

## TV Show 48

Chapter 48: Hangover

**\*\*The Gretchen Residence\*\***

A grand castle-like villa was buzzing with the heat of a massive party.

"Whew."

Adam, his face flushed from drinking, stepped outside for some fresh air.

In America, for a party to be considered remarkable, it can lack anything—except alcohol.

Americans love bars. They hold their glasses, not necessarily pairing drinks with food, and sip or chug all night long.

Men drink this way at bars with one goal: to get themselves and others drunk.

Women drink this way at bars for another reason: to give others a chance—and themselves a chance, too.

Nobody's naïve. Everyone knows the game.

Parties are no different.

Those who drink excessively, tipping beer kegs straight into their mouths, often aren't just seeking attention—they're also hoping to unleash some wild, uninhibited madness.

Tonight's graduation party was wilder than usual. Even the quiet, reserved students were acting up, let alone those already known for their craziness.

After tonight, some would head to college, others into the workforce. Their paths would diverge, sharply and irreversibly.

The wildest bunch were often the football players. Aside from the quarterback captain, most weren't skilled enough to be recruited by colleges. For them, graduation was essentially unemployment day.

Many of them would be stuck in this small town for life—some fading into mediocrity, others becoming alcoholics or abusive parents, fueling the American stereotype of villains and psychopaths portrayed in countless TV dramas.

Don't ask why. Just blame childhood trauma.

Inside the castle, the deafening chaos of the party continued unabated.

Adam shook his head to clear it. Earlier, he had gone to thank Gretchen again for her recommendation letter. A casual chat turned into an hour of drinking and bantering. When he returned to the main hall, Juno and Karen were nowhere to be found.

As he debated whether to leave and go home to write, he spotted someone sitting alone on the stone steps, drinking silently. Squinting, he realized it was George Jr., Sheldon's older brother.

"What are you doing out here alone? Where's Veronica?"

Even though George Jr. had flipped him off earlier that afternoon, Adam didn't hold it against him. In fact, he admired this older brother of young Sheldon.

If the future didn't change, George Jr. would quietly shoulder the responsibility of supporting the Cooper family after his father's death, even building a modest legacy through sheer effort.

Though George Jr. had always found Sheldon annoying, he still financed Sheldon's living expenses during college, despite being on the receiving end of his brother's sharp tongue.

George Jr. was a man who took responsibility seriously.

"Leave me alone!"

George Jr. waved him off irritably.

"Okay."

Adam shrugged, ready to walk away.

Admiration aside, he wasn't about to let his kindness be dismissed. No one owed anyone anything.

"She's going to college."

Just as Adam turned, George Jr.'s voice, filled with loss, stopped him.

Adam couldn't help but chuckle. You might as well change your name to George "Paradox" Cooper. That backtracking was faster than a spin on your heel.

"So?"

"Seeing her talk and laugh with her classmates about their future college plans...I suddenly felt like I was losing her."

George Jr. took another swig, his voice heavy with pain.

Adam understood.

Although George Jr. was Sheldon's older brother, he neither possessed Sheldon's genius intellect nor Missy's high emotional intelligence. His grades were so bad that another failure would even jeopardize his beloved football.

With his family's financial struggles and no athletic scholarship offers, George Jr. had never seriously considered college.

Instead, he planned to find a job or start a business after graduation. He'd already taken some steps and discovered a knack for business.

But tonight, seeing Veronica mingling with her classmates, eagerly discussing their collegiate dreams, he felt out of place—awkward, isolated, and deeply regretful.

Though Veronica was his girlfriend now, she'd soon leave for college in another city.

And in America, even a child knows that long-distance relationships often spell doom.

Small-town love is no match for the temptations of the big city.

A few parties in, and someone's bound to cheat.

"Look, if it's meant to be, it'll be. If not, overthinking won't change a thing."

Adam offered a simple consolation.

"How do you do it?"

"What?"

Out of the blue, George Jr. asked an unrelated question.

"How do you not care?"

George Jr. took another swig, mumbling, "I always thought I was a carefree guy, but then I met Veronica. She made me feel something entirely different. If love exists, this must be it.

But you? The girls you've been with are all amazing, yet you never seem to care at all. How do you do that?"

Adam chuckled. "It's easy—just really don't care."

In a world like a TV drama, caring about love was a recipe for heartbreak. Adam had no intention of entertaining love until he was completely exhausted by life. Even if his partner were a true goddess, he wouldn't risk it.

The risks? Endless.

Take Ross and Rachel from *\*Friends\**, for example. Their on-and-off relationship was riddled with issues, and they both dated others during their breaks.

Ross nearly hooked up with Rachel's sister. Rachel dated Ross's girlfriend's father. Then Rachel almost dated Joey.

As for Monica? She fell for Richard, her parents' friend, supposedly her "true love," only to almost date Richard's son later. Even her friends found her romantic choices bizarre.

Could you imagine living like that?

"Forget it. You wouldn't understand."

George Jr. shook his head with a bitter smile, conceding that Adam had reached a level of detachment he couldn't comprehend.

"No, it's you who don't understand," Adam countered, smiling. "You think Veronica is your true love? Trust me, she's just an important chapter in your life, not the whole story."

In *\*The Big Bang Theory\**, Sheldon once mentioned that George Jr. married young, divorced, and remarried.

So this so-called "true love," Veronica, was probably just his first wife—a relationship destined to end.

George Jr. had even bet his father that he wouldn't marry before thirty.

Talk is cheap, though. Life had other plans.

"Ah, there you are! Drive us home, will you?"

Juno and Karen stumbled out, giggling as they clung to Adam.

"Sure."

Adam staggered to his feet, supporting Juno as he led them to his pickup truck. Following Juno's directions, he drove Karen home first.

No question about it—he was drunk driving. But it was a small town, and the distance was short. Adam safely dropped them off, helped Juno inside, and promptly blacked out.