

TV Show 411

Chapter 411: Grey is Scared

Medical Center

Hospital Room

"Where's Dr. Grey?"

Mr. Harper, a man with the potential to become a renowned professor, glanced behind Adam, his faint smile fading slightly.

"She's in the operating room for a scheduled procedure," Adam explained, turning his gaze toward the psychiatrist.

The psychiatrist took the hint and stepped forward, attempting to engage Mr. Harper in conversation.

Unfortunately, his efforts were in vain.

Mr. Harper merely smiled politely and ignored him completely.

The psychiatrist shrugged and walked away.

This was a common occurrence in American hospitals.

Difficult patients were often passed around like a hot potato. Everyone tried to avoid getting too involved.

Take the case of the psychic patient Liz once encountered. Technically, he should have been under psychiatric care. But since psychics, when accurate, have an uncanny ability to read people, they make everyone—including trained psychiatrists—deeply uncomfortable.

So, the psych ward conveniently transferred him to neurosurgery under the pretense of a suspected brain tumor.

Turned out, they weren't entirely wrong—the guy really did have something wrong with his brain.

Because of the unusual nature of Mr. Harper's condition, Meredith had pulled some strings to get him prioritized for surgery.

Adam accompanied Meredith as they wheeled the sterilized and prepped Mr. Harper toward the operating room.

"Is this a desperate act?"

"No."

"Are you doing it for attention?"

"Of course not."

"I'm trying to understand, Mr. Harper. Why did you eat the heads of ten Judy dolls?"

"Because eleven would have been too many."

"..."

Meredith, still gripping the stretcher, carried on with her interrogation, completely ignoring Adam's subtle warnings.

Adam sighed.

Meredith was a surgeon, not a psychiatrist or psychologist. Digging into the twisted psychology of patients wasn't her job.

Yet, she insisted on doing it.

Adam understood why. Meredith saw herself as the ultimate embodiment of both beauty and righteousness. In her mind, people were supposed to open up to her, confess their darkest secrets, and embrace her moral perspective.

This wasn't just his speculation.

Looking back at all the cases Meredith had handled, she always did this. Whether with patients or their families, she had an uncontrollable urge to make them see the world as she did.

Most of the time, thanks to a mix of charm and sheer persistence, she succeeded. She'd often walk away smiling, satisfied with the impact she'd made.

But this time, Adam was genuinely worried for her.

Girl...

You've already caught the attention of this psycho, Mr. Harper.

The way he looks at you? Downright unsettling.

And now, you're practically throwing yourself into the fire?

Ever heard the saying, "When you stare into the abyss, the abyss stares back"?

By probing into his mind, Meredith was only making herself more interesting to him.

Sure enough, instead of lying flat on the stretcher like he was supposed to, Harper had turned to his side, watching her with that eerie, unreadable gaze.

Considering how TV dramas love putting doctors in horrifying situations...

Uh...

No way, right?

Operating Room

Dr. Bailey was already inside, waiting with George, Liz, and Cristina.

This was about to be a full-team effort.

"I think it has something to do with his mother," Liz speculated while working on the intestines. "Maybe she wanted a girl and gave him Judy dolls as a gift."

"That reminds me—I should probably warn my friend Ross," Adam quipped as he worked alongside her. "His ex-wife is a lesbian and got remarried. She and her wife are raising Ross's son, Ben. They only buy him Barbie dolls. Ross freaked out and immediately bought him a bunch of G.I. Joes."

"Found another one!" George called out before jumping into the gossip. "So? Did Ben end up preferring the G.I. Joes or the Barbies?"

Everyone turned to listen, clearly curious.

"Barbies," Adam said casually as he pulled another Judy doll head out of the intestines.

"That makes sense. Kids like pretty things," Meredith chimed in. "And when they grow up, they just go from playing with toy Barbies to chasing after real-life Barbies."

"You'd know all about that," Adam teased. "Ross actually loved Barbies as a kid. He even dressed in girls' clothes once. And in college, he had a thing for girls like you. That's why he and his best friend Chandler both secretly competed for you."

"What?!"

"Meredith dated your friend?!"

The gossip sent a wave of excitement through the room.

"Not just one friend," Adam corrected with a straight face. "Friends. Plural."

"Adam!" Meredith shot him a glare, flustered.

"You know how college is..." she trailed off awkwardly.

"Totally understandable," Liz said, coming to her rescue.

After all, everyone in the room had been to college. No explanation was necessary.

"Found another one!" Cristina announced. "Maybe his mom looked like a Judy doll, and he's a voodoo practitioner. Instead of stabbing the dolls with needles, he eats them."

"Black Judy!" Dr. Bailey exclaimed as she extracted another doll head, this one with an afro. "Before she grew out her hair, she had a full African-style cut, wore platform boots, and a leather jacket. Forceps!"

A nurse quickly handed her a fresh pair.

After pulling out Black Judy, Dr. Bailey glanced at the next one. "Model Judy! She's riding a tiny yellow scooter. You know what's weird?"

"It's not already weird enough?" Meredith muttered.

"She kind of looks like Meredith," Adam noted, immediately catching on to what Dr. Bailey meant.

"Exactly," Dr. Bailey nodded.

"Huh. She really does," the others murmured, glancing between the doll and Meredith.

Meredith felt deeply uncomfortable.

"When a man is obsessed with a woman, there's a classic romantic line: 'I want to become one with you,'" Adam remarked. "Meredith, does that still sound romantic to you now?"

"..."

Meredith's eyes flicked to the bowl of doll heads, particularly the one that resembled her.

She shivered involuntarily.

Suddenly, Adam's warnings and the way Harper had been looking at her clicked into place.

No wonder Harper didn't want to talk about it.

This wasn't just creepy.

This was terrifying. Truly, deeply terrifying.

Chapter 412: Having Parents Is Good, But Having Your Own Is Better!

Night fell.

The surgery was over.

"Adam."

Meredith called out to Adam.

"What is it?" Adam looked at her.

"Can you help me keep an eye on Mr. Harper?" Meredith gritted her teeth as she spoke.

"No problem," Adam nodded.

"Really?" Meredith was utterly shocked.

After spending over two months working together, she had a clear understanding of Adam's personality. He always made a point of keeping professional and personal matters separate, and he never agreed to such requests.

She wouldn't have asked if Mr. Harper's smile didn't send shivers down her spine. And if it weren't for the fact that her only companions at the moment were Liz, Cristina, and George—her three best friends—leaving Adam as the only real man in the group, she wouldn't have even considered making this request.

Plus, she hadn't really expected him to say yes.

But, to her surprise, Adam agreed without hesitation.

She found it hard to believe.

"Don't overthink it," Adam explained. "This is a special case. You didn't really think I was just trying to scare you before the surgery to steal your case, did you?"

"No..." Meredith was touched and quickly shook her head.

"Actually, you were right," Adam cut in. "I was trying to scare you before the surgery."

"..." Meredith felt a lump in her throat, completely speechless.

"But that was before the surgery. Or, more precisely, before I actually met Mr. Harper," Adam said seriously. "Now, it's completely different. Mr. Harper is a dangerous man. You really shouldn't be anywhere near him! This isn't a joke. If you trust me, listen to me."

Meredith shuddered. "I trust you. But what about you?"

"Danger is relative." Adam smiled. "To you, Mr. Harper is dangerous. But to me, he's harmless."

Ever since he started hunting with Juno, Karen, and Heather, he had lost all sense of fear. His other skills kept improving, but anything related to fear—like his reaction speed—remained stagnant. Sometimes, it even frustrated him.

Meredith's expression was complicated. She felt grateful toward Adam, but at the same time, she couldn't help but roll her eyes at his arrogance.

Adam ignored whatever she was thinking and took over watching Mr. Harper until his discharge.

Ring ring ring.

His phone rang.

Adam glanced at the caller ID and smirked.

"Rachel?"

"Adam! What kind of gift did you send me?! You've gone too far this time—"

Rachel's voice roared through the phone.

Adam instinctively pulled the phone away from his ear, waited a few moments, and then replied calmly, "I'm sorry. If you don't like it, I'll have someone take it back."

Beep beep.

There was a brief silence on the other end, followed by the sound of the call disconnecting.

Adam wasn't surprised at all.

Rachel's yelling had been loud, but there was no actual anger behind it. She was just putting on an act—trying to insist that she didn't like the gift.

But the truth? She definitely liked it.

Maybe even... really liked it.

Ring ring ring.

Just as he was smirking at the thought, his phone rang again.

Still Rachel.

"Rachel?"

"Adam, it's Phoebe."

The voice on the other end was Phoebe's.

"Phoebe." Adam instantly had a feeling about what was coming.

Best friends were truly mysterious creatures.

Even this was a topic they shared?

Emmm...

"Chandler, Monica, and the rest of us all miss you," Phoebe went on. "You haven't joined us for a get-together in so long..."

"Sorry, being a surgical intern is just so busy," Adam apologized. "How about tomorrow night? Does everyone have time? Let's all catch up."

Friendships took time and effort to maintain, and Adam hadn't joined his old friends in a group gathering for over two months. That was definitely pushing it.

Time was a strange thing—if you really wanted to make time for something, you always could.

"Yes, yes!" Phoebe said excitedly.

"Then it's settled. We'll meet at Monica's apartment, and I'll take care of dinner," Adam said with a smile.

"Awesome!" Phoebe clapped her hands. "Oh, by the way, Adam, my birthday is on February 16th."

"..." Adam's lips twitched.

It was only September.

Her last birthday had been over seven months ago. Her next one was still more than four months away.

What was she trying to say?

"I don't mean anything by it," Phoebe giggled. "I just think you treat Rachel really well. But we're all friends, right? You shouldn't play favorites. Whatever you do for her, you should do for me too. That's fair, isn't it?"

"Alright, I get it," Adam said, half amused, half exasperated.

"I knew you were the best, Adam!" Phoebe cheered.

After hanging up, Adam shook his head.

He wasn't sure what real-life American friend groups were like, but in sitcom universes, things could get really weird.

Friends casually asking each other for an Iron Man suit—who could imagine?

But once the initial shock passed, Adam understood.

Could Phoebe afford a high-end Iron Man suit?

Well... no, not really.

And to be fair, there were all kinds of models—MK1, MK2, MK3, Hulkbuster, even Whiplash's knockoff version, and Justin Hammer's cheap rip-offs.

They were all called Iron Man suits, but the combat effectiveness? Worlds apart.

Adam had his assistant order from the store on 8th Avenue—the one personally endorsed by Barney Stinson.

Forget looks and functionality (since Adam had no idea how good it actually was), just in terms of price—

It was definitely top-tier.

It was completely understandable that someone like Phoebe would want one after seeing it.

"At least Monica hasn't jumped in on this..." Adam muttered to himself.

Thirty minutes later—

Ring ring ring.

His phone rang again.

Adam looked at the screen, sighed, and picked up.

Monica's voice, deliberately lowered, mixed with the sound of running water. After some roundabout conversation, it turned out—

She wanted the same thing as Phoebe.

"Chandler isn't working out in the mornings anymore?" Adam frowned. "Didn't I remind you to keep him consistent?"

"No, no," Monica denied. "We've been keeping up with morning workouts."

"Then why?" Adam asked, puzzled.

"Well..." Monica hesitated for a while.

Eventually, Adam got the message.

In short: Having parents is good, but having your own is better!

It made sense.

If Monica didn't have this kind of curiosity, she wouldn't have come up with the "seven zones of pleasure" theory...

No need to overthink it!

Adam agreed and had his assistant order the upgraded Iron Patriot model as an early birthday gift for them.

Just as he was shaking his head in disbelief, a commotion erupted nearby. He quickly ran toward the noise—only to be shocked.

He found Meredith hiding, peeking out from behind a corner, trembling as if something terrifying was after her...

Chapter 413: "Now That You Mention It, I'm Not Sleepy Anymore"

Medical Center.

Seeing Meredith trembling and hiding there, peeking out, Adam's first thought was that Mr. Harper had lost it.

But then he heard a roar.

"Don't touch me!"

"You incompetent quacks!"

"How many times have I told you not to bother me while I'm working?!"

Adam relaxed a little.

It was a woman's voice—and not a high-pitched, cutesy one either.

So it probably wasn't Mr. Harper going nuts.

Hmm...

Then again, he thought about the future—some eight-foot-tall dude sitting in an internet café, switching between a squeaky little-girl voice to climb the ranks with his buddies and a soft, gentle tone to chat with his girlfriend. Or that sleazy troll from *The Big Bang Theory*—the one who ruined Howard and Bernadette's relationship by mercilessly clicking away under the Soul Bridge in *World of Warcraft*. In real

life, that guy turned out to be just a gross old fat dude from Caltech's equipment department, where Howard worked.

So yeah, without seeing someone face-to-face, you can never be sure.

To confirm, Adam quickly rounded the corner and took a look.

There was a middle-aged woman sitting on a gurney, yelling her head off and thrashing around.

Cristina, Izzie, George, and the others nearby looked like they'd just seen a ghost.

"That's Dr. Ellis Grey!"

"Didn't she go to the Mayo Clinic?"

"I heard she was with the United Nations."

"Someone said she's been traveling the world, gathering material for a groundbreaking medical book."

"How did she end up like this?"

"Maybe she's lost it. For someone as proud as her, it's not shocking she'd fall this far."

"Yeah, genius and madness are just a hair's breadth apart, right?"

"Poor Dr. Meredith Grey, though. That's Alzheimer's."

"..."

All sorts of hushed chatter reached Adam's ears.

He got the picture right away.

This was Meredith's mom—the idol of Cristina and Izzie, a legendary female doctor who'd pioneered a slew of famous surgical techniques and authored multiple textbooks.

Ellis Grey!

The Mayo Clinic's widely regarded as the top medical center in the U.S.

The UN's World Health Organization? A globally renowned hub.

Only the biggest names in medicine end up at places like those.

And Ellis Grey? She'd been invited to both—repeatedly, with open arms.

That alone spoke volumes about her status in the global medical community.

But now, with all her achievements, she'd been struck by Alzheimer's—a near-terminal disease—leaving her unable to remember who she was, where she was, or what she was doing.

No wonder Meredith was trembling and hiding, too shaken to step forward.

Back in the day, people saw Meredith as "the daughter of the legendary Grey." It was mostly envy or jealousy.

She'd always say—or at least hint—that she didn't want to be the daughter of a legend.

But deep down, she was proud of it.

That sense of identity had been carved into her bones after med school.

Not every med student has to buy textbooks written by their own mom, learn intricate techniques their mom invented, or hear classmates and professors constantly rave about how amazing their mom is.

And now? She was just a pitiful figure others felt sorry for.

The more dazzling her mom's past, the sharper the contrast Meredith felt now.

Adam shook his head and turned to leave.

He still had three patients to check on—no time to deal with this mess.

An hour later.

After rounding on his three patients, Adam was about to head to the ER when George—looking like a headless chicken—stopped him.

"Adam, help me out, man."

George's face was a mix of desperation and despair. "I can't handle Dr. Grey."

"Which Dr. Grey?" Adam asked, already knowing George had, as usual, gotten himself tangled in some drama. He couldn't resist a little jab.

"Ellis Grey—Meredith's mom," George clarified. "She's got Alzheimer's, and now she's having intermittent cramps, pain, and diarrhea. Dr. Bailey told me to examine her, but she thinks I'm her

husband. She's treating me like we're playing some doctor dress-up game. She won't let me check her—she keeps telling me to stay out of her way because she's 'working.'"

"Well, damn, George O'Malley!" Adam blinked, his expression turning sly. "I've gotta hand it to you. In novels, you've got fiancées cheating, fiancés mourning for a decade before marrying the daughter—that's already wild enough. But your seamless, no-delay move here? That's next-level, man. Makes the other stuff look amateur."

"What are you even talking about?!" George groaned, exasperated. "She's just confused. I apparently look a little like her ex-husband."

"You look like Meredith's dad?" Adam nearly burst out laughing. "Who told you that? Meredith?"

"No," George said, his face crumpling again. "The chief did. He's old friends with Meredith's mom."

"Oh, good," Adam said, nodding.

"What's good?" George asked, confused.

"Good that it's the chief saying it," Adam replied, barely holding back a grin. "If Meredith had thought you looked like her dad from the start, that time she broke down crying with you would've had a whole lot more layers to unpack."

"..." George's head started throbbing. He was on the verge of tears. "Are you gonna help me or not?"

Adam eased off the teasing—he didn't want to push George over the edge.

Time to focus.

He'd been about to say no.

He had plenty on his plate already.

Plus, he liked to keep work and personal stuff separate—unless it was absolutely necessary, he wouldn't mix the two.

And honestly, if George couldn't handle something this small, he'd be a total lost cause.

But then something George said clicked, and Adam's mind shifted. "Wait, you said she keeps talking about work? What stage is her Alzheimer's at? Stage two, right? How long has she been in stage two?"

With Alzheimer's, by stage three, people can't take care of themselves anymore. No way someone that far gone would be as lively as Ellis Grey was acting now.

"Second year!" George answered instantly, having seen her chart.

"Alright! I'll come with you to check it out," Adam said, his eyes lighting up.

Stage two Alzheimer's meant memory loss, sure, but not as severe as stage three.

And for a legend like Ellis Grey, surgery was practically muscle memory.

Hadn't she been yelling about "you incompetent quacks" just a minute ago?

There's no official ranking for doctors, but in Adam's mind, for cardiothoracic surgery, it went something like: regular attending, mildly notable Leonard, renowned Burke, big-hospital surgical chief Richard, and then the legendary Ellis Grey.

Yup—Ellis Grey was a cardiothoracic surgeon.

If Adam's hunch was right, and Ellis had held onto her medical knowledge...

Getting to talk face-to-face with a cardiothoracic legend like her? That'd be a rare treat—practically a once-in-a-lifetime thrill.

The thought hit him, and suddenly, Adam was wide awake.

Chapter 414: Adam in the Eyes of a Legendary Doctor

The Hospital Room

"Dr. Grey?"

George pushed the door open and called out.

"Damn it, Zack! I'm working here!"

Alice Grey was "hard at work" when she heard the noise and immediately snapped, "I don't have time to deal with you right now. If you want to watch cartoons, go do it yourself!"

George instantly turned to Adam with a pitiful look.

"Zack, you heard Dr. Grey. Go watch your cartoons," Adam said with a grin. Then he turned to her. "Dr. Grey, I'm Adam Duncan, MD. It's an honor to meet you. You're an idol to all of us doctors."

"You familiar with the Grey Endoscopic Procedure?" Alice Grey perked up at this. She "set her work aside" and sized Adam up with a sharp gaze.

"Of course," Adam replied, still smiling. "I've studied all the Grey techniques you pioneered. I've got to say, those innovations are a godsend for both doctors and patients."

"Cut the obvious flattery," Alice interrupted, her face stern as she switched into full-on mentor interrogation mode.

She'd heard enough rainbow-colored praise in her career. Even now, with Alzheimer's clouding her mind, her subconscious filtered it out, zeroing in on medicine instead.

Adam's heart skipped a beat with excitement as he answered her barrage of questions quickly and precisely. When it came to theory, he wasn't afraid of anyone.

The two went back and forth, question after answer, no hesitation. George, standing off to the side, was completely dumbfounded.

"Shameless!" George muttered. He saw right through Adam's "evil plan." Adam wasn't here to help him—he was using Alice Grey as a personal tutor to soak up knowledge. Worse, he wasn't even including George in the fun.

Tough luck for George, though. Alice asked fast, and Adam answered just as quickly. At first, George could kind of keep up, but as the topics got deeper and more obscure, his brain checked out. It took him a while to realize what was happening: he'd been silently dissed.

Compared to Alice Grey and Adam, he really did feel like he should take after Alice's ex-husband Zack and go watch cartoons. It was a double whammy to his IQ and his pride.

And then there was the baggage—Zack and Alice's messy past casting a dark shadow over his own future with Meredith. Man, did it sting!

"Adam, we're here to—" George started, his growing frustration spilling over onto his face.

"Shut it, Zack!" Alice barked at him.

"Ahem." Adam noticed George's face darken and realized he might've gone too far. He coughed lightly. "Dr. Grey, we need to do a quick check-up on you first. After that, I'd love to pick your brain some more. Sound good?"

"Just promoted to attending?" Alice shifted her annoyed glare from George back to Adam, her eyes glinting with a knowing tease. "Doing a little exam yourself?"

"What?!" George's jaw dropped. "You're saying he's an attending?"

"Isn't he?" Alice said with certainty. "His theory's top-notch—on par with any big-name doctor. But his grasp of surgical details? Total rookie attending vibes. What else could he be if not newly promoted?"

"..." George didn't even know how to respond. That wasn't the point!

He knew Adam was good. Everyone knew Adam was good. But not this good. Newly promoted attending? Theoretical skills to rival any famous doctor? She was really laying it on thick.

Then it hit him—Alzheimer's comes with hallucinations. Right. She wasn't the legendary doctor right now; she was just a patient. Why trust a patient's word? After all, in her eyes, George was still her husband.

"Don't get discouraged," Alice said, mistaking Adam's silence for something else. "You're so young and already an attending. That's better than I was at your age. Keep pushing like this, and your achievements won't fall short of mine."

"I'll keep at it," Adam said, grinning wide.

He was sure of it now—Alice Grey was a goldmine. Even with Alzheimer's messing with her memory, making her forget her ex-husband and daughter, she could still rattle off complex medical theories and surgical details like it was nothing.

No wonder Meredith didn't get along with her, and her ex-husband had walked away. Like all the great doctors obsessed with their craft, she probably loved her family too—but medicine? That was her true love, etched into her bones, stamped on her soul.

And honestly, without that kind of passion, she wouldn't have created so many medical legends.

"Good. Let's not waste time—start the exam," Alice said, pleased with Adam's attitude. She turned around, undoing the back of her gown to let him check her.

"Deep breath," Adam said, grabbing a stethoscope and getting to work.

Alice cooperated fully, while George watched, his mouth twitching. Why did she yell, curse, and snap at him, but treat Adam like this? The favoritism was unreal!

"No wonder Zack cheated with one of his students," George grumbled to himself. "With a temper like yours, I wouldn't stick around either."

Alice's fiery outburst earlier had let slip that juicy bit of gossip, and George had initially sided with her. But now, seeing the stark contrast with how she treated Adam, he couldn't help but feel for Zack. That guy must've had it rough too.

"How's it looking?" Alice asked.

"Probably diverticulitis," Adam said straight-up, smiling. "But we'll need a scan to confirm."

"Diverticulitis, huh. Guess I'm really getting old," Alice said, shaking her head.

Diverticula were a classic sign of aging. The older you got, the more likely they were to show up. Alice wasn't even that old—barely in her sixties. Richard, a surgical chief from her intern days, had vision issues, got surgery, and still rushed back to the hospital battlefield. Sixty wasn't old at all.

This had to be like her Alzheimer's—another condition that usually hit people over seventy, often called "old age dementia." Her body must be aging faster than most.

"Let's go get that X-ray," Alice directed. "The sooner we finish, the sooner we can operate."

"Sure thing," Adam said, helping her out of bed and nodding at George to grab the wheelchair.

"Damn it, Zack, hurry up! Stop wasting time!" Alice snapped the second George hesitated. "Can't even handle something this simple? What can I count on you for? Get out! Get out of my house! Get out of

my sight! Go mess around with that little tramp of a student and your pathetic research budget! My work matters most! I'm the one paying for this house! I'm the one supporting Meredith! I'm the one keeping you and your precious lifestyle afloat! Why don't you just leave and let me handle this myself?!"

Veins popped on Alice's forehead. If Adam weren't holding her back, she'd have lunged at George. Clearly, even with her medical memory intact, the slightest trigger could unleash some nasty Alzheimer's symptoms.

George froze, his chubby face crumpled like he was about to cry. Who had he pissed off to deserve this?

Chapter 415: "You'd Better Be Thorough!"

Ward.

"Zac, you head out for a sec."

Adam held Ellis Grey, giving George a quick wink as he spoke.

George sighed, helpless, and shuffled out.

With the chaos defused, Adam's targeted soothing worked like a charm. In no time, Ellis Grey calmed down, slipping back into the sharp, composed legendary doctor she once was.

After escorting her for an X-ray, Adam's brow furrowed.

"So, what's the deal?" George popped up again.

Adam wasn't surprised.

Ellis Grey was, after all, assigned to George by Dr. Bailey.

Not to mention, she was his goddess Meredith's mom.

No matter how harshly she'd chewed him out earlier, he had to suck it up.

He couldn't slack on caring for her—not even a little.

"It's definitely diverticulitis," Adam said, frowning. "That's not a big deal, but there's an abnormal mass near her liver."

"No way!" George gasped. "Liver cancer?"

Then he started aching for his goddess. "Poor Meredith. Isn't it bad enough her mom's got Alzheimer's? Now she's got to fight cancer too?"

"It's not confirmed as liver cancer yet," Adam cut in. "It's just an abnormal mass. Could be a benign tumor. We'll need a biopsy to know for sure."

"I'll go tell the chief," George said. "He told me to take good care of her."

"Then I'll find Meredith," Adam nodded. "We need her authorization for the biopsy."

With Alzheimer's, Ellis Grey no longer had the capacity to make her own decisions.

Whether she got surgery was entirely up to her daughter, Meredith.

It was a grim reality.

At this point, you've lost your free will.

Real freedom—not the overhyped, all-encompassing kind people brag about.

"I'll go talk to Meredith," George said quickly, hesitating.

He could already picture how heartbroken his goddess would be hearing this. He wanted to be the one by her side, comforting her.

"Fine by me," Adam shrugged. "I'll go tell the chief then—get him to set up the OR and schedule the surgery ASAP."

"Got it." George nodded, his face heavy as he went off to find Meredith.

Surgical Chief's Office.

"Dr. Duncan, what's up?"

Chief of Surgery Richard, who'd barely been home a few days before rushing back to work, looked up at Adam with mild surprise.

"Chief, it's about Ellis Grey."

Adam laid out the situation.

Chief Richard's expression darkened, and he let out a small sigh.

"Alright. I'll do the surgery myself."

"Chief, your condition—" Adam blinked, startled. "I can handle this kind of procedure."

"I'm fine," Chief Richard said, standing up. "No time for paperwork. I'll get a verbal okay from Shepherd first."

"Dr. Shepherd won't go for it," Adam warned. "Your brain surgery was just a week ago. You're not cleared to operate."

"I can do it!" Chief Richard shot Adam a glare. "I'm the Chief of Surgery! I call the shots!"

"Okay," Adam backed off.

A biopsy was a minor procedure—any resident could handle it.

And with the chief pulling rank like that, Adam wasn't about to argue.

"She's Ellis Grey—my good friend," Chief Richard added, softening his tone after realizing he'd come off harsh. "I have to give it everything I've got. I can't risk any slip-ups. I know my body, and you all know my skills."

"True," Adam nodded.

To be the surgical chief at one of the top medical centers in the U.S.—in the economic and cultural hub of the Big Apple, no less—Richard's medical prowess was undeniable.

He was the real star of the hospital.

"Come with me," Chief Richard said, pleased with Adam's response, and headed out.

Adam hurried after him.

Chief Richard went to Dr. Shepherd for verbal approval.

Too bad Shepherd was still pissed at him and flat-out ignored his requests—and threats.

No matter how big a deal you are, right now, you're just my patient.

If I say no, it's a no.

You're the one who handed the interim chief gig to Burke, then invited my nightmare of an ex-wife here—blowing up my life before I could even explain to my girlfriend, Meredith. Now everything's a mess.

"Let's find Burke," Chief Richard stormed off, his face dark.

"Chief, George went to get Meredith's authorization," Adam piped up. "No one's with Dr. Grey right now. Should I head back and help with her pre-op prep?"

He'd already seen the chief get shut down once.

If Burke shot him down too, Richard might take it out on him.

No doubt about it!

Adam hadn't done anything wrong, but that's just how the world works.

"Fine," Chief Richard thought it over and nodded.

After Shepherd's pushback, he wasn't as cocksure anymore.

Sure, he was the chief, but big-name surgeons like Shepherd and Burke could easily overrule him in public if they had a solid reason.

Outside the Ward.

"How bad is it?" Meredith and George peeked at Ellis Grey from a distance.

"What's her bilirubin level?" she asked.

"Four," George replied, giving her a sympathetic look. "Not great, but not terrible either. Adam's right—it might just be a benign tumor. No jaundice yet, at least."

Jaundice would've meant serious liver trouble.

"I know," Meredith mumbled, distracted.

"What are you two doing out here?" Adam walked up. "Meredith, have you signed the authorization?"

"Done," George said, waving the consent form.

"Alright. The chief's getting Burke to do the diverticulitis surgery and handle the biopsy at the same time," Adam reassured them. "You know Burke's skill. It'll be fine."

Then he turned to George. "George, pre-op for Dr. Grey—you going, or should I?"

"..." George's face darkened.

He wanted to.

But with Ellis Grey's attitude toward him, he'd be useless.

"You go," George muttered, still sulking.

"Hey! You'd better be thorough!" Adam shot back, unimpressed. "Who's got the sour face now? You're the one who begged me to help—not like I stole your surgery! It hasn't even started. You can still take it, and I won't say a word."

"George, Adam's just trying to help," Meredith said, shifting her gaze from her mom to them. She stepped in to mediate.

She'd just accepted Adam's offer, and honestly, she felt better with him handling her mom than George. Naturally, she took Adam's side.

"I know. Sorry," George said, his chubby face flushing red, then white, his eyes brimming with frustration.

Life was hard for him.

Chapter 416: A Perfect Duet

The Medical Center

With Meredith's authorization in hand, Adam started helping Alice Grey with her pre-surgery prep.

Adam was a pro at this—he had the skills and the charm to back it up. Playing himself naturally, he got Alice Grey to cooperate like it was no big deal.

Since Surgical Chief Richard couldn't operate himself, he called in Dr. Burke, the guy he trusted most.

The surgery itself? Nothing much to say. After a rush biopsy on the tissue sample, it turned out to be a benign tumor. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief—Adam most of all.

"Meredith, want to grab dinner tonight to celebrate?"

Once the good news spread to everyone who needed to hear it, Adam tracked down Meredith and tossed out the invite with a grin.

The second he said it, Liz, Cristina, George, and Meredith all whipped their heads around to stare at him, their eyes dripping with suspicion.

"What's up?" Adam asked, shrugging.

"Something's off with you," Cristina said, her voice low and teasing.

"Super off," Liz chimed in with a nod.

"Count me in!" George blurted out, antsy.

"Okay, spill it. What's your angle?" Meredith cut through the noise, glaring at him. "This about my mom, isn't it?"

"..." Adam's mouth twitched.

What kind of way is that to put it? he thought. It sounded so awkward—like he was some creep rounding up favors or something.

"Can't it just be a normal hangout between friends? You know, celebrating your mom's health and everything going smoothly?"

"Psh!" Liz, Cristina, and George scoffed in unison.

"That's it? You think we're buying that?" Cristina smirked.

"I've got it!" George shouted, pointing at Adam. "You're trying to keep learning from her!"

"Learning from her?" Cristina's sharp little eyes lit up with interest.

George spilled the whole story—how Alice Grey had sized Adam up, plus her glowing review of him. "She seriously said that, and you guys actually believe her?"

Cristina, Liz, and Meredith went quiet, their gazes flickering over Adam uncertainly.

"You're not seriously buying this, are you?" George asked, feeling a bit awkward when no one backed him up. His eyes darted between the three women, and after a few rounds of silence, it clicked. He gasped.

"If it were you, I wouldn't believe it," Cristina said, throwing him a side-eye.

"Yeah, if it were anyone else, I'd call BS," Liz added with a sigh.

"Remember that nurse with pancreatic cancer?" Meredith said softly. "She was my mom's surgical nurse for eighteen years. My mom's got Alzheimer's—doesn't even remember me, her own daughter. But when that nurse came up, Mom lit up instantly, laughing, asking if she was still scrubbing in, calling her the best surgical nurse ever."

"Totally makes sense," Cristina said matter-of-factly. "How much time did you spend with her compared to that nurse?"

Meredith froze. She'd never thought about it like that.

Now that she did, it hit her—her mom barely took her anywhere as a kid. For decades, Alice Grey practically lived in the OR. Twenty-seven years as her daughter, and Meredith's time with her probably didn't even add up to a fraction of the eighteen years that nurse clocked. Her mom forgetting her but remembering the nurse? It tracked.

"So, here's the thing," Adam said, grinning. "I've got an idea. How about we rent an office for Dr. Grey here at the hospital? Keep her in an environment she knows like the back of her hand. Pair that with the latest meds to boost brain metabolism and cognition, and we could really slow down her Alzheimer's. Sure, there's no cure yet, but with the right combo, we can delay it big-time."

"And then you can keep picking her brain!" Liz rolled her eyes. "Don't you think that's a little too self-serving?"

"It's a win-win-win-win—and no, I'm not winning four times!" Adam shot back. "It's good for Dr. Grey, good for Meredith, good for me, and good for you guys too! A legendary doctor's knowledge and experience are priceless. Letting it go to waste would be a shame—not just for medicine, but for all of humanity!"

"I say we try it," Cristina said, predictably the first to jump on board. "Adam's willing to shell out his own cash to help Meredith's mom ease her Alzheimer's, improve her quality of life down the road, and pass down some medical legacy while he's at it. What's that? Pure, selfless vibes! Why would we stop him?"

"No way," Meredith said, shaking her head, conflicted. "I don't want to see her. I'm scared of seeing her..."

"That's it?" Adam cut in. "I can set her office up far from where we hang out and get some seasoned nurses to keep an eye on her so she doesn't mess with hospital ops. If you don't want to see her, I'll make sure you don't. How's that?"

"Meredith," Cristina jumped in without missing a beat, tag-teaming like a pro. "Alzheimer's can be managed. Your mom's sharpest memories are from her doctor days. Put her in that setting, recreate those scenes, reinforce those memories—it's good for her. Who knows? She might even remember you one day."

"And even if she doesn't," Adam added, "letting her live in her glory days beats leaving her to rot alone in some nursing home by a hundred miles, right?"

"If it were me, I'd pick this in a heartbeat," Cristina said, nodding.

"Meredith," Adam said earnestly, "she's your mom. Back then, she didn't have time for you. Now, I'm willing to pull every string to create the perfect setup so you can spend time with her, let her be there for you, help you, watch you grow, and be proud of you. This is a chance to start over with her—do you really want to throw it away just because it feels weird at first?"

"Think straight, Meredith. This is a once-in-a-lifetime shot to fix some regrets!" Cristina piped up. "Plus, with her condition, keeping her in the hospital is way better than a nursing home. If something goes wrong, we can handle it on the spot. A nursing home? Good luck with that. Time's life. You really want to risk the delay?"

"Meredith..."

"Meredith..."

"Meredith..."

Adam finished, and Cristina jumped in seamlessly. Cristina wrapped up, and Adam picked right back up. It was a perfectly synced duet—George and Liz were floored.

Meredith's face twisted in indecision, then she clutched her head, and finally she couldn't take it anymore. "Fine, stop! I'll agree, okay? Just stop!"

"Smart move!" Cristina grinned.

"It's gonna be a beautiful fresh start," Adam said, his smile genuine. "Meredith, trust me, you won't regret this. Oh, and I hear you've got a stash of your mom's old surgery tapes at home. Bring 'em over sometime—replaying those could help her condition."

"Great idea!" Cristina chimed in.

Meredith, George, and Liz: "..."

Chapter 417: Money Rains Down Like Flowers

Medical Center

"It's me. Tomorrow, you go..."

Amid the stunned silence of Meredith and the other two, Adam immediately grabbed his phone and dialed Assistant No. 3.

"By the way, Meredith, which nursing home is Dr. Gray at again?"

Adam asked, holding the phone in one hand while looking at her expectantly.

What choice did Meredith have? She could only reluctantly give him the name and address of the nursing home.

"Did you hear me? Go there and recruit the healthcare workers who cared for Dr. Alice Gray."

Ignoring Meredith's inner turmoil—and with Christina giving him a silent thumbs-up—Adam nonchalantly laid out his orders to Assistant No. 3.

"Alright, find me six—preferably three men and three women so they can work in pairs. They need to be ready to start tomorrow. And yes, compensation isn't an issue."

Though Meredith felt completely overwhelmed by the back-and-forth between Adam and Christina, she ended up agreeing. When it comes to matters like these, it's best to strike while the iron's hot and settle things decisively. If Meredith used to have a 60% chance of backing out afterward, Adam's dazzling shower of cash has now crushed that chance to less than 1%.

George and Liz couldn't help but grimace.

With one swift move, Adam ensured that six healthcare workers would be at his beck and call around the clock.

To poach them quickly, money's no object, right?

But seriously—how much money does that take?

The compensation here is leagues above what a typical nursing home worker earns while juggling care for several, sometimes even a dozen, seniors.

With money, you really can do anything.

"Also, order a gourmet meal and have it delivered to this address—attention: Monica Geller. And make it fast."

After securing the healthcare staff for Dr. Gray, Adam remembered one more thing.

After hanging up, he turned to Christina and said,

"I was originally planning to have dinner with friends tomorrow night, but now with Dr. Gray's situation, it looks like I won't get that chance—for tomorrow night or for a long while after. So let's move it up to tonight. Christina, cover for Dr. Gray until early morning; after your dinner, I'll come back and take over. Sound good?"

"Don't worry," she replied with a nod.

Unlike the unmotivated slackers George and Liz, Christina and Adam were completely on the same page. After all, this was the legendary Dr. Alice Gray—a textbook example of excellence. Getting a chance to learn from her is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity; it's like living the dream straight out of a novel. Adam had already spent a fortune and worked tirelessly to set this up. Now, as long as Christina just puts in a little effort—even if it means sacrificing her free time every night—she was more than willing.

"I'll go talk to the director about renting an office space at the hospital," Adam said.

Looking at Meredith, he smiled, "Meredith, get home tonight and organize Dr. Gray's surgical footage, notes, and all those valuable records. See you tomorrow."

Then, shooting Christina a look that said "keep holding the fort," he headed off to see Chief of Surgery Richard.

Although showering money like confetti is Mr. No-Trace's signature move, this tactic was a bit too flashy—leaving too many traces. Even if Meredith were metaphorically pinned down by these glittering financial ultimatums, there'd still be a slim 1% chance she could break free if she mustered the courage. Christina, however, was a different story. As Meredith's best friend—and the kind who always has her back, even tossing out sayings like, "If you can't fight it, why not just lie down and enjoy it?"—she left no room for resistance.

Chief of Surgery's Office

Adam laid out his plan.

To his surprise, Chief of Surgery Richard didn't immediately agree; he seemed just as conflicted as Meredith. Meredith's hesitation was because of her troubled relationship with her mother.

"So what's your excuse?" Adam asked, his gaze turning strangely toward Richard.

"Alright, I'll help sort it out," Richard replied, noticing Adam's odd look. He forced a smile—he really had no choice.

Adam had already detailed a long list of benefits regarding Dr. Alice Gray—plus, he'd anticipated potential disruptions to the hospital's operations and was ready to fix them with cash. As a longtime colleague and good friend of Dr. Gray, handling the office rental was just a small favor. How could Richard possibly refuse?

"Thanks, Chief," Adam said, setting aside his nosiness and speaking sincerely. "It'd be best if you could get this done quickly—ideally by tomorrow. Dr. Gray is only scheduled for a few days in the hospital before discharge, and I want her transferred immediately. I need her new office arranged to look just like her old one."

"Got it," Richard replied.

Latest novel, first released on 69shu!

Unable to hold back, Chief Richard exclaimed, "Dr. Duncan, you really put your heart into this!"

Setting aside some unspeakable thoughts, he felt genuinely pleased—even a bit envious—that an ailing old colleague and friend could receive perks that far exceeded the norm. After all, even at their level, they were still just working for the man. If you're a worker and you still expect extra perks after you're done for the boss, dream on! Remember, the promised perks can always be unilaterally revoked. Without legal protection, even if you died right in front of your boss, no one would bat an eye. And when unforeseen circumstances hit, it's really tragic.

In short, Meredith surrendered before things got ugly—otherwise, Adam had a knockout punch waiting for her.

"Alright then," he thought.

You, because of your past and your busy schedule, didn't want to see your mom—so you put her in a nursing home. But do you realize how high the crime rates are in Western nursing homes and assisted living facilities? They're shockingly high—enough to send shivers down your spine, not to mention the abuse. Your mom is a legendary doctor. Not only was she a beauty in her youth, but even now she carries herself with a charm that far exceeds the norm—making her an easy target. And on top of that, she has Alzheimer's. Even if she were victimized, she might not even remember. Doesn't that only make her even more vulnerable?

She's your mom, for crying out loud! How can you stand by and let that happen?

If Adam were to confront Meredith with these real investigative reports, he'd have her so full of shame and regret that she'd be bawling her eyes out, maybe even break down completely. But there's no way around it—Adam is a good guy. He wouldn't resort to that unless absolutely necessary.

Hmm... That's just how thoughtful he is.

"Monica, it's me. The dinner with friends originally scheduled for tomorrow night has been moved up..."

With Chief Richard's agreement, Adam left with a beaming smile. As he headed toward the locker room, he called Monica and the others.

"Your cousin Kathy is there as well? No problem—more people means more fun. I'll have an extra order placed."

Chapter 418: I've Never Seen Such a Shameless Bastard

Medical Center

Adam had called Monica—and then he called Tool Man #3. By that time, everyone had already eaten. So Adam had Tool Man #3 order that French gourmet dinner—scant portions but outrageously expensive. Since Monica's cousin was coming too, of course there'd be a serving for her as well.

He hung up the phone and headed to the locker room to change. Once dressed, he walked toward the elevator, ready to leave the hospital. But before he got there, he suddenly overheard an intense conversation.

> "You really are a devil—you know it, don't you?"

>

> Dr. Shept's voice, laced with anger, responded, "If Satan ever showed up, he'd look just like you. Why don't you hop on a broom and fly back to Boston?"

>

> "Don't be so narrow-minded," came a casual retort from Dr. Montgomery, Shept's wife.

>

> "Then stop acting like a damn bitch!" Dr. Shept snapped coldly.

"

> "You'll eventually forgive me, won't you? I mean, we used to be the best of friends. Even though love hit a crisis, you can't just throw away such deep friendship, can you?"

>

> "I once thought you were the love of my life," Dr. Shept added in a chilly tone. "But plans don't always go as expected. When you shamelessly got intimate with my best friend Mark—in our marital bed, flaunting our wedding photo—everything changed."

At that moment, it all suddenly made sense to Adam. No wonder earlier, when Alex was caught in that real shooting incident, Dr. Shept (like all the other doctors) had initially shown concern for him. But as more details emerged—especially the scandal about Alex and the shooter's wife getting frisky on the shooter's wedding bed while posing with his wedding photo—Dr. Shept's attitude had shifted dramatically. He couldn't hide his revulsion for Alex. The truth was finally laid bare: Dr. Shept truly felt the betrayal, and what made it even worse was that the one who cuckolded him was none other than his best friend.

Adam stopped in his tracks, not wanting to get any closer, yet he wasn't about to leave.

"Divorce papers?"

After a few seconds of stunned silence, Dr. Shept's surprised voice broke through. Clearly, he hadn't expected that after clinging on as if her life depended on it, Dr. Montgomery would now lay everything on the table—and proactively present the divorce papers.

"Your lawyer said it's all fine," Dr. Montgomery said calmly. "I haven't signed yet; the decision is yours. If you sign, I'll sign. Once that's done, I'll catch the fastest flight out of New York."

"I'll sign right away. I want you to leave immediately," Dr. Shept replied coolly.

"Derek, have you ever thought about something?" Dr. Montgomery laughed. "Even if I were Satan—even if I cheated on you with your best friend—I might still be the love of your life!"

Dr. Shept fell silent. Adam was speechless. That classic line—"I smoke, I drink, I have tattoos, but I know I'm a good girl"—pales in comparison to Dr. Montgomery's zinger. Who does she think she is? The Black Widow? Dr. Shept, what are you waiting for? Get up there and give her a piece of your mind!

In his shock, Adam couldn't help but root for Dr. Shept—not just as a man, but as a fellow human being. His emotions were so intense that even the usually composed Adam stepped out from the corner. Merely eavesdropping wasn't enough to satisfy his ever-growing craving for gossip; he had to witness live as Dr. Shept delivered that classic insult: "I've never seen such a shameless bastard!"

But then something even more shocking happened. Dr. Shept stood there, dumbfounded, watching as Dr. Montgomery—sporting a slight smile—stepped into the elevator and left, divorce papers clutched in her hand. The hand that was poised to sign froze mid-air.

"No way?" Adam muttered, his lips twitching. "You're not really going to change your mind, are you? Is Dr. Montgomery's mouth really that persuasive?"

Dr. Shept lingered with the divorce papers for a long moment before looking up at the sky with a soft sigh. He lowered his pen and, with the papers still in hand, pressed the elevator's down button.

Adam walked over.

"Dr. Shept."

"Dr. Duncan."

They exchanged brief greetings as the elevator arrived. Stepping inside, the elevator began its descent, and a brief silence fell over them.

Unable to contain himself, Adam blurted out, "Dr. Shept, if anything like that night ever happens again, I can watch over Meredith for you."

There was a pause. Dr. Shept looked puzzled but still nodded and said, "Thank you."

According to the latest gossip posted on 69 Book, that night, his wife had suddenly shown up and his mistress, Meredith, had fled—leaving him no chance to chase after her. So he'd asked Adam to take care of Meredith. It was, after all, a personal favor.

Adam smiled. At first, he'd been reluctant—after all, Meredith had an uncanny knack for, well, dropping her pants when she was drunk. If things went wrong, not only would the favor go unearned, but it could also land him in a huge mess. And as it turned out, even with all the tight security that night, Meredith still ended up hooking up with George. Emmm—strictly speaking, it was only a half affair. It started with a bang but fizzled out. Still, in the end, Dr. Shept got cuckolded.

Adam had been a bit worried before, but now it seemed completely unnecessary. Even if Dr. Shept knew what happened between Meredith and George, it wouldn't be a big deal. He even seemed ready to forgive his beloved wife and his best friend for cheating—especially since he was the one who'd initially wronged Meredith. After all, she was just lashing out in drunken heartbreak. Of course, he was 100% going to forgive her. This was an utterly risk-free favor—too good to pass up. If you're not taking it, you lose.

520 Apartment

Knock, knock, knock. Knock, knock, knock. Knock, knock, knock.

"Come in."

Adam knocked, and upon hearing Monica's voice, he opened the door and stepped inside.

"What's going on?"

The moment he walked in, Adam sensed something was off. Rachel and Phoebe were sitting on the couch, all eyes fixed on the door. Ross was slumped in an armchair, looking awkward, while Monica stood there nervously wringing her hands—practically buzzing with anticipation. Chandler hovered behind her with a helpless look, and Joey still hadn't shown up. On the table, an exquisitely arranged set of plates lay covered by a beautiful cloche. Clearly, the French gourmet dinner that Adam had ordered via Tool Man #3 had already been delivered—because when money talks, efficiency is off the charts.

"Hold on a minute," Monica motioned to Adam, then called out to the bathroom, "Casey, are you done yet?"

"Almost," came a young female voice from inside.

"What's going on?" Adam muttered, a bit confused.

Casey—Monica's cousin—stepped out of the bathroom wrapped in a bathrobe, tossing her long, flowing hair as she did. The three women all fixed their gaze on Adam, while Ross and Chandler's expressions turned blank.

Chapter 419: The Sinister Salted Fish

Apartment 520

A gorgeous woman stepped out in a bathrobe, her wet, long hair swinging as she moved. It's a scene every decent guy's seen before—except that the five pairs of keen eyes surrounding her completely ruined the familiar vibe.

Adam stole a glance at her before politely averting his eyes and turning toward Monica, the lady of the house, as if to ask, "What's going on here?"

Monica replied, "We'll talk about it later."

"Casey, this is our good friend Adam."

"Adam, this is my cousin—from both Ross and me."

As Monica introduced everyone, her tone lagged slightly whenever she mentioned Ross, clearly hinting at something. Ross immediately lowered his head.

"Hi."

Adam greeted with a smile.

"Hi."

Casey, covering her chest with her left hand and slightly raising her right, let her fingers move subtly as she fixed her gaze on Adam—her smile lingering at the corner of her mouth.

"Ahem."

Ross coughed heavily.

"I'll go change my clothes."

Noticing the awkwardness of the moment, Casey also grinned and walked into what used to be Rachel's room—the guest room, now. [Click—door closes]

"See? That's a perfectly normal reaction for a man!" Monica immediately leaped up, pointing at Adam as she glanced over at Chandler and Ross.

"Exactly!"

Pregnant Rachel complained, "Every time you see her, it's like time slows down, you hear a beautiful melody, even catch a hint of her perfume, and Casey just lights up? All lies—you guys are completely smitten!"

"I'm not lying."

"It's true, and it wasn't even planned."

Chandler and Ross scrambled awkwardly to defend themselves.

"I believe you," Rachel retorted sarcastically. "Because if you planned to kiss Casey, you'd really be a scumbag—damn it, she's your cousin!"

"Distant cousin!" Ross blurted out.

Seeing Adam's shocked expression, Ross quickly added, "Legally speaking, we're in the clear!"

"Ho, ho, ho!" Monica raised her hand in disbelief and shot a look at her own brother, "You actually thought that through?"

...

Ross was at a loss for words, his face reddening.

"Who was it that leaned in for a kiss with Casey?"

Rachel sneered, "I'm really curious if Monica will buy your excuse."

"I..." Ross stammered, his face turning beet-red.

"Calm down," Adam soothed. "I know a guy whose first time was with his distant cousin."

"Really?" Ross's eyes lit up. "So what happened between them?"

Monica and the others stared in surprise.

"Oh, here's the story," Adam said, barely containing his laughter. "Back when they were still young, at his uncle's funeral, he and his distant cousin were in the kitchen—chatting on opposite sides of a shelf holding pickled herring. At first, just like you, Ross, neither of them meant a thing by it. But then, at one moment, their eyes met and the fire of youth just exploded."

"Ugh, that's disgusting!" someone exclaimed.

"They actually did that at their uncle's funeral?"

"What happened next?"

While Rachel and the others condemned it, Ross grew more animated, pressing for details.

"After that, they ended up in a Japanese car."

Adam laughed. "Even now, whenever that guy sees or smells pickled herring, he gets this guilty yet awkward thrill."

"Guilty?" Ross objected.

"Yeah," Adam replied seriously. "I mean, that's his cousin, isn't it inherently wrong?"

"She's a distant cousin!!!" Ross insisted. "Legally there's no problem!"

"So?" Adam shrugged. "We're not talking law here—we're just morally teasing him."

Ross's face darkened. By now, if he still didn't realize Adam wasn't on his side, he'd be a fool.

"Hahaha!"

"Exactly—we're just morally looking down on you."

"You're so convinced—do you really have the nerve to bring this up at a family reunion, Ross? I wonder if you dare."

Rachel and the others burst into laughter. "What's so funny?"

After a while, a now-dressed Casey emerged from the guest room. It was clear her long delay had a purpose—

Newest update: This little story was first posted on the 69shu forum!

She had taken her time to get dolled up, and Ross just stood there, transfixed and dazed. Adam noticed that even Chandler seemed a bit mesmerized.

"Nothing," Monica said dismissively, giving Chandler a sharp twist on the back before quickly changing the subject.

Originally, she'd planned to have the guest room for Casey, but as soon as Chandler saw her, he couldn't help but stare. With no choice, she ended up sending Casey over to Ross's place—only to have Ross take it even further and try to make a move. So, poor Casey ended up coming back. After all, as long as she was around, Chandler was far less of a problem than Ross. But now that things have reached this point, neither Chandler nor Ross have improved a bit—they still act like perverts at every turn. Looks like Casey can't stay here any longer. A husband and a brother, both infatuated with their cousin... it's a disgrace for the whole family!

"Everyone, let's eat—this is Adam's apology feast," Monica called out.

"What about Joey?" Adam asked, genuinely curious.

"Where else would he be? The pretty one obviously has a date," Adam added.

Monica grumbled, "If it were tomorrow night, he could join us, but you switched it to tonight."

"Sorry," Adam replied apologetically.

"Are you doctors really that busy? Can't you even spare one night?" Phoebe questioned.

"No," Adam shook his head before launching into the story of Alice Gray. "...Although she still remembers medicine for now, who knows when she'll forget. So I have to pass on every bit of her experience and knowledge as quickly and completely as possible."

"Wow! That's incredible," Casey exclaimed.

"For the patients, I'm with you!" Phoebe added with a thumbs-up.

"I never expected Meredith's mom... which means our chances for get-togethers will be even fewer," Chandler said with a shake of his head.

"Yeah," Adam nodded. "But I promise—I won't miss any of the important moments we share."

"I believe you," Chandler said with a smile.

"OMG!" Rachel fanned her face, looking utterly moved. "Do you have to be this touching? I'm about to cry."

"Have you picked out a name for the baby yet? Leonard's really curious," Adam's remark quickly snapped Rachel out of her sentimentality.

"Don't ruin the mood with that talk!" Rachel snapped, playfully smacking Adam.

"Chandler, what about you and Monica?" Adam asked, turning to the two he valued most.

"We?" Monica and Chandler exchanged a surprised look before laughing. "We just finished our honeymoon a little over two months ago—we're not thinking about that right now."

"Yeah, take your time," Adam said with a knowing smile.

After the meal, Adam pulled Chandler aside onto the balcony for a few words before he left. He really admired what Lily and Matthew had said—that as long as they never miss the significant moments in each other's lives, the best of friends will always remain that way.

Chapter 420: Owen Li Straight-Up Calls Him a Pro

Apartment 520

In the early hours, everyone headed back to their own places.

"What were you whispering about on the balcony with Adam?"

Inside the bedroom—after finishing her morning routine—Monica casually asked while applying her skincare products.

"Joey's business," Chandler replied from the bed. "Adam told me to remind Joey to stop messing around. His buddy Barney, who's as famous as Joey in New York, has already caught that seductive virus—and he's still undergoing treatment."

"What?"

Monica's eyes went wide. "You mean he actually got infected?"

"Adam said that if Joey doesn't watch himself, then with the public service ad he did for the hospital back in the day—combined with his now modest fame as a soap opera actor and his firsthand experience—it's a done deal that someone will pay him to do another ad."

Chandler quipped, "Maybe they'll even hire him as a spokesperson."

"But that's the seductive virus, isn't it?" Monica replied, exasperated. "Do you remember what happened last time when Joey, who didn't even have the virus, did that ad?"

"Oh, I definitely remember," Chandler laughed. "He went over a month without a date, and his family wouldn't let him come home for Christmas—they were scared he'd infect them."

"Yeah..." Monica sighed, feeling uneasy. "Joey's been slacking off for over ten years without any issues. I almost forgot about it—it always felt so far removed from us."

Well, that uneasiness was more like lingering fear.

After all, Monica had had her share of relationships back in the day.

And Chandler, too.

Plus, Chandler even had that fling with the legendary Aurora—who traveled the world and always seemed to have more than one boyfriend wherever she went...

"I heard some nasty diseases can lie dormant for years, right?" Monica mused, her worry growing.

"We're fine," Chandler quickly reassured her.

"You don't understand!" Monica cried, her face clouded with distress. "What if we end up infecting our kids someday?"

"They won't... But if you're worried, we can get tested."

Chandler continued, "Adam works at the hospital. We can quietly ask him to run some tests for us—it's really convenient."

"Did Adam say something to you?"

Monica pulled away from Chandler's embrace and glared at him. "He even asked if we wanted to have kids. Is he worried we might pass it on?"

At that, she launched into an emotional tirade and self-reproach:

"I hate you! When you first came over to my place, I was totally smitten. If you had felt the same, we would have been each other's only one—then we wouldn't have these worries! And I hate myself, too! Why was I so unrestrained back then? What harm would waiting a few more years have done...?"

Chandler groaned. Back then, he was in college and Monica was still in high school—they were clueless. There was no way either of them could have been the one and only for the other. And, to top it off, Monica was two-faced back then—how was he supposed to choose? Which one? My wife's compulsions are killing me.

"I swear, I really didn't..." Chandler tried to explain, but looking at Monica's frantic expression, he knew words were futile.

At the very least, sleep was out of the question tonight. So he got up and pulled Monica along.

"What are you doing? It's this late—I'm not in the mood!" he protested.

"I'm not in the mood either. Adam's on duty at the hospital tonight, so we're going to sneak over and have him run some tests to rule out any risks. That way, you and I can finally sleep easy, don't you think?"

"Alright."

Monica instantly perked up.

Adam had just returned to the apartment and was about to head to the hospital when he received a call from Chandler and Monica.

"Come over then," they said.

Adam replied with mock surprise. After hanging up, he couldn't help but smile. This had been part of his plan all along—even if he had underestimated Monica's reaction speed.

Letting slip that they should come to the hospital to rule out "filthy diseases" was just an excuse. What he really wanted was for Chandler and Monica to get a fertility test. Adam knew Chandler was fine, but Monica truly longed for a child of her own. After all, she'd broken up with that beloved older man back then precisely because he already had kids and didn't want any more.

Both Chandler and Monica had issues in that department, making it incredibly difficult for them to conceive the fruit of their love. Even though Adam—the real go-getter—had already talked Chandler into leaving his body-damaging job as a coder and dragging him out for morning runs, the true results were still up in the air.

If they continued to struggle with conceiving, time would be the most critical factor. The very latest update? It was announced in issue 69 of "The Book!" After all, a woman's prime childbearing years are only a few, and Monica's were nearly over...

Plus, as she aged, her chances of conceiving would drop while the risks of pregnancy steadily increased. That was one of the key reasons why, in the original timeline, Chandler and Monica eventually gave up on having kids and opted to adopt. By then, they simply didn't have much time left to try.

Now, with Adam helping out, they started planning all of this during their two-month honeymoon. If the test results weren't promising, they'd immediately start "stacking up" time—a few years' wait, hoping things might eventually work out.

What would it cost? Just a few tearful, heart-wrenching moments. And think of all the life experiences they'd gain along the way...

At that point, Owen Li straight-up said, "Now that's some pro-level insight!"

Medical Center

Adam waited outside.

Before long, Monica and Chandler rushed in.

"Aren't we just getting our blood drawn?" Chandler remarked, holding a purple-gold bowl reminiscent of the one Tang Sanzang used on his epic journey—half laughing, half exasperated.

"Both," Adam said in a straight face. "We're doing a full check-up."

"Cut the crap—let's get moving!"

Monica, in full boss mode, declared, "This time, I'm making an exception—go ahead and daydream about Casey in the bathroom."

Chandler just managed a bitter smile.

"Go on—I still need to take Monica for her tests."

Adam patted Chandler on the shoulder with a grin, "The lady's spoken. This is a rare opportunity, so make the most of it!"

Resigned, Chandler clutched the bowl and shuffled into the bathroom. Meanwhile, Adam led Monica over to another female doctor. After all, women and men are different—these kinds of tests aren't as straightforward for women.

"Christina, what are you doing here?" Adam asked as he came out after settling Monica in, bumping into Christina. He immediately frowned, "Weren't you supposed to be watching Dr. Gray?"

"I wanted to," Christina shrugged. "But she's resting now, and someone volunteered to keep an eye on her. There's no point in me just sitting there, so I thought I'd take a walk and see if anyone else needs me. Don't worry—I'll check in every half hour."

"Someone volunteered? Who?" Adam asked, surprised.

"Go see for yourself," Christina replied with a strange look.

Now intrigued, Adam immediately walked over.

"Holy shit!"

When he reached the ward and peeked inside, Adam was utterly dumbfounded.
