

TV Show 43

Chapter 43: Surprise Party **

New Jersey

"Goodbye."

"Goodbye."

Under the reluctant gaze of young Leonard, Adam started his pickup truck and left New Jersey.

To be honest, Leonard truly was a sincere and straightforward person.

In a short period, the impression of him transitioned from a TV character to a real-life experience that Adam could personally feel.

After driving for a while, Adam, overwhelmed with emotion, looped back and secretly sought out the bully Jimmy. He had a proper conversation with him, further reinforcing the concept of "Leonard has a ruthless friend, don't mess with Leonard."

Only then did he drive away again.

Texas

Galveston County

The Duncan Family Home

"Surprised? Unexpected?"

As Adam pushed open the door, a group of people suddenly jumped out, holding a banner that read, *"Welcome Back Home, Our College Student Adam Duncan!"* They shouted in unison.

"Wow!"

Adam responded with dramatic enthusiasm.

He had actually anticipated this surprise party.

After all, this is the *land of parties*—where even the apocalypse would call for a blowout bash.

The news that Adam passed the Columbia University interview had, of course, been immediately shared with his family.

Columbia University is a true elite school. Adam's acceptance was a major event that brought great pride to the Duncan family.

The three-day interval was more than enough for the family to prepare a grand party.

All of the Duncan family's friends and relatives were there.

In fact, this was essentially the same as the big banquets held in the East after college entrance exams.

"Come here and let me hug you!"

Adam's mom, Amy, was incredibly excited. She rushed over and gave him a warm hug while chattering away. "Back when Bob dropped you on the floor as a baby, we thought you'd never make it to college in this lifetime. Who would've thought my PJ would make it to Columbia? Thank God!"

In her excitement, she forgot Adam had changed his name. She reverted to his original name, as they had called him PJ for over a decade.

"Ahem."

Adam's dad, Bob, cleared his throat awkwardly from the side.

Dropping kids was his signature move.

Adam was the first; Teddy and Gabby were uncertain, but Charlie had also been dropped by Bob.

In the original timeline, PJ's intelligence was indeed questionable. Gabby was even strictly forbidden by Bob and Amy from calling PJ "dumb." On the other hand, Teddy and Gabby were quite smart, suggesting that drop might have actually impacted PJ's IQ.

"Adam, I'm proud of you."

After Amy released Adam, Bob spoke solemnly.

"Thank you."

Adam followed local customs, responding with one of the most common phrases in American TV shows.

"Well done, bro."

Teddy stepped forward, playfully punching Adam.

Her grades had always been excellent, and she once thought she was the shining star of the Duncan family. However, she didn't expect her once-clueless big brother to change so dramatically and even get into Columbia—a school she could only dream of. She was both happy for Adam and proud to have him as her brother.

"Is New York fun?"

Gabby, now 14, joined in. Over the past four years, he had evolved from a ten-year-old troublemaker into a fourteen-year-old troublemaker.

"Of course," Adam encouraged. "New York is one of the world's greatest cities. The excitement there is beyond your imagination, so work hard, young man."

"Really?"

Gabby rubbed his chin, deep in thought.

"There's an old saying: New York is both heaven and hell," Adam cautioned. "For the wealthy, it's heaven. But if you're broke, surviving there is pure hell."

"Your brother is right," Bob chimed in, issuing a stern warning. "New York is heaven for promising individuals like Adam. Don't get any bad ideas."

"Adam, Adam!"

At this moment, a tiny figure hugged Adam's leg, accompanied by a soft, childlike voice.

"Charlie!"

Adam looked down to find his four-year-old sister, Charlie, with her chubby cheeks and bright eyes looking up at him adorably. He quickly scooped her up, playfully teasing her, making her giggle uncontrollably.

In the U.S., it's common for family members to address each other by their first names.

To them, friendships are often deemed more important than family relationships because friends are equals and can stay with you, while family members often end up scattered across the country.

That's why many parents, when trying to connect with their kids, say, "We're best friends," rather than, "I'm your parent."

Between siblings, aside from introductions to others where terms like "brother" or "sister" might be used, names are typically the default.

"Hey, Adam."

Emmett approached, fist-bumping Adam. His expression was more complicated.

With graduation approaching, his best friend had received an acceptance letter from Columbia, while his own future remained uncertain. The one thing he was sure of? College wasn't in the cards for him.

Prestigious schools were out of reach, and even the tuition for ordinary universities was beyond his family's means. He couldn't afford to take on massive student loans to gamble on an uncertain future.

As for the cheaper for-profit colleges or community colleges, Emmett wasn't even interested in finishing high school courses, let alone paying for more schooling.

If nothing changed, he would graduate into unemployment and start drifting through life.

Adam understood this reality but was powerless to change it.

In the original timeline, PJ could have helped Emmett because running a food truck didn't require much skill—just an extra set of hands.

But Adam's future lay in becoming a great doctor, a path completely disconnected from Emmett.

After graduation, they would part ways, like two lines diverging further and further until they no longer intersected.

It was harsh, but it was reality.

In Adam's past life in the East, wasn't it the same?

Unless Adam intended to flaunt his success or had ulterior motives to organize some grand reunion, their paths wouldn't cross again.

And clearly, Adam wasn't that type of person.

Besides, Emmett wasn't some beautiful classmate.

"Congratulations."

After Adam mingled with friends and family, Juno came over to congratulate him.

"Same to you," Adam replied with a smile, his gaze briefly sweeping over Karen, who was sticking close to Juno. He sighed inwardly.

Not only had the good cabbage grown, but it had joined a whole cluster.

Recently, Juno had also interviewed at Harvard and passed successfully.

"Be sure to welcome me when I visit New York," Juno teased.

"Of course," Adam replied with a smile.

Harvard is in Boston, about 340 kilometers from New York—a three-to-four-hour drive—not far at all. Adam's welcome wasn't just polite.

Even though Juno was like a bloodthirsty Little Red Riding Hood with another equally dangerous companion, four years of interaction made Adam feel she meant him no harm.

Besides, Adam was destined to apply to Harvard Medical School in the future.

They would likely cross paths again. Staying on good terms now was better than reuniting as strangers.