredith snapped out of it, each taking an arm and hauling Christina toward the door.

"Joe, put it on my tab," Adam called, tilting his chin.

"No problem," Joe replied with a grin.

Even Alex could run a tab here—Adam was a sure bet.

Adam felt great.

One, he might've just saved Christina from a real danger, maybe even bought her some extra years.
Two, he'd distracted Meredith enough to keep her infamous "100% drunk pants-dropping" move from happening tonight.

And on top of that, he'd pulled off two high-level surgeries today, earning favors from two big-shot doctors.

A damn near perfect day!