

## TV Show 451

### Chapter 451: The Shameless Guy

Just a minute ago, a guy and a gal strolled into Peggy's apartment building, chatting and laughing as they headed upstairs.

In the security room, the gal on duty checked the info and recognized the visitors. "Hurry, call Miss Lisa!" she told her buddy. See, Lisa was in charge of all of them for better management.

"Shit!" Lisa got the call and muttered a curse, then dialed Adam fast. No answer. She kept trying while sneaking a peek through the peephole.

By then, the couple had reached Peggy's door. Lisa's mind raced with thoughts, but she held back and whispered, "Boss, it's not that I'm slacking, but who could've seen this coming? You're on your own now..."

"Haven't seen Peggy in ages, let's surprise her!" The woman, looking all glowy and not even forty, fished out the key from her purse and grinned at the middle-aged guy next to her as she unlocked the door.

"Linda, it's pretty late, maybe we should've given Peggy a heads-up," the middle-aged guy said gently, gazing at her with love in his eyes.

"No worries, she's probably still up, you know how she gets with her science stuff," Peggy's mom, Linda, replied with a sweet smile. She twisted the lock, swung the door open, and threw her arms wide, but her "surprise!" got stuck in her throat when she didn't see Peggy.

"The light's on, she must be in the bedroom or the bathroom. David, why don't you chill on the sofa for a bit?"

"Sure thing." David gave a gentle smile.

Even though he's not Peggy's dad—and even if he were—now that she's grown up, there are still things to be careful about. You know, there's some nasty stuff going on in the States. Being a decent guy, he makes sure to mind these details.

"Peggy?" Linda called out while heading to the bedroom.

Inside the bedroom, Adam, with his super hearing, picked up on Linda and David's arrival right away. But the window was tiny, and they were on the third floor, so with his size, slipping out wasn't easy. He was totally stressing out .

Help, what's it like to be caught in bed by your "mother-in-law"?

"Peggy?" Just then, Linda twisted the bedroom door open.

"Mom." The bedside lamp was on, and Peggy, lying on her side facing the door, casually greeted Linda.

"Oh, you're in bed? Forgot to turn off the living room light, huh?" Linda came over, sat on the bed, and chuckled as she felt Peggy's forehead. "Wait, you're a bit warm. You don't have a fever, do you?"

Right then, her face changed, and she stood up to flip on the main light. But she sensed something was off and quickly glanced behind Peggy. In the dim part of the bed, there was definitely someone else lying there.

"Oh my God!" Linda gasped, covering her mouth, and stared at her daughter in shock.

"Peggy!"

"I'm an adult now," Peggy said, still lying on her side with a whatever look.

"Linda, everything alright?" David called from outside the bedroom, hearing the commotion.

"I'm okay," Linda answered, then glared behind Peggy. "Who is that? Come out now! Or do I have to pull the covers off?"

"Hey there, Mrs. Adler~" Adam finally popped his head out from under the covers and greeted her casually with a little wave .

"Adam?" Linda recognized him right away, and her face relaxed a little.

Looks matter, you know. Her daughter's amazing, and most guys just don't cut it. But Adam's different. Not only does he look good with Peggy, but his accomplishments are just as impressive—maybe even better. Hey, it's a money world, right? Everything's about cash. Even the best scientists gotta eat.

If it were some other guy, she'd be pissed . But since it's Adam, she figures she can deal with it.

"Peggy, Uncle David's here too. You two better get yourselves together and come out," Linda said, shooting Adam a look before turning to Peggy.

"Okay," Peggy replied, frowning a bit.

Linda shook her head with a half-smile, left the bedroom, and shut the door behind her.

In the living room, David, the sweet middle-aged guy, noticed something was off with his partner and quickly asked, "What's up?"

"Peggy's all grown up now..." Linda awkwardly summed up what happened.

Since they'd have to meet each other soon, it was better to give a heads-up to avoid more awkwardness.

"So, this Adam's been Peggy's friend since they were kids, and he's pretty great, huh?" David grinned .

Being the nice guy, he wanted to help his partner feel better.

"Yeah," Linda nodded. "Remember when I told you about my divorce with Barry? Peggy was so upset she started to give up on everything. Thank goodness Adam and Sheldon were there to bring her back."

"Good thing, or Peggy wouldn't be where she is today," David chimed in.

"Sheldon's the same age as Peggy, and Adam's a few years older. Even though they're all friends, Peggy used to hang out with Sheldon more," Linda said, a bit conflicted. "So, Adam showing up like this caught me off guard."

"That's how young folks are," David reassured her. "When they click, things happen fast. Peggy's always buried in her research, and you can't look after her like you used to, so she's probably been lonely. This might be a good thing."

"Yeah," Linda said with a small smile. "Peggy's always been unique. I was worried that our stuff might mess with her, but now I see she's really grown up. She's got her own life, and it's not just about science anymore. I can relax a bit."

"Still, we gotta check out this guy," David said, glancing at the bedroom with a weird look.

They'd been talking for a bit, but there was zero noise from the bedroom. Hmm...

"David, you'll help me keep an eye on this later," Linda said, then realized something was off. Her face turned red, and she yelled toward the bedroom, "Peggy!"

No answer from the bedroom. Everything went silent.

David's lip twitched as he thought, Kids these days, no way...

After a solid ten seconds of silence, Linda's face twisted, and she hissed, "Adam Duncan!!!" "Just a sec, almost ready," Adam called out awkwardly from the bedroom.

"Right," David thought, shaking his head at how kids behave these days. Seeing Linda's face turn red, he quickly changed the topic. "Hey, Linda, you hungry? Maybe we can whip up something to eat?"

"No, thanks," Linda said, unable to smile even at her partner right now.

That little jerk, Adam Duncan! This is too much!

And just when she thought Adam couldn't be any more shameless, time proved her wrong. It was a whole half hour later when they finally heard the bedroom door opening. While they waited, David tried to distract himself by reading on his phone. He came across a page mentioning" but his mind was elsewhere, wondering what was taking so long.

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Chapter 452: What's the Big Deal with Big Pants?

Peggy's Apartment

The bedroom door creaked open, and Adam stepped out, flashing an awkward grin. He was met by David, who had a weird look on his face, and Linda, who seemed ready to explode.

"Mrs. Adler..." Adam began.

"I'm not Mrs. Adler anymore," Linda cut in sharply, her eyes drilling into him with barely contained rage.

If she hadn't been straining to catch any odd noises from the bedroom, she'd have already barged in and let Adam have it. No matter how good-looking, wealthy, or talented he was, he couldn't just act like he owned the place. It was disrespectful—especially in front of her partner!

"Uh..." Adam stammered, at a loss. He didn't even know what last name Linda used now, since they'd barely interacted before and he had no clue about her maiden name.

"You can call her Ms. Watson," David chimed in, his warm tone smoothing over the tension. "I'm David Grossman. You must be Adam Duncan, right?"

"Hi, Mr. Grossman," Adam said, shooting him a grateful glance. He started to reach out for a handshake but hesitated and pulled back at the last second.

David's lips twitched, and the room sank into awkward silence again.

"Peggy!" Linda snapped, glaring daggers at Adam. She was about to storm into the bedroom to talk to her daughter when Peggy emerged, fully dressed. Linda called out to her anyway.

Peggy gave a quiet nod, walked to the open kitchen, and yanked open the fridge. She grabbed a water bottle, twisted off the cap, took a big swig, swished it around with a gurgle, spat it into the sink, and then chugged some more. Turning to Linda, she said casually, "Mom, you guys chat," then nodded at David on the sofa. "Hey, David."

"Hey, Peggy!" David replied, standing up with a wave and his brightest smile.

Peggy ignored them all, strolling over to her desk and sitting down in a pose so perfect it could've been a painting.

Meanwhile, Adam sidled over to the sink, turned on the faucet, let it run for a moment, washed his hands, and shut it off—all while dodging Linda's icy, murderous stare. Yep, she was furious, and everyone knew why. They were all adults here; it wasn't hard to guess what had happened.

Ahem. Adam cleared his throat, shaking off the embarrassment. He'd faced bigger scenes than this. "Ms. Watson, Mr. Grossman," he said, forcing a casual tone, "Peggy mentioned you were in Washington before?"

Linda didn't bother responding. She marched over to Peggy, grabbed her arm, and pulled her into the bedroom, slamming the door with a loud thud. Clearly, she couldn't wait another second for that mother-daughter showdown.

"Yeah, my hometown's there," David said with a gentle smile. "I decided to start my own business, so I moved back from New York. I design furniture, make it myself, and sell it."

"Design, huh? That's cool," Adam replied. "I've got a friend who's a designer too—he works on buildings."

"Oh?" David's eyes sparked with interest. As a furniture designer starting his own gig, he was eager to connect with others in the field, even if their crafts differed.

"You guys should chat sometime," Adam suggested. "His name's Ted Mosby. He recently wowed a client with a design and jumped to project manager for a 70+ story skyscraper. Well, it's still in the design phase, so it's not set in stone yet."

Adam walked to the desk, scribbled a phone number, and handed it to David. "Here, you two could hit it off."

"Your friend's Ted Mosby?" David asked, lighting up.

"You've heard of him?" Adam raised an eyebrow.

"Of course," David said. "He was just a junior designer under the legendary architect Old White. The client hired the firm for Old White's name, but somehow, Old White came up with a 78-story building that was... uh, let's just say unique."

"I know," Adam said with a knowing smirk.

Old White's design was a 78-story tower wrapped in pink marble, topped with a dome, and featuring two spherical entrances on either side. Compared to that monstrosity, even the wildest buildings out there looked tame.

"Everyone saw it for what it was, but Old White didn't," David chuckled. "When the client saw the model, they were horrified and ready to bolt. This was supposed to be a landmark skyscraper! If it ever

hit TV, they'd probably have to blur it out. The client wasn't nuts—they weren't about to greenlight that."

"Old White's reputation was too big," Adam agreed. "When he unveiled the design, his whole team just clapped and cheered. My friend Ted saw through it but kept his mouth shut, swallowing his critiques."

"That's why I quit to go solo," David sighed. "Working for someone else stifles you. I doubt Ted was the only one who noticed. Probably everyone did, but Old White could fire them, so they all played along."

"Exactly," Adam nodded. "Ted asked his colleagues later, and they all admitted it was ridiculous, but no one dared call out the emperor's new clothes."

"So when the client walked away, it could've sunk the firm," David said. "But Ted had a backup plan—he'd secretly designed his own version and pitched it. The client loved it, and that's how he became project manager. It's an inspiring story buzzing around the design world."

"Now Old White works under Ted," Adam laughed. "Pretty ironic. Ted's even thinking about firing him."

"Really?" David leaned in. "Is it payback, or...?"

"Nah, not revenge," Adam said, shaking his head. "Ted's a good guy, even if his personal life's a mess. It's just that Old White still acts like the boss, undermining Ted in front of everyone."

David gave Adam an odd look, maybe because that bit about Ted's personal life sounded a little too familiar.

Adam caught it but brushed it off. "Speaking of stories, Ted's rise is so wild, it's like something out of a novel. Actually, I read a similar tale on It's about a young designer overcoming obstacles to make it big. Life imitating art, huh?"

"Oh, cool!" David perked up. "I haven't heard of that author, but I'll check it out. Always hunting for inspiration."

"You should," Adam grinned. "It's a great read."

Just then, the bedroom door flew open. Linda stormed out, her face still red with anger, with Peggy trailing behind, cool as ever.

Adam and David exchanged a quick glance, both knowing this wasn't over yet.

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#### Chapter 453: A Million Paths

In Peggy's apartment, out in the living room, Adam and David are cracking up and having a blast. Meanwhile, inside the bedroom, Linda's looking totally helpless. Her own daughter pulled something like this, and when Linda caught her in the act, Peggy didn't even flinch. Instead, it's Linda who's feeling awkward, her initial anger slowly turning into embarrassment. What is this mess?!

"Peggy," Linda said carefully, "what's really going on between you and Adam?"

"Didn't you already figure it out, Mom?" Peggy replied, looking surprised. "It's just a pure, uh... you-know-what kind of thing."

Linda's jaw dropped, completely floored.

For years, Linda had been by Peggy's side, supporting her studies, proud of the brilliant kid she raised. But after just a few months of Peggy chasing her own love life, hearing such blunt words come out of her mouth? It was a lot to swallow.

"Did he put it that way?" Linda snapped, clenching her teeth.

That jerk Adam—how dare he treat her precious girl like this? So full of himself!

"Nope," Peggy shook her head. "I went after him first. Mom, you know I've only got one and a half friends. Sheldon's always been this neutral, clueless kid, so I had to go for the half-friend instead."

"But you're a girl, Peggy. This puts you at a disadvantage," Linda said, torn.

"Disadvantage?" Peggy blinked. "Mom, remember how my research was totally stuck a few months back? Once Adam came into the picture, everything clicked—my path forward opened up. He's my muse, giving me nonstop scientific inspiration. If anyone's losing out, it's him. How am I at a disadvantage?"

Linda couldn't help but laugh and sigh . She got it. For her math-and-science-obsessed daughter, nothing trumped research. Adam being a constant source of inspiration was Peggy's biggest win. The usual "who's taking advantage of who" stuff in relationships didn't apply to her one-of-a-kind kid.

Still, even if Linda understood, as a regular mom, she couldn't shake the feeling that Adam was getting the better deal—and it ticked her off.

"Peggy, maybe I should stick around and keep you company?" Linda offered hesitantly.

"No need," Peggy said, shaking her head. "Lisa's got me covered. You should go hang with Uncle David. Too many people in the apartment's no good."

Linda felt drained . I'm her mom, darn it!

"Who's Lisa?" she asked.

"Adam's assistant," Peggy said casually. "Now she's mine, handling all the random stuff."

"He even got you an assistant?" Linda's face twisted with mixed feelings. "Peggy, you're the youngest mathematician ever. If you asked, the school would've hooked you up with an assistant—no need to lean on him."

"Lisa's super good, though," Peggy countered. "She saves me a ton of time. The school's assistants couldn't keep up like she does."

Linda paused, then glanced around the bedroom. It hit her—the place had changed. Subtle luxury oozed from every corner. She realized why Lisa was so capable: Adam wasn't skimping on the cash.

That made her feel both relieved and worried. Relieved that Adam seemed to care, but worried about how long that'd last.

"So, what's your plan?" Linda asked, getting serious.

"Plan for what?" Peggy looked confused. "You don't mean marriage with Adam, do you?"

"If you like him, and he likes you, and you're already... like this, what's wrong with marriage?" Linda shot back.

"What, so we can end up like you and Dad—fighting all the time and then divorcing?" Peggy said coolly. "No thanks. That's way too much time and energy. Marriage is just a boring chain holding tons of scientists back from going further.

Like, if Einstein didn't have two wives and a bunch of lovers, wasting all that time on his teacher's daughter, college buddies, cousin, cousin's kid, and secretary, he might've nailed the unified field theory. We could be zipping through space in warp ships by now.

Or Schrödinger—if he didn't have all those wives and girlfriends, spending energy on students, actresses, and office clerks, and if he'd hired an assistant who actually helped instead of just picking someone because he liked their wife, we might know if that cat's dead or alive.

Madame Curie—"

"Okay, okay!" Linda's head was pounding, and she waved her hand to stop her. "I get it, I get what you're saying."

The bedroom went quiet for a moment.

Linda replayed Peggy's words in her head, her eyes brimming with guilt. This is all my fault! No—scratch that—it's that creep Barry's fault! If he hadn't picked fights with her, spouting garbage like "You care too much about Peggy, giving her all your love and leaving none for me," showing Peggy the nasty side of marriage, she wouldn't have these wild ideas. Seriously?! Peggy's his kid too! Was it wrong for Linda to pour her heart into loving their special daughter who needed extra care?

For a split second, Linda's mind drifted. She remembered stumbling across something online about creators getting support through Maybe Peggy could use something like that for her research one day, she thought, but she brushed it off quick, snapping back to her guilt and frustration.

Then she thought about Adam's job. A doctor—just like Barry. Peggy was only eleven when they split, and Linda had raised her solo ever since. With no dad around, it made sense Peggy might gravitate toward Adam, who had the same gig as her father. Add in Adam's grown-up charm and his nerve—thick enough to make even weathered adults jealous—and Linda's self-blame hit harder.

She didn't like Peggy being with Adam in this vague, no-future setup, but the memory of Peggy spiraling after the divorce held her back from getting too tough. Sigh, she thought, letting out a heavy breath. "You're still young, so there's no rush. But if you're gonna keep hanging with Adam, don't take his money. Things stay equal only if there's no cash involved." That was a brutal lesson from her years as a housewife. She'd put up with so much for so long because she had no income, totally reliant on her husband.

"I didn't ask for anything," Peggy said, frowning. "We don't owe each other a thing—it's fair." She didn't sweat the small stuff. If it's there, cool; if not, whatever. It wasn't a big deal to her—like when Adam offhandedly named her formula the Duncan-Adler formula. Just random stuff, no fuss. If your heart's calm, why'd the wind even matter?

Linda had no comeback. In the end, she just stressed the safety basics. Peggy's only eighteen, barely an adult, so messing around with Adam for a few years isn't a disaster. Plenty of scientists don't settle down until their thirties. Peggy's got loads of time to sort it out. But the big rule? Be safe—don't end up with a baby!

Chapter 454: Adam the Great Man

At Peggy's apartment.

Linda stepped out of the bedroom, her face dark as a storm cloud after grilling Peggy about some "safety stuff."

But Peggy was way too cool about it—like, suspiciously calm.

So Linda couldn't really push it. She just stormed out and threw Adam some serious side-eye.

"Ms. Watson, I had Lisa book us dinner. Wanna join us later?" Adam asked with a friendly grin.

"Nah, not hungry," Linda shot back, wrinkling her nose. "David, let's get outta here!"

"Actually, I'm kinda starving," David piped up, trying to play peacemaker. He and Adam were hitting it off, and he thought Adam and Peggy were a match made in heaven. No point in letting Linda and Adam stay at odds—it'd just make life awkward for him and Peggy. "Why don't we all eat? Hate to waste good food, you know?"

Linda was steaming, but one look from David softened her up, and she stayed, grumbling. Middle-aged love's not like those wild teenage flings—you figure out how to roll with it.

Especially with Peggy around, Linda didn't want to embarrass David in front of the "kids."

"So, Lisa's that assistant you got for Peggy? Invite her to dinner too," Linda said, half-resigned, half-curious about this girl who was sorta stepping into her shoes.

"Sure," Adam nodded, no fuss, and rang up Lisa.

Then it got quiet again. Peggy didn't even glance at them—she was back at her desk, deep in her own world.

Linda, still brooding over her chat with Peggy, clammed up, her face all business.

"Adam, I hear you're a writer?" David jumped in to break the silence.

"Part-time," Adam said, appreciating the vibe. "Started writing after high school to stack some cash. But my real dream's always been to save lives as a doctor. Right now, I'm interning at New York Medical Center."

"New York Medical Center?" David's eyes widened. "That's where they took all the victims from that train wreck today, right? It's all over the news."

"Yeah," Adam nodded. "We'd already been on for, like, ten-plus hours. I was driving over to Peggy's at dawn when..."

"You come over every night?" Linda cut in, jaw dropping. "Peggy's still young—how could you?!"

Clearly, she'd gotten some spicy details from Peggy during their "safety talk" and was freaking out about Adam's late-night visits.

"No, no, hold up!" Adam scrambled to explain. "Interns are slammed—I can't swing by every day. Just Sundays, usually. But these past few days, Peggy and I have been teaming up on a research paper, so I've been pulling all-nighters to make it work."

"A research paper?" Linda's frown eased a little.

Adam laid out the whole deal with the Duncan-Adler formula.

"Oh, got it," Linda said, her mood lifting. So Peggy was holding her own—made things feel more even.

"So, you were headed here at dawn, then got the train derailment call?" David grinned, steering things back.

"Yup," Adam confirmed. "Hospital rang us all back in, pronto. We were swamped with crash victims 'til 9 a.m., no chance to eat or anything."

"Man, being a doctor sounds rough," David said, shaking his head.

"For real," Adam agreed. "I've got stamina, so I'm good. But my coworkers? After forty hours straight, they're wiped—crashing in the break room, blood and grime still on 'em. Some just flop on stretchers in the hall and pass out."

"Then why do it?" Linda asked, puzzled. "You're rolling in cash, your books are killer—why not just kick back as a big-shot writer?"

Adam's lip twitched. She was painting him like some loaded playboy.

"Doctors save people," he said, dead serious. "Today, I pulled nine critical cases and six tough ones through. That rush beats making my first billion, hands down. It's what drives me—like Peggy's obsessed with math."

(System pinged later:  $+0.019 + 0.0056 = 0.12$  years (43.8 days) added, only 0.8 days used—net gain of 43 days! Total win! )

David: "..."

Linda: "..."

David was starting to think Adam was flexing a bit, even if he liked the guy. Linda, though, was torn—impressed by how Adam and Peggy were so alike in their passions, but floored by that "first billion" line.

"Your first billion? How much money do you even have?" she blurted.

"Heh," Adam chuckled, playing it humble. "After a while, it's just digits. Doesn't mean much. I don't even keep count."

David's mouth twitched. Oh yeah, total flex. But fair enough—guy's trying to impress Peggy's mom.

"Writing pays that well?" Linda asked, still stunned.

"It's alright," Adam shrugged. "The first billion was mostly books, yeah, but after that, it's just money making money—investments, you know, playing the long game."

Linda hesitated, glancing at David. He was launching his own business and could use some cash to get it off the ground. But she'd just warned Peggy to keep money out of her thing with Adam...

David caught her look and gave a small shake of his head, firm. He was doing this solo—no handouts. He loved the grind and didn't want strings. Plus, he adored Linda and cared about Peggy too much to muddy things with cash.

Adam clocked their little exchange but played it off like he didn't.

"I'm into books too," David said, switching gears with a smile. "Big Jane Austen fan."

"Pride and Prejudice lady, right?" Adam nodded. "Her stuff's legendary—over a hundred years strong, huge influence."

"Yep," David grinned. "But honestly, I like Emma more than Pride and Prejudice."

"Emma..." Adam paused, glancing at Linda Watson with a weird look on his face.

Chapter 455: The Proposal

Peggy's Apartment

As David rambled on excitedly about the novel Emma, Adam's face took on an odd look. He was sensitive about that name—and the surname too—thanks to his memories of the actress Emma Watson. A funny thought crossed his mind: if David and Linda got married and had a girl, would they name her Emma Watson? With how much Peggy resembled that Emma Watson, it wouldn't be a stretch to imagine them as half-sisters or something. But then he remembered it was already 1998—the real Emma Watson, the magical princess, must've been born in England by now. He chuckled to himself and let the idea go. Normally, kids take their dad's last name anyway, so if David and Linda had a daughter, she'd probably be Emma Grossman.

Knock, knock, knock.

The sound snapped Adam out of his chat with David about the book's plot. He stood up, peeked through the peephole, and saw Lisa with a female bodyguard holding a big food box. Only then did he open the door—better safe than sorry, right? You never know when someone might burst in with a machine gun, security or not.

Lisa and the bodyguard quickly set the table, pulling out fancy dishes from the box one by one. Champagne and red wine? Oh, they were fancy fancy. Once everything was ready, Lisa waved the bodyguard off and glanced at Adam.

"David, Linda, let's eat!" Adam called out with a grin.

In the U.S., once you're tight with someone, it's all first names—no "Mr." or "Mrs." nonsense, no matter the age gap. David had already told Adam to drop the formalities, and Adam just assumed Linda was cool with it too...

"Peggy!" Linda shot Adam a glare but turned to call her daughter. She froze mid-step. Lisa had already leaned in, whispered something to Peggy, and here came Peggy, strolling over like it was no big deal.

At the table, Lisa pulled out a chair for Peggy, waited for her to sit, then tied a white napkin around her neck like she was royalty. She poured a tiny splash of red wine into Peggy's glass and started tackling the seafood, expertly picking out the meat and placing it on Peggy's plate. Peggy dug in like it was the most natural thing in the world—and honestly, it probably was. This wasn't their first rodeo.

Linda, Peggy's actual mom, stood there, a mess of emotions swirling inside her. She finally got what Peggy meant by "Lisa does it better." This kind of pampering? Even she couldn't pull that off. Ugh, damn rich people! she thought. They're out here ruining the sacred bond between mother and child! Because, let's be real—if Linda were in Peggy's shoes, she'd want this life too...

The meal was delicious, but it left a sour taste in Linda's mouth. Especially when she talked to Lisa about Peggy's care and realized Lisa didn't even need her pointers. That stung.

"Let's go," Linda muttered after dinner, feeling deflated. She and David were in the thick of their romance, so even though Peggy's place had two bedrooms, they'd already booked a hotel room for the night.

"Mind if I talk to Peggy alone for a sec?" David asked out of nowhere.

"Of course not," Linda replied, blinking in surprise.

Adam caught David's eye, a hunch forming, and nodded. "Linda, let's head to Lisa's place. She lives right across the hall."

The three of them stepped out. Adam shot Lisa a look, and she nodded back. She'd hang by the door and keep an ear out. David seemed solid, but you can't slack on safety.

Lisa's Apartment

"So, you rented this place just so Lisa could look after Peggy?" Linda asked, poking around the apartment.

"Nope," Adam said, shaking his head. "I bought it."

Linda froze. Freaking ugly capitalism, she thought, always tempting people into this decadent nonsense!

"Adam," she said after a beat, her tone serious, "what's the deal with you and Peggy?"

"Uh..." Adam hesitated. "More than friends, but not quite lovers?"

Linda's face darkened. Don't think I'm too old to know what that means, buddy!

"We're both too young!" Adam blurted, seeing her temper flare. "Peggy's swamped with research, I've got residency training—neither of us has time for anything else for, like, five or six years."

Linda went quiet. That was the exact same thing she'd figured out after grilling Peggy.

"Don't hurt her," she said finally, her voice softer but firm.

"I won't," Adam promised, dead serious. "Never."

"Anything else I should know?" Linda's expression eased up. She was trying to have a real talk with him now. Sure, she had her gripes, but Peggy picked this guy, and he was pretty flawless—except for a few red flags she couldn't shake.

"Well," Adam started, thinking it over, "I also bought the apartment downstairs for bodyguards..." He laid out his plans and why he'd made them.

"No way," Linda gasped. "Is college that dangerous? We never ran into anything like that!"

"It's because Peggy's a public figure," Adam explained. "She sticks to her routine—home, school, back again—doesn't party, and you were always with her, so it makes sense you didn't see trouble. But it's not a big cost, and better safe than sorry, you know?"

Linda just stared, speechless. After a long pause, she gave a wry smile. "You handle it."

Everything she could think of—or couldn't—Adam had already covered. What else was there to say?

"Boss," Lisa popped in, "Mr. Grossman and Peggy are done. They're asking for you guys."

"Got it," Adam said, catching Lisa's glance and guessing what was up. He motioned for Linda to go first, then followed with Lisa behind him.

Back at Peggy's place, Linda pushed the door open. The lights were dimmed, casting a soft glow. David stood there, facing the entrance, his eyes brimming with love. Linda stopped dead, her heart pounding like crazy.

David took a few steps forward—no sliding tackles here, folks—dropped to one knee in front of her, and gazed up with total devotion. Slowly, he pulled a ring box from his pocket and popped out the classic line:

"Linda Jane Watson, will you marry me?"

"OMG!" Linda clapped her hands over her mouth, barely holding in a squeal .

"I already got your dad's permission," David said, his voice warm and steady, "and just now, Peggy gave me her blessing. Linda, will you be Mrs. Grossman?"

In the U.S., traditional guys don't mess around—they get the father-in-law's okay before popping the question. Take Sheldon from *The Big Bang Theory*: he checked with Amy's dad first, and if the guy had said no, Sheldon would've bailed on the whole plan. (Though, let's be honest, Amy's dad would've been toast—stuck with a controlling wife and a ticked-off daughter, no safe haven left.)

David went the extra mile. He'd cleared it with Peggy's grandpa and asked Peggy, Linda's daughter, for her blessing. Clearly, this busy startup guy didn't just drop everything to visit his girlfriend's kid for no reason. He had a mission: get Peggy's approval, then propose to Linda.

Chapter 456: Peggy's Heart

At Peggy's apartment.

"Yes! Yes! Yes!"

Linda was all about that "say it three times if it's important" rule.

David slid the diamond ring onto Linda's left ring finger, got up, and pulled her into a big hug—straight out of a rom-com playbook.

applause

Peggy, being the daughter, didn't bat an eye, so Adam stepped up to clap and cheer them on.

"Uh, guys?"

Adam had to stop clapping and let out a loud fake cough to break the moment. 'Cause if they kept going, it was either gonna get weird or turn into something not exactly kid-friendly.

David snapped out of it first and let go of his fiancée.

Linda bolted straight to Peggy and threw her arms around her. She was all about hugs right then—needed someone to hold.

Peggy patted her back a couple times, rested her head on Linda's shoulder, and gave a small "whatever makes you happy" smile.

"Congrats, man," Adam said, nodding at David.

"Thanks," David replied, his bushy brows and big eyes lighting up with a huge grin.

"I'm engaged, y'all!" Linda finally let Peggy go after a while, holding up her hand and flashing that ring like crazy, totally pumped. "Isn't it gorgeous?"

"Gorgeous!" Adam and Peggy both nodded.

"Look, I'm just getting my business off the ground, so it's not huge, and it's not Tiffany's or anything..." David said, sounding a little guilty he couldn't give her something flashier.

"Nah, nah, nah!" Linda shook her head hard. "This is the biggest, prettiest ring I've ever seen!" Then they locked eyes, all mushy and lovestruck.

"Man, David, if you'd met me sooner, this would've gone way differently," Adam thought to himself. "I'd have hooked you up with a bigger, shinier ring for the same price!"

You know that "diamonds are forever" line? Total nonsense. Plastic bags outlast diamonds any day.

If David had asked his advice before buying, Adam would've told him to pull a Leonard move. Step one: hit up a hardware store for a big diamond drill bit. Step two: yank the diamond off, take it to a jeweler to set in a ring, and grab a Tiffany's box. Boom—suddenly it's a "Tiffany's" giant-carat ring, looking pricey as hell. Just never admit it's from a drill bit, like Leonard didn't. Then your fiancée's rocking a ring that screams "I bled my bank account dry for this!"

Yup! Adam didn't buy for a second that Leonard's ring for Penny was real Tiffany's, even though Leonard denied it three times, cool as a cucumber. But Adam trusted Sheldon more—guy's too straight-up to lie. Leonard, the tech nerd, would totally do this. He's not fooled by ads; to him, a diamond's a diamond, store-bought or drill-bit-sourced. Why spend ten times more? Plus, Leonard's broke—no way he's splurging on a huge rock. Save that cash for Comic-Con and action figures instead—way more fun. ☹️ Adam was actually on board with it. Back before he time-traveled, the diamond hype was already fading.

A few minutes later.

Linda and David took off. Classic TV line: "Get a room, you two!"

Then Adam pulled Peggy into the bedroom.

Late night.

Adam didn't smoke or drink in his past life, and now, as a doctor, he's even more against smoking. Peggy tried a few cigarettes back when she was in her "rebel" phase, but Adam set her straight. Now she's all about science—dropped Missy and smoking altogether. So, no cigarette stink in the bedroom.

"You okay? Something bugging you?" Adam asked, eyes closed.

"How'd you know?" Peggy replied.

"Heh," Adam chuckled. "I'm just an intern, but the top docs say I'm already good as a new cardio attending. We mess with hearts all day—'heart stuff' is our thing. Plus, I'm holding yours right now~"

Peggy ignored his cheesy flirting, not even tossing him a playful wink. She just frowned. "Adam, do you believe in love?"

Linda's upcoming remarriage clearly had her rattled, even if she played it off like she didn't care. Adam could see right through her.

"Not really," he said, dropping the charm. "Love at first sight? That's just hormones. I'm more into the slow stuff—friendship, family, love all mixed up over time."

"Same," Peggy said, voice flat. "Mom was probably over the moon when she got engaged to Dad, but how'd that end? Love's got a shelf life. After the honeymoon phase, it's kaput—just a pointless loop with someone new, over and over."

"Hey, don't be such a downer," Adam said. "It's not always like that."

"Oh yeah? How long do you think Mom and David will last?" Peggy smirked.

"..." Adam went quiet. Who could tell? Months? Years? Maybe forever? With anyone else, he'd toss out a random guess, but not Peggy. She's too sharp—bullshitting her would be an insult.

"What matters is your mom's happy now," he said with a smile. "Right?"

"I guess," Peggy mumbled, sounding a bit down. "She put her life on hold for me for, like, six or seven years. Otherwise, she'd have remarried fast, like Dad did—new wife in less than a year."

"You seen your dad lately?" Adam asked, perking up since Peggy was actually up for a midnight heart-to-heart. Usually, she'd crash first, leaving him wired and wanting to talk—or more. Their dynamic was

flipped—normally the guy's out cold while the girl's chatty. But with Adam's... stamina, he just grinned and dealt with it, not sure if it was a win or a loss.

"Nope," Peggy shook her head. "Since college, I've been with Mom. He invites me for Christmas, but I can't be bothered."

"You hate him?" Adam asked.

"Nah," she said, cool and detached. "Their marriage falling apart was kinda my fault. Mom put way too much into me."

Adam ran his fingers through her hair, feeling for her. She used to take all the blame, nearly lost herself over it. He was the one who pulled her back. Even now, she's got that guilt buried deep—nobody but Adam, who knows her heart inside out, can tell.

Chapter 457: Sheldon the Coward

It was the dead of night. While Peggy was having a rare heart-to-heart with Adam on the other side of the country, in Pasadena, California, at the California Institute of Technology, someone knocked on the door of an apartment in the doctoral housing complex.

Due to the time difference, it was 2 a.m. in New York, but only 11 p.m. here. Most college students would still be out partying hard at this hour, but not the resident of this apartment. By 9 p.m. every night, he was in his pajamas, tucked into his perfectly made bed with just his head sticking out, sleeping as soundly as Dracula in his coffin.

Well, okay—if there were actual thunder, he'd probably be wide awake. The guy's afraid of pretty much everything.

And who was this "vampire count"? None other than Sheldon Cooper, currently pursuing his second doctorate at Caltech.

In his sleep, Sheldon's face twisted in terror as he thrashed his head from side to side. "Gorn, don't crash into me! I'm just a train running on schedule! Don't hit me! Spock, save me!" he mumbled, eyes squeezed shut.

Suddenly—knock, knock, knock!—a sound came from the door.

"No!" Sheldon yelled, bolting upright. He frantically patted himself down, and once he confirmed he was still in one piece, he let out a long, shaky sigh of relief.

In his dream, he'd turned into a train engine, chugging along merrily with a cheerful choo-choo. Then, out of nowhere, a car pulled up beside him. Behind the wheel sat a monster with a crocodile head and a human body. One scaly hand rested on the window, its red eyes locked onto Sheldon, a menacing grin spreading across its face. With its other hand, it jerked the steering wheel, sending the car swerving toward the train as if to smash right into him.

That creature? It was a Gorn, an alien from Star Trek—Sheldon's favorite sci-fi show. Also, the star of his nightmares.

The first knock hit just as the Gorn floored the gas, charging at him. The second knock brought its snarling face so close he could almost smell its stench. By the third knock, the Gorn's car slammed into him full force.

In a panic, Sheldon jolted awake from the nightmare.

Knock, knock, knock! The pounding at the door didn't let up.

Scowling, Sheldon threw off his blankets, climbed out of bed, and shuffled toward the door. But then—pause. His annoyance melted into fear. He spun around and darted back to his bedroom.

When he reappeared, he was clutching a short stick. With a press of a button, a red beam shot out—yep, a lightsaber, straight out of Star Wars. Gripping it like a lifeline, he crept to the door and peeked through the peephole. Outside stood a gentle-looking middle-aged woman. But he wasn't fooled—behind her loomed a burly guy in a black suit. Suspicious.

"Who is it?" Sheldon called out.

"Is this Sheldon Cooper?" the woman asked.

"Yes. Who are you?"

"We're security from Caltech," she replied with a smile. "We're here to escort you to the University of Chicago for an academic exchange. It's urgent—we have to leave now. But don't worry, we've got a motorhome ready so you can sleep on the way."

Sheldon didn't doubt he deserved such treatment—naturally, he was a big deal. Still, he wasn't buying it. "You say you're school security. Prove it," he demanded through the door.

The woman held up a card with her photo to the peephole. "Here's our campus access card."

With a creak, Sheldon eased the door open halfway, the chain still latched, and studied them with a look that screamed, You might be up to no good. "What about his?" he asked, nodding at the man.

"Jon," the woman prompted. The guy—Jon—sighed and pulled out his own ID, holding it up for Sheldon to see.

"Satisfied?" she asked, still smiling.

"Wait a sec," Sheldon said. No way was he that easy to convince. He waved them off, slipped back to his bedroom, and rummaged through his wallet. Returning, he flashed a card at them. "This is my Justice League membership card."

Jon blinked. "Uh... what's that supposed to mean?"

"Just because I have this doesn't mean I know Batman," Sheldon sneered. Fake IDs? Please. Did they think he was born yesterday?

"You can call the campus security office—they'll vouch for us," the woman offered, grinning. "It's like if you called Commissioner Gordon to prove you know Batman. Then everyone would believe you're really in the Justice League and pals with the Dark Knight."

"You've seen Justice League?" Sheldon asked, his guard dropping just a hair.

"My son's obsessed with it, so I've watched my fair share," she chuckled.

"Hold on." Sheldon retreated to the living room, grabbed his phone, and dialed the school's security office. He interrogated them for ages, flipping their ID details every which way, tossing in trick questions to trip them up. His paranoia was on full blast.

"Now do you believe us?" Jon grumbled after standing outside for over ten minutes, watching Sheldon finally hang up.

"Absolutely... not!" Sheldon shook his head. "How do I know you're not all in on it?"

"Who'd waste their time on that?" Jon muttered, massaging his temples.

"Oh, really?" Sheldon flashed a sly grin. "Hard to say. Terrorists? Spies from some shadowy nation? Aliens?" His eyes narrowed, boring into them as he tightened his grip on the lightsaber, ready to lunge.

He couldn't help it. Fresh off a dream where the Gorn attacked him, and now two strangers show up in the middle of the night to whisk him away? Way too fishy. What if it was an alien plot? He was, after all, the king of intellect—humanity's last hope. If they nabbed him, Earth was done for. For the planet's sake, he had to stay sharp.

"So how can we convince you?" the woman asked, her smile turning weary.

"That's my line," Sheldon shot back, waving his lightsaber, shoulders hunched, eyes wide. "What can you do to make me trust you?"

"Alright, fine—we'll come clean," she said, throwing up her hands. "We're not from campus security."

"Aha! I knew it!" Sheldon crowed. "You evil aliens, trying to kidnap me! Dream on!"

"Actually," she continued, "we're professional security hired by your friend Adam Duncan to get you to the University of Chicago for your exchange. Don't believe us? Call him."

"Adam?" Sheldon squinted, still skeptical.

"Yep," she nodded.

It wasn't her going off-script. Adam had warned her when he set this up. If Sheldon bought their cover, great. If not, just tell him the truth. Adam knew Sheldon too well—he'd seen this coming a mile away. He'd hoped it wouldn't come to this, but, well, he'd underestimated his friend's stubbornness.

Chapter 458

Peggy's Apartment

Adam and Peggy were deep in a heart-to-heart when the phone cut through the silence with its shrill ring.

"Gotta be Sheldon—probably freaking out about that security thing again," Adam said, snagging the phone and giving it a playful little shake at Peggy before picking up.

"Hey, Sheldon."

"Who's this?" Sheldon demanded, dead serious, even though he obviously knew Adam's voice.

"...Adam Duncan," Adam replied, his mouth twitching slightly.

"How do I know you're really Adam Duncan?"

Sheldon's voice dripped with suspicion, paired with a smug, dismissive smirk. He acted like he was perched above the stratosphere, untouchable, and nothing could slip past him.

"Remember that time in science class when Dr. Ronaldo Hodges from the Houston Johnson Space Center came to guest lecture? Our teacher invited him, he totally blew you off, and then you schooled him hard?"

Adam tossed out the memory like it was no big deal.

"Ha! I knew it—you're aliens pretending to be Adam!"

On the other end, Sheldon's tone screamed 'called it!' "Adam doesn't give a crap about that stuff. Only you aliens would obsess over Earth's space program.

Oh, wait—I designed that booster rocket recycling system, didn't I? It's gonna slash launch costs big time. Once it's up and running, Earth's space game will level up—huge threat to you extraterrestrials! That's why you're here to kidnap me, isn't it?"

"..."

Adam's eye twitched.

Anyone else who thought like that—and had the guts to say it—would've been carted off to a psych ward ages ago.

Sheldon, though? He'd been mistaken for a nutcase more times than you could count.

Like that night he broke into a playground and dove into the ball pit, swimming around like it was the freaking ocean. The security guard caught him and called Leonard. When Leonard showed up to apologize, the guard just waved it off: "No biggie, my cousin's got a 'special' kid like that..." Leonard wanted to argue, but he bit his tongue. Then he spent half the night playing hide-and-seek in the ball pit, chasing Sheldon as he bobbed up and down like a manic submarine.

Or that time Sheldon's hair got shaggy, but his regular barber was stuck in the hospital. He wouldn't let the guy's nephew touch him—only his usual barber would do. So, he marched into the hospital with a pair of scissors, clicking them next to the comatose barber's ear, hoping the familiar snip-snip would jolt

the guy awake to give him a trim. A nurse walked in, pegged him as a runaway from the psych floor, and started cooing "sweetie" to keep him calm while she ran for security. Sheldon, pro that he is, pocketed the scissors and hightailed it out of there. One more second, and he'd have been strapped to a gurney for real.

Emmm.

That's Sheldon—Adam's good ol' pal. ☹️

"Remember when..."

Adam sighed, racking his brain for some tiny, random moments only the two of them would know. They both had photographic memories—sharp as a tack—so even the smallest, oldest stuff came back like it was yesterday.

"Poor Adam," Sheldon tsked, shaking his head. "You've got him under your thumb, huh? Scanned his brain with your memory-reading tech? If you hadn't, how could he recall all that? He's not me! Hmph, you're not fooling me!"

Adam wanted to fire back a snarky "Oh, come on!"—but, okay, Sheldon's wild theory kind of held water. ☹️

Most people's smarts are set from birth. Back when Adam hung out with Sheldon, he was still sharpening his brain, nowhere near genius territory yet. To Sheldon, he was just some regular dude. So, could a regular dude pull up a random memory from years ago—scene, words, tone, expressions, all in HD? Nope. Sheldon's paranoia wasn't totally off-base.

Adam, though, wasn't normal—he was a transmigrator with a system, leveling up to a photographic memory even super geniuses might envy. How was that any different from aliens hijacking his brain with a memory reader? Which sounded crazier? It's not like it was 2020, with Chinese transmigration novels flooding the U.S. Sure, Adam wrote *Lord of the Mysteries*, a transmigration story, but it had a golden finger, not a system. The whole "system transmigration" trope hadn't hit the mainstream yet. So, yeah, Sheldon's alien theory made sense in his head.

"I..."

Adam opened his mouth, then threw in the towel. "Fine, Peggy, you talk to him!"

He flipped the phone to speaker mode.

"Peggy?"

Sheldon snorted. "It's 2:23 AM in New York. How's Peggy gonna chat with me? Still claiming you're not aliens?"

"Would aliens pull this off..."

Peggy took the reins, diving into a rapid-fire exchange with Sheldon in their geeky, high-IQ math lingo.

Adam's brain checked out. He hadn't tackled those theories yet—stuff that took history's greatest minds their whole lives to crack. Even as a super genius now, he couldn't just get it without serious study. Their convo was lightning-fast and loaded with jargon—total gibberish to him.

They yammered on for a full thirty minutes.

"Okay, fine, you're Peggy," Sheldon relented. "Aliens might snag memories, but they can't hijack your brain. If they could, I'd be screwed anyway."

Then his tone shifted, curious. "But why are you with Adam at this hour?"

"You don't remember? It was your idea," Peggy said with a grin.

"My idea?"

Sheldon paused, then lit up. "Oh, ohhh~ You mean you two are ?"

Adam's mouth twitched. "Can you not use that word?"

It was one of Sheldon's favorites, but it grated like nails on a chalkboard.

"Got it."

Sheldon pivoted without missing a beat. "So, you're saying you two are @#?"

"..."

Adam gave up talking. God only knew what other cringe terms Sheldon had up his sleeve.

"Yup," Peggy said, cool as ever. "And thanks to your tip, my math research is unstuck. The ideas just keep flowing. If this keeps up for a year, I might crack the complete conjecture."

"For real? It's that good?" Sheldon marveled.

"For me, yeah," Peggy replied with a smile.

"No way!"

Sheldon's jealousy kicked in. "I've gotta try it too!"

"You? Want to try?"

Sheldon—the guy who'd never budge—was suddenly curious. When Penny heard about it later, she was so floored she crushed a wine glass in her hand. Picturing that, Adam instinctively let go of whatever he was gripping. Then, after Sheldon's next blunt ramble,

Adam: "..."

Chapter 459: It's Not Easy for Anyone

Peggy's Apartment

"Heh."

After hearing what Sheldon said, Peggy burst out laughing.

Meanwhile, Adam just stared blankly: "...(ω ` ll)"

Luckily, Adam snapped out of it fast and fired back, "Aren't you missing a suffix or something?!"

"Bazinga!" came Sheldon's voice from the other end of the phone. After a few seconds of silence, his cheerful laughter echoed through.

Adam let out a long sigh of relief.

Sure enough, he's just messing with me!

But this wasn't a joke he could play along with.

"Hmm!" Peggy tried to keep poking fun at him, but Adam, quick as a flash, clapped a hand over her mouth.

He chatted with Sheldon a bit more, reassuring him that the two security guys were his people and that Sheldon could trust them for the Chicago trip. Then, he hung up without hesitation.

"What's your deal?" Peggy asked, sounding a little annoyed.

She only had two friends, and this was a rare chance for them all to vibe together and have some fun. And Adam just had to ruin it.

"It's just a little teasing," she grumbled. "Was that really necessary?"

"It's not what you think," Adam said with a wry smile. "I don't mind, honestly. I just didn't want you wasting your energy."

No matter how much you say, I can't hear it anyway.

"And if you go on too long, all I'd hear is a bunch of beeping," he added. "That's way too harsh on the ears."

Peggy didn't quite get the whole "unspeakable" thing he was hinting at, but seeing how pitiful he looked, she let it drop.

Adam breathed another sigh of relief.

Still not steady enough, he thought. Guess I'll punish myself by copying the Stability Mantra three thousand times!

In his mind, he pictured a starry sky, styled like the opening crawl of Star Wars. He started writing the Stability Mantra across it, complete with some epic background music.

Four in the Morning

The sky was still pitch black.

Adam gave a sleeping Peggy a soft kiss on the forehead, made sure Lisa and the others had their instructions, and then drove off from New Jersey through a raging storm.

Last night had been a chaos of lightning and thunder, with howling winds outside that made it feel like the end of the world.

Adam had no doubt the hospital would be swamped today with patients injured by this insane weather.

New York. Medical Center. Locker Room

When Adam got there, Meredith, George, and Liz were already changing into their scrubs.

Christina, though, was still rocking yesterday's white coat.

"You haven't changed?" Adam asked with a grin.

"Why bother?" Christina shrugged. "No time, no mood. I was out cold last night when they dragged me out of bed. Lightning hit a substation, and everyone stuck at the hospital had to jump in to move patients."

"Doesn't the hospital have backup generators?" Adam asked, surprised.

"One works. The other's been busted forever and never replaced," Christina complained. "It could only keep the operating rooms going, so we shoved all the ER patients in there."

"That's ridiculous," George muttered as he changed. "They know it's broken and don't fix it? What if something goes wrong?"

"Go tell the director," Christina shot back with a smirk. "The budget had cash for a new generator, but the director nixed it to save money for another MRI machine."

George clammed up real quick.

"Oh, and that herniated disc patient?" Christina said, glaring at everyone. "He's mine. Anyone tries to take him, and we're done!"

"You mean Mr. Hunter Lamott? The guy who watches naughty nurse videos to deal with pain?" Adam's eyes lit up. "He hasn't had surgery yet?"

"It was slated for yesterday," Christina said, locking eyes with him. "But with all that chaos, you think Dr. Shepherd had time for him? It's today now. I've been with that patient since last night, so this surgery's mine. Back off."

"Who gets the surgery is up to Dr. Shepherd during rounds," Adam said, glancing at Meredith with a sly smile. "I'm not the one you should be worried about, right?"

Meredith stayed stone-faced.

"No, it's you!" Christina snapped. "Meredith doesn't care about this, so it's just us two—"

"Hey!" George cut in.

"What, are George and I chopped liver?" Liz huffed.

Christina gave them a look that screamed deal with it, then turned back to Adam. "You don't know what I went through last night... If you're still my friend, don't fight me for this surgery."

"Fine," Adam relented. Christina was dead serious, and he wasn't about to bicker over one surgery.

Now, if it was a procedure I'd never done before, that'd be a different story, he mused. Sometimes you've gotta stab a friend in the back for the greater good—like saving more patients. They might not get it now, but they'll come around eventually.

Hmm, you can't always please everyone, right?

"Thanks," Christina said, her face brightening.

"Hang on, aren't you forgetting something?" Adam blocked her path, smirking. "What did you do last night?"

At that, George and the others perked up and stared.

"Nothing," Christina mumbled, avoiding eye contact.

"So you're lying to me?" Adam said, deadpan. "Guess we'll just fight for that surgery fair and square then."

"Come on, spill it! What's the big secret?" Liz laughed.

"Yeah, tell us!" George egged her on.

"Alright, alright!" Christina groaned, realizing they wouldn't drop it until she fessed up.

Turns out, after the power went out, Mr. Lamott couldn't watch his pain-relief movies anymore and was in agony right away.

His wife wasn't there, and the nurses were too busy shuffling patients around to help him.

Christina happened to walk by and checked on him. His blood pressure was spiking, and his pulse was racing—no way he was faking it.

That's when she stopped thinking he was just some creep.

Those "art films" actually calmed him down and eased his pain.

So, she started brainstorming ways to help.

Painkillers? Nope, he was allergic.

In the end, Christina had to turn into a storyteller, dramatically narrating the Oath of the Peach Garden from Romance of the Three Kingdoms to keep Mr. Lamott going until the power came back.

"Pfft!" Once she finished explaining, Adam and the others lost it.

"What did you do?"

"Hahaha!"

"Oh man, my sides!"

"Stop laughing!" Christina hissed, glancing at the other doctors changing nearby. "I was just doing my job as a doctor!"

"Nah, you were totally doing a nurse's gig," Adam teased with a wink, hinting at something cheeky.

"Hahaha!"

"Nurse Christina!" Liz and George cracked up again.

"You're the nurses!" Christina snapped, smacking Liz and George playfully. She shot Adam a death glare, then stormed out, slamming the door behind her.

Chapter 460: Adam's Follower

`Medical Center

"What's up with her?" Adam asked, trailing Christina out of the locker room with a curious tilt of his head.

"You mean Meredith?" Christina shook her head. "Dr. Shepherd dumped her, and this time it's for good."

"No way, really?" Adam raised an eyebrow, unconvinced.

"He didn't sign the divorce papers," Christina explained, her voice dripping with disdain. "He told Meredith that Dr. Montgomery's his wife—so how could he possibly divorce her? What a shameless jerk! When he first met Meredith, why didn't he just say that? Why not drop that bomb right when they had it out? Instead, he let Meredith swallow her pride and beg him to pick her, only to hit her with that casual line—like she's the one wrecking his family and he's some saint."

"How dare you!" Adam said with a smirk, his tone teasing.

"Huh?" Christina shot him a puzzled look.

"I mean, imagine if Dr. Shepherd had tacked on a 'how dare you' at the end," Adam grinned playfully. "It'd be next-level dramatic."

"You know what?" Christina paused, mulling it over, then nodded. "Yeah, throwing that in would make it even more absurdly hilarious."

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Emergency Room

"...all that media brainwashing, cramming kids' heads with garbage like 'I love you, you love me, we're one big happy family'—just filthy, laughable nonsense..." Adam caught the familiar rant as he stepped in.

Glancing over, he spotted an African-American guy who could've been Earl from 2 Broke Girls—decked out in a hospital gown, spitting and raving in that signature rap cadence, saliva flying everywhere.

If Joey, the actor who swore clear diction meant spraying spit, were here, he'd shout, "Pro move!"

"What's going on?" Adam asked, intrigued.

"It's—" A young nurse started, but a guy in a white coat cut her off.

"Mr. Rack's got uremia," the guy said in one breath, holding up a coffee tray with a suck-up smile aimed at Adam. "Needs dialysis, but his mouth's pissed off half the staff in New York hospitals. No one'll take him, so he's been hopping from place to place. Dr. Lewis felt sorry for him and let him in. Dr. Duncan, want a latte?"

"Kiss-ass!" the nurse snapped, glaring at the interrupter.

"And you are?" Adam asked, grinning at the eager guy.

"John Carter, sir. Fourth-year at NYU School of Medicine, interning in the ER," he replied, flashing his best polished smile.

"Thanks, Carter." Adam took the latte, gave a nod, then handed it to the nurse.

"Thank you, Dr. Duncan!" Her face lit up like she'd won the lottery.

Carter's smile froze.

"Carter," Adam said, clapping him on the shoulder with a chuckle, "you're a med intern, so here's your first lesson from me, a resident intern: don't ever piss off the nurses."

In hospitals, interns might be the lowest rung of real doctors—still earning a "Dr." title—but med students like Carter, stuck as "Mr." or "Ms.," had zero clout with patients. Unless, of course, they were some rare prodigy. The pecking order was crystal clear: attendings mentored residents, residents guided interns, and interns babysat med students. Carter pegging Adam as his ticket up showed he had sharp instincts.

"Thank you, Dr. Duncan!" Carter bounced back fast, grinning. "Please keep teaching me!"

"Heh." Adam gave a vague smile and headed toward Susan Lewis.

"You're not much to look at, but you've got big dreams," the nurse snorted at Carter. "Wanna tag along with Dr. Duncan? Join the line."

"Line?" Carter froze mid-step, nerves kicking in. "Wait, are other med interns after Dr. Duncan too?"

"I wasn't even counting you med interns," she shot back, puffing out her chest. "Plenty of actual interns are cozying up to Dr. Duncan, hoping to soak up some wisdom. Haven't you seen his open lectures? The guy's a genius—trades words with legends! Rumor has it he's an attending hiding in intern scrubs. You, a measly med student fresh off the boat, think you can skip two levels and shadow an 'attending'? Keep dreaming!"

With that, she grabbed the latte Adam had passed her, sipping it like it was liquid gold, savoring every drop.

Carter stood there, deflated.

"If I were you, I wouldn't overthink it," the nurse said, tossing him a glance. "Start with the basics—don't screw up the simple stuff. Dr. Duncan's not here to babysit you through that. Ask the old-timer nurses; they've seen it all. Once you're sharp enough to call them out, then you can dream about earning Dr. Duncan's nod and shadowing him for the good stuff."

Interns and nurses had a weird dance. At first, nurses dubbed the newbies "Bambi," poking fun at their fumbles. But if those rookies ditched the "I'm a med school grad" ego, nurses would throw them a bone, helping them grow. It was the humblest stretch for doctors and the happiest for nurses—when the

divide was thinnest. Usually lasted two or three months. After that, the nurses' wisdom was tapped out, and the shift hit. A nurse might nudge a Bambi about a patient, but the half-seasoned rookies—armed with med school theory—would spot the flaws. Doctors owned the diagnosis gig, not nurses who'd grinded out experience. So, the interns started pushing back, demanding their calls be followed. That's when nurses clocked the golden days were done, muttering a flat, "Yes, doctor." From then on, it was doctors versus nurses—no more laughs, no shared lunches. Unless they hooked up, of course—then who's boss didn't matter.

Eh, whatever works! No shame in it! Interns had it rough, but med students like Carter? They'd better bow low and soak up everything—or the veteran nurses would school them hard.

"Thanks," Carter said earnestly, locking in a quiet vow to nail the basics fast and snag a spot by Adam's side.