

## TV Show 39

Chapter 39: The Gears of Fate \*\*

New York City.

West Side.

"Excuse me, do you know where the Central Perk Café is?"

"Central Perk Café?"

"Yes, yes, do you know it?"

"Never heard of it!"

"..."

Adam's mouth twitched.

It was daytime when he arrived, and his interview at Columbia University went smoothly.

By nightfall, in high spirits, he began exploring the hub of the multiverse of American TV shows. Remembering the Central Perk Café frequented by the characters in \*Friends\*, he decided to look for it.

New York City consists of five boroughs, with Manhattan being the most prosperous. Columbia University is located there, showcasing its grandeur.

The East Side of New York is a commercial center filled with towering skyscrapers and bustling traffic. The West Side leans more towards cultural diversity, with low-rise buildings and vibrant neighborhoods beloved by young people.

If Adam remembered correctly, the characters in \*Friends\* primarily operated in the West Side, specifically in Greenwich Village, near Central Park.

However, after asking numerous people, no one seemed to know about the Central Perk Café. Perhaps it was an obscure spot, or maybe this world simply didn't have the \*Friends\* cast. It was also possible they had yet to come together.

"Sigh, what a pity."

After wandering a bit longer without finding any clues, Adam sighed in disappointment.

"Let's check out MacLaren's Pub instead."

Pulling himself together, he turned his attention to \*How I Met Your Mother\* and the pub often visited by its characters. After asking a few locals, Adam was delighted to learn there was indeed a MacLaren's Pub a few blocks away, so he set off.

Unbeknownst to him, as he turned to leave, a group of five emerged from around the corner.

Three women and two men, all in their twenties.

The man and woman leading the group were a couple, followed by three friends.

"Hey, Ross, look!"

The woman in front nudged her husband, pointing excitedly at a stunning woman walking across the street.

"Wow."

Ross glanced over and, upon noticing her striking looks, turned smugly to his friends and said, "See? That's my awesome wife. Who can compare?"

"Carol is amazing."

Ross's sister, Monica, gave a thumbs-up from the back.

"Yeah, this should've been a trap."

Another woman in the group joked, "Chandler, regret it now? Back in college, if you'd won Carol over, you'd be the one admiring pretty women with your wife."

"Isn't Chandler gay?"

Carol whispered to Ross.

"Shh."

Ross raised a finger to his lips, signaling her to keep quiet.

Carol pursed her lips, worried that Chandler might overhear and hurt his feelings.

Ross, however, was grinning from ear to ear. Back in college, both he and Chandler had been interested in Carol. Ross had secretly told Carol that Chandler was gay and had a boyfriend who also liked her. That cunning move eliminated two rivals, and Ross ultimately won Carol's hand—his proudest accomplishment.

"Haha."

Chandler laughed theatrically.

"What's so funny?"

The group, noticing his odd mood, asked in concern.

"It's Chip."

Chandler frowned. "He's planning to move out. I might never find another roommate as perfect as him."

He looked genuinely heartbroken.

"Aww..."

Monica, standing to his left, immediately hugged him and comforted, "Don't be sad. You'll find someone even better, just like me and Phoebe."

On his right, Phoebe rolled her eyes.

The group laughed and chatted as they entered a bar.

Meanwhile, Adam stepped into MacLaren's Pub and looked around, finding no familiar faces. Approaching the bar, he asked the bartender, "Excuse me, do you know Barney Stinson?"

"Nope."

"What about Ted Mosby?"

"Never heard of him."

"Lily and Marshall?"

"No idea. Sir, are you even old enough to be here?"

Disheartened, Adam left MacLaren's Pub. Although he was of age, he wasn't 22—the legal drinking age in bars. Since none of the \*How I Met Your Mother\* characters seemed to be there, there was no point in staying.

Given the flamboyance of Barney Stinson and Ted Mosby, they'd definitely be known to the bartender if they existed in this world. The fact they weren't recognized meant either they didn't exist or hadn't yet arrived on the scene.

In either case, Adam had no choice but to leave disappointed.

As he strolled along the street, a flyer was suddenly thrust into his hand. Bold letters on it read: **\*\*\*Suit Up!\*\*\***

"Heh."

Adam couldn't help but chuckle.

He sensed that the characters he sought likely did exist in this world, but since it was only 1992, they hadn't yet grown into the figures he remembered. Naturally, they wouldn't be hanging out at their future haunts.

"I'll meet them someday."

Having figured this out, Adam felt a sense of relief. He gave up on further exploration and headed back to his hotel to rest. Tomorrow, he would focus on finding a way to surpass his current intelligence plateau of 140 points.

At the same time, a young man with blond hair, scruffy facial hair, and a heavy backpack staggered down another street, looking utterly dejected. He, too, received the same flyer.

He had planned to volunteer in Nicaragua with Shannon, his one true love. But Shannon betrayed him and got involved with a man in a suit—the same man who had casually high-fived him at their coffee shop just days earlier.

At the time, he'd pitied the guy, thinking he didn't understand the beauty of true love. But reality had slapped him hard—true love was no match for a suit and stacks of cash.

Even after recording a desperate plea for Shannon to return to him, she and the man in the suit had laughed at and humiliated him.

Now, as despair consumed him, he saw the words on the flyer: **\*\*"Suit Up!"\*\***

"What's the difference between him and me?"

His conclusion: the suit.

Determined, he walked into a tailor shop, clutching the flyer.

With the sound of drums beating in the background, he cut off his ponytail, shaved his scruffy beard, buttoned his vest, tightened his belt, put on a watch, tied his tie, laced his shoes, slipped on his jacket, and adjusted his shirt cuffs.

When he stood up again, his eyes gleamed with a newfound resolve.

"Thirty years of ups and downs—don't underestimate the poor and young!"

In that moment, the gears of fate began to turn, and the boy who once dreamed of slaying dragons was now on the path to becoming one himself.