

## TV Show 481

### Chapter 481: A Burning Heart

#### Nurses' Station

"Sorry about earlier."

Christina apologized to Nurse Debbie, whom she'd rubbed the wrong way before.

"It's not that hard to show us a little respect, you know?" Debbie said with a hint of sass.

"We're all coworkers here—mutual respect should be a given," Adam chimed in with a grin, smoothing things over.

"That's the real reason Dr. Duncan's so popular," Debbie said, laughing. "It's not just that he's the best—it's because he's the kindest too!"

Christina watched Adam and Debbie trade compliments like they were in some corporate love-fest. Inside, she was rolling her eyes so hard they might've gotten stuck, but she kept her face neutral. Adam's story from earlier had really hit her hard. She couldn't shake the feeling that the senior doctor he'd talked about was basically her in a nutshell. If it were her, she'd have done the exact same things—snapping at a nurse she didn't vibe with when she was in a bad mood? Totally normal. Refusing to back down after? Oh, that was a given. She was a doctor, after all—high and mighty!

But what she hadn't seen coming was how nurses could pull sneaky, roundabout moves to get back at her—and totally get away with it. She had no choice but to swallow her pride and apologize. Sure, she was proud, but she wasn't dumb. Risking her career over a bruised ego? Only an idiot would do that.

"Alright, this severe diarrhea case—I'll call another doctor to handle it," Debbie said, practically glowing from Adam's flattery. At his nudge, she finally let the grudge go.

"Thanks!" Christina perked up. This didn't just mean she was off the hook for endless grunt work—it also meant she could snag her first adult male teratoma removal surgery. Score!

"Go for it!" Adam urged, even more pumped than she was. With surgery schedules clashing, this was a chance to cut losses and turn a profit—big time.

Christina nodded, a grin spreading across her face as she bolted off.

Hospital Room

Adam was doing a pre-op check on Mrs. Griswold.

"Alan, make sure they take that tube out of my throat right after surgery..." Mrs. Griswold was, as usual, nagging her husband with a laundry list of demands.

"Take a break, huh?" Mr. Griswold muttered.

"What did you just say?!" Her voice shot up a full octave.

"You've got surgery soon—rest up and stop talking for a bit," he said again, head down, after a long pause.

"What, I can't even talk now? Oh, that's rich! You're sick of me, aren't you? You're unbelievable..." Mrs. Griswold exploded.

"Shut up!"

This time, though, her husband—who'd been a pushover his whole life—didn't just sit there and take it like he always had. He lifted his head and roared at her, his voice growing louder until it cracked with exhaustion. "I said shut up! You complain to me all day, blame me, nag me—every single day! Can't you just be quiet for once?! Even just for a minute?! Can't you go one second of your life without yapping?!"

"Mr. Griswold, please calm down!" Adam had sensed trouble the moment he started talking and tried to intervene. A heart patient couldn't handle that kind of outburst.

But an honest man losing it? There was no stopping him.

Beep beep beep.

The monitor's alarm blared.

Mrs. Griswold—either from anger or shock—clutched her chest, gasping for air.

"She's having a heart attack!"

"Four milligrams of morphine!"

"Start nitroglycerin—ten micrograms per minute!"

"Get the OR on the line—notify Dr. Green!"

"Move fast, people—we're heading to surgery now!"

Adam took charge, cool as ever.

"It's all my fault," Mr. Griswold said, snapping out of his rage. Seeing his wife like this, guilt washed over him.

Adam glanced at him but didn't say anything. Yeah, he'd triggered this mess, no doubt. But knowing their situation, Adam got it. Still, he wasn't about to toss out a "Don't worry, she'll be fine" to comfort him. That heart—already through three surgeries—was now facing its fourth, under local anesthesia no less, since they couldn't risk it stopping again. No one could predict how it'd go. And even if Adam was 100% sure, he wouldn't say it. Giving hope only to crush it later? That's the cruelest move—and the fastest way to get sued. No pro doctor would risk it.

## Operating Room

"Huh, Mrs. Griswold's holding up way better than I expected," Adam said, surprised, as he opened her chest.

"Yeah," Leonard agreed from his usual spot as first assistant, giving Adam the lead. He took a look and nodded. "Some people are just built tougher. Most wouldn't survive their first surgery, but here she is, powering through her fourth—and she'll keep going strong."

"Wonder if Mr. Griswold's happy or bummed about that," Adam quipped.

"He's too stuck in his ways," Leonard said, shaking his head. As Mrs. Griswold's primary doc, he knew their family inside out. "If he'd been braver, it wouldn't have come to this. Half her bossiness? He enabled it."

The anesthesiologist and nurses exchanged smirky, gossipy glances.

"Back up!"

In a split second, everything changed. Adam kicked into overdrive—like bullet time in a movie. A spark flared from the cauterizing tool in his hand. He shoved Leonard, who'd been hunched over the same spot, out of the way.

Leonard stumbled, totally thrown off. "What the—?"

"Red alert!" A nurse shouted as the room's temp gauge screeched.

Boom! A fireball erupted from Mrs. Griswold's chest. If Adam hadn't pushed Leonard, that flame would've hit him square in the face.

"Activate fire protocol!"

"Saline! Wet towels!"

"Cut the power!"

"Shut off the oxygen!"

"Grab the airbag—assist breathing!"

"Anyone not needed, get out now!"

Adam barked orders, dousing the fire with saline, slapping on a wet towel, and moving fast to stop the bleeding. Shockingly, Mrs. Griswold took it like a champ. Her vitals stayed rock-solid—better than most young, healthy hearts could've managed.

"You caught that before the alarm?" Leonard—used to chaos—recovered quick, jumping back to assist. Once they stabilized her, he voiced what everyone was thinking.

"I've got decent eyes," Adam said with a grin, stitching up the heart. "Reflexes aren't bad either."

Everyone else: "..."

Oh, and speaking of clutch moves—this is the kind of drama that keeps us on our toes, right?

Chapter 482: Laughing My Head Off as I Head Out

Medical Center.

Operating Room.

"So why'd it catch fire this time?" Leonard asked, frowning.

Hospital fires aren't exactly rare. And operating room fires? They make up the bulk of them. It's not even that surprising when you think about it. The OR's got the perfect storm for a fire: flammable stuff, oxygen, and ignition sources.

Let's break it down.

Flammable materials? Oh, plenty. High-proof alcohol is everywhere in a surgical suite that needs to be scrubbed down and disinfected. Surgical drapes cover the patient, leaving just the operating area exposed. Then there's the piles of cotton balls and towels for soaking up blood—sometimes they even forget one inside a patient's chest cavity. You can imagine how often those get used. Add in all the random supplies, rubber, and plastic bits, and yeah, it's a tinderbox waiting to happen.

Oxidizers? You bet. Oxygen's the big one. ORs are packed with people working long, intense hours, so to keep everyone sharp and avoid oxygen shortages, they use a fancy system—think air conditioning pumped with a mix of medical-grade, high-concentration oxygen and regular air. It's just enough to perk up the docs and nurses, keep them alert, and fight off fatigue. But that oxygen-rich air? It's like a fire's best friend.

Then there's nitrous oxide—laughing gas. It's mostly phased out of ORs these days, but outside? Totally different story. Some folks—especially girls—love huffing it to numb out until they're basically jelly. Compressed air for ventilators and other gear's in the mix too. Oh, and the room's usually a positive-pressure environment for non-contagious surgeries—higher pressure inside than out. Higher pressure lowers the ignition point, so things catch fire even easier.

And ignition sources? Take your pick: electrocautery tools, surgical lasers, drills, sparks. Electricity and fire go hand in hand.

That's why ORs have crazy strict fire prevention rules. Fires just shouldn't happen. And a patient's chest catching fire during heart surgery? In this day and age, that's straight-up unheard of. Leonard was totally thrown.

"Mrs. Griswold had a sudden pneumothorax—a tiny tear in her lung tissue," Adam piped up. He'd already run the scenario in his head. "High-purity oxygen from her breathing leaked out, hit a spark from the cautery tool, and landed on a dry hemostatic towel. In that oxygen-heavy environment, boom—fire."

Leonard raised an eyebrow. "You said earlier she got pissed off at Mr. Griswold?"

"Yeah," Adam nodded. "She was clutching her chest, struggling to breathe. The heart attack masked the pneumothorax symptoms."

Leonard mulled it over and gave a nod. Made sense. They'd confirm it once the surgery wrapped up and they could check her lung tissue.

In Western medicine, tons of conditions share the same symptoms—sometimes dozens, even hundreds. Patients can have multiple issues at once, and the signs overlap. In emergencies, it's way too easy to focus on the big problem and miss the sneaky secondary one. Even Dr. House next door gets tricked by that kind of thing all the time—running test after test, ruling stuff out, until he finally nails the real cause and fixes it.

"Adam, didn't you handle a case a while back where someone's lung basically exploded?" Leonard asked with a grin.

"Yup," Adam chuckled. "Some kid was gaming, got wrecked by his little cousin, and lost it. His lung had a big bleb that popped—literally 'blew up from anger.' Gave a whole new meaning to 'pissed off' and 'anger hurts.' Looks like it's not just the young ones who can blow a gasket, huh?"

Leonard sighed and shook his head. Still, despite the chaos, the surgery went off without a hitch. Mrs. Griswold's a tough one—her will to live was unreal.

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Family Waiting Area.

Adam and Leonard stepped out together to update Mr. Griswold, who'd been pacing out there, about the surgery's success—and the wild hiccup.

"Her heart caught fire?" Mr. Griswold blinked, stunned.

"Yeah," Adam said, launching into the explanation. He walked him through it, and the post-op checks backed him up. "I know it sounds nuts, but it's not as weird as you'd think. The surgery went great, and your wife's gonna pull through just fine."

"Heh... hehehe... HAAAAH!"

Mr. Griswold slapped his hands over his face, his expression all twisted up. Then he couldn't hold it in—started with a quiet chuckle, then a giggle, and finally full-on belly laughs. When he noticed Adam and Leonard staring, he tried to dial it back to a snicker, but by the end, he was cracking up again.

"Heh, so in her fourth heart surgery, her heart catches fire, and she still survives? She's gonna be fine after this? HAAAAH!"

Adam and Leonard exchanged a look—half amused, half exasperated. Clearly, this "good news" wasn't what Mr. Griswold had been hoping for.

"She's like... like some kind of mysterious monster!" he said, waving a finger in the air, grinning ear to ear. "The kind that never dies!"

"Ahem," Adam coughed lightly. "Mr. Griswold, maybe you should take a breather, process this? We can chat more later if you—"

"Wait? No! No way! I'm done waiting!" Mr. Griswold shook his head like a madman, jumped up, shoved his wife's purse into Adam's hands, grabbed his coat, and started dancing toward the exit.

"Tell her—yeah, tell her—even without me, she'll keep on living just fine! HAAAAH!"

A few steps out, he spun back, flashed a goofy salute at Adam and Leonard, yanked the door open, and strode off, laughing like a lunatic.

"Hope we don't need to call psych for him," Leonard muttered, shaking his head.

"Nah," Adam said with a wry smile. "He's just letting it all out. I get it."

Oh, he got it alright. Back when he first crossed over to this world and found out his girlfriend was the infamous throat-slitting pro, Magic Amy? Those days of walking on eggshells were brutal. After busting his ass to turn himself into a drama king just so she'd dump him, the moment he was free, he'd screamed his head off too. Probably looked just as unhinged as Mr. Griswold.

The more pent-up you are, the crazier the release. Totally normal—not nuts. He'd calm down once the high wore off.

"Hey, isn't that first-ever adult male teratoma removal surgery happening this afternoon too?" Leonard glanced at his watch and stood. "It's probably still going. Wanna swing by?"

"Sure," Adam agreed, no hesitation.

Observation Room.

The surgery was a long one. A bunch of docs who'd snagged standing-room spots got paged out before it was over, so by the time Adam and Leonard rolled in, it was crowded but doable.

Adam peeked in and spotted Christina standing there as second assistant. He smirked—score! A rare surgery to watch and a favor in the bank.

Chapter 483: Hurry and Get Muscular Adam

Observation Operating Room

When a spherical tumor was removed from Mr. Herman's body, everyone in the room gasped in awe.

"What a shame we can't display it in a glass jar," someone sighed.

"Yeah, it's so fascinating," another chimed in.

"If only he hadn't insisted against it," someone else added with a hint of regret.

Adam couldn't help but chuckle.

Normally, whatever gets cut out during surgery is left to the hospital to deal with—patients don't usually care. But there are exceptions.

Take that dangerous, middle-aged "fake lolita" Adam once encountered. After her adoptive mother had a miscarriage, she went full artsy-hipster mode, cremating the fetus and using the ashes as fertilizer for a potted flower. She'd stare at the flower like it was a person.

Pointless, though.

The grief didn't go away. In the end, they adopted a girl to fill the void—only for it to spiral into a family-wrecking disaster.

And then there's this case.

Mr. Herman had genuinely seen the teratoma in his belly as a "baby" at first, pouring some emotion into it. That's why he was dead-set against the doctors turning it into some exhibit after the surgery.

It's way more normal than growing a flower from ashes, at least.

The doctors weren't thrilled, but they had to respect his wishes. It's not like this was Einstein's brain—nothing worth risking their licenses or jail time to steal, dissect, or study.

The afternoon flew by in a flash.

As night fell, word came that Barney had been "kissed" on the butt by a golden eyelash rattlesnake. Matthew and Lily swung by to check in.

"What's going on now?" Lily blurted out, half-laughing. "Barney, you again?!"

"Don't blame me!" Barney groaned, lying on his side. "Blame this hospital! Blame Adam!"

"Blaming the hospital makes sense, but why Adam?" Lily shot back, annoyed.

"He's the first one to blame!" Barney wailed. "Think about it—ever since I met him, how many times have I ended up in a mess?!"

"..."

Matthew and Lily paused, exchanging a look. Huh. He's got a point.

"Is Adam, like, Barney's kryptonite or something?" Matthew mused.

"Even if he is, it's not Adam's fault," Lily countered. "Barney, you're always the one stirring the pot first. Then Adam bets you, teaches you a lesson, and you—knowing full well what he's up to—jump in headfirst anyway. Who's to blame here? Only you!"

"Exactly," Matthew grinned. "Barney, you brought this on yourself, man."

"What are you guys chatting about? Sounds like a good time!"

Adam popped in, having heard Matthew and Lily were around. He figured he'd say hi.

His life for the next few years would revolve around the hospital—friend hangouts were rare, and even seeing them was tough. So, whenever there was a chance to catch up at work, he made the most of it. Even a quick hello was worth it.

"Oh, nothing much—just how Barney totally deserves this," Lily brushed it off with a smirk. Then she hugged Matthew tighter, looking at Adam with a mix of nerves and excitement. "Hey, Adam, we need a favor."

"What's up?" Adam asked.

"There's a monster in our apartment," they said, clinging to each other, trembling slightly.

"A what now?" Adam blinked.

"We just got home from work..." Lily started.

"Ahem," Adam cut in fast. "I get that you two are all lovey-dovey—no need for the steamy details. Skip to the point."

Lily and Matthew were way too into each other. Coming home and getting handsy the second they walked in? Standard move. But no need to overshare—Adam's a pure sunshine boy, not here for the rated-R stuff! 😊

"So, I looked up, and suddenly I spotted this thing," Lily said, wide-eyed with panic. "I pointed it out to Matthew, and he freaked out too..."

Adam glanced at Matthew.

"It's true, man. Total freakout," Matthew admitted, sheepishly covering himself a bit. "We bolted out of the apartment, then remembered Barney's latest drama and came here. Figured we'd ask our strongest, most jacked friend—you—to handle it. This monster's got your name on it, Adam."

"Wait, so you came to get Adam to fight some monster and just happened to check on me?" Barney grumbled, his face sour.

"That's not the point," Lily waved him off. "The point is, this thing is terrifying!"

"Okay, what kind of monster are we talking about?" Adam teased. "Don't tell me it's just a cockroach-rat or something."

"A cockroach-rat?"

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Matthew and Lily froze, then blurted out their takes.

"It's the most insane, disgusting rat ever!" Matthew said.

"No, it's a super-sized mega-cockroach!" Lily argued.

"It's a rat—it's got whiskers!"

"It's a cockroach—it's got antennae!"

"..."

They started bickering.

"Hold up, hold up!" Adam interrupted. "Sounds like you're describing some mutant cockroach-rat hybrid."

"A mutant cockroach-rat hybrid?"

They glanced at each other, compromising on Adam's name for it, then gasped, "Adam, you've seen one?!"

"Nope," Adam deadpanned. "But I've got two friends who ran into the same magical creature—and reacted exactly like you two."

"For real?" Matthew and Lily weren't buying it.

"Dead serious," Adam said, straight-faced. "Like, identical vibes."

"No way, that's wild! Who are they?" They were hooked, curious about these mystery friends.

"One's named Guangu, the other's Meijia," Adam grinned. "Foreigners—you wouldn't know 'em."

"Whoa!" Lily yelped. "So, cockroach-rats are a global thing? Why haven't we heard about them before?"

"The world's full of mysteries," Matthew jumped in, getting excited. "Like Bigfoot, Yeti, the Loch Ness Monster—Earth's huge, and we've barely scratched the surface!"

"Alright, I'll head over with you guys later to check out this legendary cockroach-rat," Adam laughed. "I've got a hunch it's the first of its kind."

"Why's that?" Lily tilted her head. "What about the one your friends saw?"

"Theirs was probably a descendant," Adam quipped. "Don't ask me how—I'm just going with my gut! Oh, and heads-up: cockroach-rats can fly."

"WHAT?!" Matthew and Lily shouted in unison. "It flies? Roaches and rats don't fly!"

"It's a mutant monster," Adam shrugged with a grin. "Totally tracks."

"But what caused it to mutate?" Matthew frowned. "This is New York, not some irradiated island."

"Yeah, isn't radiation the big mutation trigger?" Lily added.

"Radiation's the main culprit, sure," Adam nodded. "But it's not the only one. And it's not just islands that've been nuked—tons of places have had nuclear tests."

He stopped there.

Anything more wasn't fit for casual chit-chat.

From his past-life memories, Adam knew the U.S. had run way more nuclear tests on its own soil than that island nation ever saw. Ruthless stuff—sometimes they didn't even spare their own people. In sparsely populated states, secret tests left wide radiation zones, all hushed up from the affected residents. Cancer rates spiked in those areas later, way higher than elsewhere, and it blew up into class-action lawsuits when the truth came out.

If a cockroach-rat was a radiation-spawned freak, it'd more likely pop up in the U.S. than anywhere else. East Country? That'd be a stretch—pure comedy.

Chapter 484: Perspective Really Matters

Matthew's Apartment

Adam drove them over, ready to get this done quick.

"Once we grab it, we can send it to Columbia's Bio Center. Who knows? Could be a huge biological breakthrough!" Adam said with a grin.

"No way!" Lily piped up, horrified. She's got the softest heart of the crew. "They'll experiment on it—that's way too cruel!"

"So?" Adam shot her a sideways glance.

"So, can't we just whack it with a stick and be done?" Lily suggested earnestly, still somehow the kindest one in the room.

"Fair point," Adam nodded seriously. "But no one knows what this thing even is. What if it's carrying some nasty bug? One whack, blood splatters everywhere, and boom—contamination city. Not ideal."

"Okay, fine, catch it alive then," Lily backtracked instantly.

"Adam! Long time no see," came a voice as the door swung open. Ted was there too, pacing around like a nervous wreck.

"Ted, you've seen it too, right?" Lily asked, her eyes darting around in panic.

"Seen what?" Ted blinked, totally lost.

"The cockroach-rat!" Matthew chimed in. "Why else would you be so worked up?"

"You forgot—I've got my appointment at the Singleton Terminator soon," Ted said, wringing his hands. "Now that it's crunch time, I'm not sure this is the right move."

"If you're not sure, why even go?" Adam asked, chuckling.

"I don't have a choice—it's science," Ted said, rubbing his hands together. "I can't just not believe in science, right?"

"Heh," Adam smirked. "Tell me more."

This isn't some anti-intellectual era in the U.S.—not yet, anyway. Ted's a top-notch architect, young and already heading up the prep for a 78-story skyscraper project. He's solid middle-class, upper-middle even.

Even in the future, a guy like Ted would still put his faith in science over conspiracy nonsense. It's all about where you sit, right? Your perspective shapes your headspace.

The anti-science crowd? Mostly lower-middle-class folks. Are they dumb? Nah. It's just that all those shiny scientific breakthroughs don't trickle down to them. Take medicine, for example: billion-dollar wonder drugs get developed, but they can't afford 'em. Health insurance costs keep climbing, coverage keeps shrinking. The poor get poorer, the rich get richer.

Tech keeps marching on—so what? Doesn't help the little guy. If you're screwed either way, why not bet on God instead of science? The more the elite preach "trust the data," the more the underdogs push back. It's a quiet, helpless kind of rebellion.

"Last night, I went to apologize to that coworker who quit," Ted explained. "We got to talking, and it turned to stuff about being single and lonely..."

"Ohhh~" Adam grinned, raising an eyebrow. "You felt so bad about her quitting—did you, uh, make it up to her for the emotional damage?"

"Heh heh heh," Matthew and Lily, who'd been scouring the place for the cockroach-rat, perked up and smirked knowingly.

"What are you guys thinking?" Ted groaned. "It wasn't like that at all!"

"Sure, you weren't in the mood," Adam teased. "But I'd bet if you'd offered, she wouldn't have said no to that kind of 'apology.' Honestly, it'd be the sincere thing to do."

Ted's a catch—think leading man in a hit TV show. Handsome? Obviously. Plus, he's got this romantic vibe that hits women like a ton of bricks. Even the chubby girl he hurt wouldn't stand a chance against that kind of charm.

"...Anyway!" Ted dodged the topic with an eye roll. "We got onto the subject, and she mentioned she'd joined the Singleton Terminator recently. But they still haven't matched her with anyone decent. Then, with what I accidentally said, she got fed up and quit. So it's not all my fault."

"And then?" Adam leaned in, curious. "How'd you end up signing up too?"

"I didn't buy into this Singleton Terminator stuff at first," Ted admitted with a wry smile. "But she made it sound wild—like they use some math formula to sift through all of New York and narrow it down to your perfect match. It's such a tiny pool that, unless you want to fish blind in the ocean, you're better off going there. The owner, Ellen Paschel, is supposedly the best matchmaker in the city—total pro, 100% success rate pairing people up!"

"So you're ditching that girl you were waiting for?" Adam laughed. "What about your slutty pumpkin? Halloween's just a few weeks away!"

"Yeah..." Ted gave an awkward grin. "I'm still waiting for her, of course. This is just a test run. Maybe I won't even need you to give me her number in six months—I'll snag it from the Singleton Terminator myself!"

Oh, and here's a quick plug—[patreon:belamy20](https://www.patreon.com/belamy20)—supporting creators keeps the good stuff coming!

Think about it: if I find her that way, wouldn't it prove we're meant to be? As for the slutty pumpkin, she's just a memory. I only want to see her one more time—no ulterior motives." He put on his most sincere face.

Adam shook his head with a sigh. Damn romanticism.

Years back, Ted met a girl in a pumpkin costume at a rooftop Halloween party. Why "slutty"? Picture a skimpy pumpkin outfit—use your imagination. Ted was dressed as a hanging chad that night, rocking an election sign around his neck. They hit it off, and she gave him her number... only for it to end up in a candy stash that some kid swiped.

Losing his shot at a "pumpkin fling" crushed Ted. That built-in romantic streak had him dressing up in the same costume every Halloween since, waiting on that rooftop all night for a girl who'd probably never show. He's kept it up for years—and looks like he'll keep going.

If he actually finds her someday, that sappy story alone would seal the deal. A playboy like Ted pulling that off? It's a woman's worst nightmare—whoever falls for it is toast!

"One key question," Adam said, snapping out of the slutty pumpkin tangent and holding up a finger. "You really think a girl that great would need to join some Singleton Terminator?"

"Uh..." Ted froze.

"Go for it," Adam said with a grin. "If she does pop up in their database, then yeah, maybe you two are destined.

"And if she's not?" Ted couldn't help asking.

"Then you're not," Adam shrugged. "Let's see what this 'best matchmaker in New York' and her fancy science formula pick out as your dream girl."

"Alright!" Ted mulled it over, then psyched himself up. "If a rat and a cockroach can find true love in New York, then so can I!"

"Wait, what?" Matthew yelped. "You think this cockroach-rat is some lovechild of a rat and a roach?"

"Eww!" Lily gagged. "It's so ugly and gross—how could that be a lovechild?"

"Why not?" Ted countered, slipping into his romantic lens.

"Nope," Adam shut it down cold. "Ever heard of reproductive isolation?"

"It's just a metaphor!" Ted grumbled, shooting Adam a look. He grabbed his coat and headed for the door. These friends couldn't keep up with his romantic wavelength. Right then, he missed Barney—sure, Barney wasn't romantic, but he was wild enough to at least vibe on the same frequency.

"Kidding! You've got this," Adam called after Ted's retreating figure with a smirk. "Good luck finding your lady rat!"

Ted: "..."

Chapter 485: "You Believe Me, Right?"

Matthew's Apartment

After Ted left...

Lily and Matthew's search finally paid off.

"Adam! Over here!"

Their terrified shouts echoed through the room.

Adam hurried over, following their wide-eyed stares.

"Eww, gross!"

Yup, it was mutant-level disgusting. Even Adam, who'd seen it all, couldn't help but grimace out loud.

"It's coming this way!"

Lily and Matthew stumbled back in unison.

"Leave it to me."

Adam geared up—mask, goggles, gloves, the whole deal. Fully armored, he crouched down toward the cockroach-rat hybrid, locking eyes with it for a few tense seconds. Then, in a flash, he snatched it up.

He plopped it straight into a glass container he'd prepped earlier and slammed the lid shut.

It wasn't that Adam's speed had suddenly outpaced animal reflexes or anything. Nah, this cockroach-rat just wasn't scared of people.

Adam had zero doubt that once Columbia University's bio lab dissected this thing, they'd find its胆子—uh, guts, or maybe courage?—were way bigger than your average rat or roach, pound for pound.

"C'mere, you two."

Adam held up the glass jar, inspecting it casually while waving over Matthew and Lily, who were still cowering at a safe distance. Seeing them hesitate, he chuckled.

"Matthew, I get Lily being freaked out, but you? A 6'4" giant? Really?"

"It's not fear!"

Matthew puffed out his chest, trying to play it cool.

"Oh, yeah?"

Adam shoved the jar right in his face.

"Ahh!"

Matthew yelped and leaped back.

"If that's not fear, then what is it?" Adam teased.

"It's... awe! Yeah, awe at mysterious things!" Matthew clutched his chest, desperately clinging to his dignity.

"Heh."

Adam cracked up.

Matthew hailed from Minnesota, where his whole family was a lineup of giants. His dad and two older brothers? All over 6'6". At 6'4", Matthew could only flex his height over the women in the family—and even then, it wasn't a total win. One of his sisters-in-law was taller than him.

Their meals? Supersized. When it came to making food, most folks scooped mayo with a spoon. The Erickson clan? They measured it in cups—16 full cups, to be exact. Their salads? Seven layers deep!

As for games, regular ol' violent football wasn't enough for these "titans." They'd cooked up their own mashup: blue ice ball, a chaotic mix of basketball and hockey. Rules? What rules? It was pure, brutal chaos—smacking each other with hockey sticks was fair game. You either toughed it out or tapped out.

When Matthew was about to hit adulthood, his rite of passage for inheriting his brother's car was... wild. He had to drive buck naked to grab coffee. To get the keys, he sucked it up and did it.

But his two brothers? They got there first, bought out every coffee tray at the shop, and left him high and dry. Matthew, undeterred, loaded up the family's coffee order cup by cup, planning to crawl home slow and steady.

Cue his brothers popping out of nowhere, startling him. Coffee everywhere—scalding hot, all over him and probably them too.

Oof! That sting! Only real siblings could pull off a prank that savage.

So, growing up in that kind of chaos, Matthew being spooked by a little cockroach-rat? It honestly threw Adam for a loop. Then again, Matthew did have this weird reverence for Bigfoot, Yetis, the Loch Ness Monster—all that mysterious stuff. So maybe it tracked after all.

"Hey, this needs to go to Columbia's bio center. I'm swamped—Matthew, you up for it?" Adam asked, holding out the jar.

"I..." Matthew swallowed hard, then forced out, "Yeah, I can do it. I've got a buddy in Columbia's bio department—he'll love this."

"Sweet." Adam handed it over with a grin. "Who knows? Might just change his career trajectory."

Matthew hesitated, hands darting in and out, but finally took it.

"Ugh, yuck."

Lily, now feeling like the situation was under control—glass jar, no escape—edged closer, peering at it. "So gross! This is all Ted's fault! He totally ruined my perfect vision of love's little miracles!"

"Alright, you two have fun with that. I've gotta head back to the hospital," Adam said with a laugh, brushing off Lily's dramatic, shallow rant as he headed out.

Tonight, he still had to dig into Alice Grey's legendary experience pack.

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Medical Center

Outside the building...

Oh, and by the way, here's a quick plug: [patreon:belamy20](https://www.patreon.com/belamy20)—support the story if you're feeling it!

The second Adam pulled up, he caught a soap-opera-worthy scene.

"See ya, Derek~"

"See ya, Meredith~"

There, on an outdoor bench, Dr. Shepherd sat in his off-duty clothes. Meredith stood up, facing him with a loaded, double-meaning goodbye. He blinked, then matched her solemn vibe with his own reply.

That "see ya" was both a casual "catch you later after work" and a deeper "we're done, time to move on" vibe.

Looked like Meredith was finally ready to let go.

Adam's lips quirked into a smirk.

"What's so funny?"

Meredith, sharp as ever, spotted the curve of his mouth as she turned back toward the hospital.

"Nothing," Adam said, shaking his head.

"Me and Derek? It's over for good," she said, clearly knowing what he was smirking about and jumping to explain.

"Mm-hmm, I believe you," Adam replied, mimicking her earlier "solemn" tone. He locked eyes with her for a good few seconds before nodding seriously.

"..."

Meredith's whole vibe just deflated. She could feel the sarcasm dripping off him.

"You don't believe me?!"

"Why'd you say that?" Adam grinned wider. "I'm giving you the exact same energy you just gave!"

"You—!" Meredith huffed, fuming.

"Wanna bet on it?" Adam said, trying to smooth things over. "How about a rare surgery? If you really manage to cut ties with Dr. Shepherd—no more lingering strings—I'll hand you a rare surgery down the line. But if you can't, you owe me one. Deal? It's a freebie for you!"

Meredith opened her mouth, ready to jump at it, but then she caught the glint in Adam's eye. She pursed her lips, said nothing, and stormed off.

"C'mon, it's a no-lose deal! You believe me, right?" Adam called after her retreating back.

Sigh. Young folks these days—no trust, no guts.

Adam shook his head, chuckling to himself.

Meredith could talk a big game about "goodbye," but it was just a heat-of-the-moment thing. She thought she'd moved on.

But exes? There's a 0 or 1 difference—have you crossed that line or not? Why do people freak out about their partner's old flames? Why do they try to block any contact? Because the risk of rekindling something with an ex is a million times higher than with some random stranger!

Emotions flare, things happen, someone gets burned—it's basic math.

And Meredith? She knew it deep down.

She wasn't your average girl, either. Forget exes—she had a passive skill: 100% pants-dropping chance when drunk, even with a total stranger. No way she'd win Adam's bet.

So why would she take it? She'd have to be nuts.

Chapter 486: The Real MVP of Showtime

Nighttime at the Medical Center

The little study session was back in action.

"Huh? Just you tonight?" Adam asked, surprised to see only Christina there.

"Yeah, Meredith didn't feel like coming—she's at the bar," Christina said casually as she plopped down with her neatly organized notes. "George tagged along with her. Izzie's swamped working under Dr. Montgomery—she's basically a dog on a leash with no time to spare. As for Bianca and the others, well, that's on you."

"Ahem," Adam coughed lightly, giving her a chill grin. "The ones who wanna show up will. No point forcing the rest."

Christina shot him a little smirk, like she was calling his bluff.

So, why wasn't Bianca here? Simple—she and Adam were in a bit of a tiff. It all started recently: Adam's been juggling helping Kate with her case while also playing baby-prep assistant to Peggy, getting ready for their "first kid." That meant Bianca's usual slot on his schedule got squeezed down to almost nothing.

Sure, Adam's stamina could rival Naruto's, but he doesn't have some Reverse Harem Jutsu to split himself into a dozen clones. One's in New Jersey, the other's in New York—doesn't matter how tough he is if he's not even in the same zip code. Over time, even though Bianca knew the deal going in, she couldn't help but throw a mini tantrum.

Adam, being the stand-up guy he is, didn't pull any fake sweet-talk to smooth it over. He left it all up to her—her call.

Emmm... This definitely isn't some "don't reject, don't initiate, don't take responsibility" move! Nope, not at all!

Tonight's study session was just Adam and Christina—smallest stove crew yet.

After wrapping up...

"No date with Dr. Burke tonight?" Adam asked as he finished calming Alice Grey down and gave the nurses some instructions. He fell into step with Christina as they headed out.

"He asked," Christina shrugged. "But I blew him off. Dating's cool and all, but shadowing Alice Grey? That's the real deal."

"You're killing it," Adam said, flashing a thumbs-up. "You're gonna be one hell of a surgeon someday."



For someone without a cheat code or golden ticket, Christina's got the perfect combo: talent and relentless hustle. Barring any wild curveballs, she's got success in the bag. Maybe not Alice Grey's legendary status—that takes more than grit; it's like winning the cosmic lottery—but hitting Dr. Burke's level of "famous doc" or even Chief of Surgery Richard's "big shot" tier? Totally doable.

"Just good?" Christina rolled her eyes at him. "You mocking me? My goal's always been Alice Grey."

"Nah, you know I didn't mean it like that," Adam laughed.

She gave him a quick look and nodded. "Good. Yeah, there's a gap between us, but I'm always chasing it. I don't do surrender."

"I bet your dates with Burke are a riot," Adam teased.

"More like a nightmare," she groaned. "He doesn't get me at all. He's never even seen me outside the hospital..."

"Oh, really?" Adam grinned, leaning into it.

"Naked doesn't count," she added quick, then kept ranting. "He's like some relic from the '50s or '60s—sleeps with a woman and suddenly he's ready to slap a ring on it without even asking if we're game! I hate talking personal stuff, but now he's all curious about my life. It's driving me nuts! I wish he'd be more like you."

"Hmm?" Adam's eyes slid over to her, suspicious.

"It's a compliment!" Christina threw her hands up. "Aren't you that guy? You and your lady friends seem to get along just fine."

"True," Adam nodded, owning it.

She wasn't wrong!

"Seriously, why bother with some fancy dinner date?" Christina griped. "We've got a better spot right here—crash Alice Grey's open lectures together. Learn some cutting-edge stuff and have a blast. What's not to love? He's into it too, but nope—too stuck-up with his 'attending surgeon' and 'thoracic surgery bigwig' ego to show up!"

"You could push a little harder," Adam said, eyes lighting up as he egged her on. "That'd be a fun date."

"Right?" Christina perked up. "You get it too, huh?"

"Totally," Adam agreed. "All your time with Burke's been in the hospital. He's into the version of you he sees there—outside life doesn't even matter."

"Thanks," she said, her face screaming finally, someone gets me.

"Heh," Adam chuckled.

Oh, and here's a quick shoutout—patreon:belamy20—keeping creators like this alive is the move!

Truth is, Adam's got an angle here: he's trying to rope Burke in as extra muscle. During work hours, Burke's teaching moments are all in the OR—short bursts, hit-or-miss timing. But if Burke joined the study crew? Adam could go full throttle, picking his brain for hours.

Burke might not be Alice Grey's legend-tier, but he's still a name-brand doc with some unique tricks up his sleeve. Plus, he's always in the OR, always leveling up. For Adam, that's gold. Normally, dragging an attending like Burke into something like this would be a pipe dream—guy's got a life after clocking out. But seeing how clueless Burke is with romance?

Using Christina as bait could totally work. And the best part? She's on the same page—same goals, same payoff. Tsk! That's why, out of all the docs he works with, Christina's the one he vibes with most as a friend.

The Next Day

Bright and Early

New day, fresh start.

Meredith was slumped on a bench outside the building, nursing a hangover with a coffee in hand. Christina was chatting her up.

"Every time I kick them out, they look so sad," Meredith said with a laugh. "Seriously, why don't these guys get it? Taking them home from the bar doesn't mean it's real."

"Easy," Adam chimed in, strolling over after catching her line from a distance. "Usually, it's guys saying that! When it's you, they're just thrown off—not actually heartbroken."

"Well, you guys better get used to it," Meredith grinned. "More and more women are gonna start treating you like that."

"Let's hope not," Adam said, his mouth twitching into a half-smirk.

"Meredith," a random guy interrupted, walking up to her. "You work here?"

"Steve, what are you doing here?" Meredith's face darkened.

This was her bar hookup from last night—the "tool" she'd just booted out. She had a sneaking suspicion he'd followed her.

"I've got a little problem..." Steve hesitated.

"What kind of problem?" Christina asked, instantly switching from bestie mode to doctor mode, her eyes gleaming with curiosity.

"Well, actually, it's a big problem," Steve said. He dropped the jacket he'd been holding in front of himself, revealing said issue.

"Pfft!" Adam nearly lost it, choking back a laugh so hard he almost hurt himself.

From now on, if anyone asks who the real showstopper at the medical center is? Adam's got one answer: Meredith Grey!

Chapter 487: "Oh, This? Now I'm Pumped!"

Medical Center

Outside the building...

Meredith's latest hookup, Steven, decided to show off his... issue to Adam and the crew of doctors.

Adam nearly lost it trying not to laugh.

Before, he'd pegged Meredith as just a seasoned pro—y'know, the type with a 100% pants-dropping superpower when drunk. But now? Oh, he'd underestimated her. She wasn't just a pro; she was a legend—the queen of chaos herself!

Cristina, meanwhile, had this creepy grin plastered on her face, staring like she'd hit the jackpot.

Meredith, who'd been ogling Steven's face up until now, finally clued in and glanced down at his... situation.

And just like that, she was done.

"I'm screwed!"

That was the only thought thundering through her head.

She'd just been dumped by Dr. Shepherd, and the "mistress gets ditched" drama was already the hottest gossip in the hospital. Everywhere she went, people pointed and snickered. And now this? She was officially persona non grata.

"Cover it up," Adam said, barely holding in his laughter. "This place is a revolving door—save the details for the exam room."

"Oh, right, right!"

Steven fumbled, grabbing his jacket to shield himself. He'd only flashed everyone because he was freaking out. No sane guy would willingly air that kind of laundry in public.

"Let's head to the exam room," Adam said, waving them along.

"Yeah, let's go!" Cristina tossed her coffee aside, her eyes practically sparkling with excitement.

Of course, she didn't forget to drag her shell-shocked bestie Meredith along. After all, Meredith was part of this mess—she'd need to weigh in on the "condition"!

Erm... Not that this was about gawking or anything. Nope, totally legit patient-care protocol. 😊

"C'mon, move it," Cristina said, slinging an arm around Meredith. "Let's get him checked out while it's quiet. If it's no big deal, we send him packing—smartest play here."

"But what if we can't fix it?" Meredith whined, her face a picture of misery.

"With Adam around? We're golden," Cristina said confidently. "As long as he's cool keeping it on the down-low for you."

"Right!" Meredith perked up, snapping out of her daze. She bolted after Adam, grabbing his arm.

"Please, help him—and keep it quiet!"

"I'll do my best," Adam said with a noncommittal shrug. "But if it's serious, it's gotta go up the chain. Full protocol."

Meredith wasn't thrilled, but she knew Adam was a stickler for the rules. Resigned, she just prayed Steven's problem was minor.

Too bad life loves a curveball—nine times out of ten, it doesn't go your way.

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Emergency Department

Exam Room

Adam suited up—white coat, gloves, all business—and after a thorough check, he turned to a fidgeting Steven. "You been taking any meds?"

"Meds?" Steven blinked, caught off guard.

"Meds?!" Meredith blurted. "No way!"

Steven was still processing, but Adam and Cristina exchanged loaded smirks.

Why was Meredith so sure? Oh, the pro was throwing shade at his... performance.

"Y'know, stuff for erectile dysfunction," Adam clarified. "What you've got going on? It's called priapism—usually happens from overdoing those kinds of drugs."

"No! I swear, I haven't taken anything!" Steven protested, glancing at a now-suspicious Meredith. "Everything between us was totally natural!"

"Alright, since there's no proof you're lying, we'll take your word for it," Adam said, all serious-like. "But that means we've gotta dig deeper—tests, treatments, the works. It's gonna be rough, uncomfortable, maybe even make you wish you didn't have... well, that. So, you sure you don't wanna rethink your story?"

"Steven, you have to be honest," Meredith pleaded, voice tight. "Dr. Duncan's not kidding—those tests and treatments? They're brutal..."

She rattled off a few unmentionable details.

Steven's tan face went ghost-white, and he instinctively hunched over.

"Taking meds isn't a big deal..." Meredith muttered, practically begging him to fess up.

If he had, they'd have a clear cause. Easy fix, no circus.

Oh, and hey—patreon:belamy20—drop some love if you're enjoying the chaos!

The story might just stay in their little circle if she played it tough—her friends wouldn't blab.

"You've gotta tell us the truth so we can fix this fast and stop the pain," she pressed.

"I didn't take anything," Steven croaked, pale and shaky. "If I had, I'd say so!"

"Sorry, Meredith," Adam said with an apologetic grin. "Looks like Steven's checking in. He's probably not lying. Meredith, grab some sedative, draw some blood—we're rolling out the full test lineup."

"Me?!" Meredith yelped.

"Either you or Cristina—your call," Adam said, smirking. "I've got stuff to do."

Basic tests? A decent nurse could handle those. No way Adam was sticking around for grunt work that ate up hours—not unless he was the attending on this case.

Plus, if this kept up, Steven couldn't stay... inflated forever. Too long, and it'd turn into ED, thrombosis, or worse—necrosis. Next stop: involuntary kung-fu monk status.

Sure, it's all "zero times or a million" in theory, but no guy's signing up for that step willingly.

So, odds were they'd need to physically intervene—shrink those blood vessels.

AKA: someone's doing an enema.

If that flopped, it'd escalate to needle aspiration.

Whether Meredith handled it or begged Cristina to step in, Adam knew one thing: he wasn't touching it.

"I've got stuff too," Cristina chimed in, bolting after Adam.

Watching the drama? Fun. Treating her bestie's hookup like this? Hard pass. Even a pro like her had limits.

Meredith opened her mouth to protest, but they were already gone. She was stuck, awkwardly running tests with the guy she'd kicked out of her place that morning.

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One Hour Later

"Adam!"

Meredith sidled up to him.

"How'd it go?" Adam asked, finishing up with a nurse before turning to her with a grin.

"Steven's tests came back normal. Cristina helped with the enema—didn't work. Then we did needle aspiration, and it finally... calmed him down," Meredith whispered.

"That's great," Adam said, nodding. "So, what's the problem?"

"We don't know," she said, flustered. "It just happened again! Adam, come take a look?"

"Again?" Adam's eyebrows shot up. "That's neurological then—maybe a tumor. Let's go check it out."

Oh, this? Now he was pumped.

Tumor surgeries? Never small potatoes.

Chapter 488: High-Energy Alert

Medical Center, Ward Room

"Dr. Bailey?"

Adam had been dragged over by Meredith, and the second he opened the door, he was met with a face sporting a chilly smirk.

Christina shot him a helpless look.

"You're surprised I'm here?" Dr. Bailey said, her tone dripping with sarcasm. "Unless I'm remembering wrong, you're one of my interns. Every move you make in this hospital needs my approval. Or do you think you can sneak around behind my back again?"

"Sorry," Meredith jumped in quick. "Dr. Bailey, this is my friend. His condition's a little... unique, so we thought—"

"You thought?" Bailey cut her off sharp. "This is a hospital. I don't care what you think—I care what I think! And what I think is simple: you follow orders, stick to the rules, and learn how to be a proper surgeon. Is that so hard for you?"

"Not hard at all," Christina piped up fast, eager to stay out of the crossfire.

She wasn't about to get lumped in with Meredith on this one. If Meredith weren't her bestie, she'd have thrown in a "It's just her, not me—I told her not to do it" for good measure.

"Not hard?" Bailey snorted. "So you're just deliberately trying to piss me off then?"

"..." Christina and Meredith were speechless.

Adam, meanwhile, kept his eyes on his nose and his nose on his heart—total Zen mode. He wasn't one of Bailey's interns, and he wasn't your average newbie either. But if he dared open his mouth, Bailey's wrath would hit him like a carpet bomb. So, he stayed out of it.

Too bad the universe doesn't care about your plans.

"And what's your deal?" Bailey asked, glaring at her two star interns for a bit before turning her still-simmering fury on Adam, who'd been trying to play invisible.

"Meredith asked me to check out the case," Adam said with an innocent grin.

"Ha!" Bailey scoffed. "We all know you're hot stuff, but no matter how good you are, you're still an intern. Consults like this—are you even allowed to handle those?"

"Nope," Adam nodded honestly. "That's why I'm just taking a look. If something's off, I'll report it right away."

It sounded blunt, but it was the truth. Adam's skills were top-notch and still climbing fast. Still, as an intern, he couldn't officially see patients without a senior doc's green light. That's why he'd shot down Meredith's plea to secretly take on Steve's case from the start.

"Hmph!" Bailey pursed her lips. She was actually cool with Adam's attitude—he wasn't her problem, and a quick nudge was enough. Then she zeroed back in on Meredith.

"Your friend here—all his tests came back normal. Enemas, needle aspiration, nothing's worked. It's probably neurological."

"That's what we thought too, so I got Adam—" Meredith started.

"You should've gone to Duncan!" Bailey interrupted. "Neurological issue means you call in a neuro expert, not Adam! Drag this out any longer, and that thing might actually die off."

"Ah!" Steve, who'd been lying in bed watching the drama unfold like a flagpole, let out a panicked yelp.

"Relax, I've already called for a consult," Bailey said, calming him down.

"A consult?!" Meredith's voice shot up ninety degrees. "You called neurosurgery?!"

Adam felt that uncontrollable urge to laugh again, just like when he first saw Steve. Holding it in was torture—he was dying over here. How does something this ridiculous even happen? Meredith, you're the queen of chaos!

"Hey! It's not my fault!" Bailey snapped, totally getting why Meredith was freaking out but not about to let it slide. She planted a hand on her hip. "You're the one who broke this guy's little buddy."

"..." Meredith clammed up, mortified beyond words.

Christina ducked her head low—real low, practically smushing her face into her chest—to hide the laugh she couldn't hold back.

Adam wanted to play fair and say something like, "There's tissue damage, sure, but it's not broken—no need to exaggerate..." Then he remembered Meredith's morning rant about how guys shouldn't expect feelings from a bar hookup.

Yeah, fair. A woman takes a guy home from the bar, and he thinks she's catching feelings? Nah, she's just using him like a workhorse. In Adam's past life, there were plenty of classic lines for scenes like this. Anyone in the know gets it.

Oh, and here's a quick plug—patreon:belamy20—supporting creators keeps the good vibes rolling!

Thinking about it, Meredith kicking Steve out first thing was practically a mercy. At least he walked into the hospital on his own two feet instead of hobbling in, clinging to the wall. Emmm... Meredith's not the type to drain the pond dry—she's got some decency!

"Good morning, everyone!" A chipper voice rang out just as Meredith was drowning in shame and Adam and co. were snickering under their breath. Footsteps followed the greeting.

Bailey's neuro consult had arrived. And who else could it be but Dr. Shepherd, the neurosurgery chief himself?

Meredith, facing away from the door, squeezed her eyes shut. Her body swayed like she might collapse. The final blow had landed.

"So, what's the situation?" Shepherd asked, nodding at everyone with a grin.

He was in great spirits. Last night, he and his girlfriend Meredith had officially called it quits. Well, ex-girlfriend now—she'd come to her senses, and they'd parted on friendly terms. He knew she didn't blame him.

Blame fate's twisted sense of humor instead.

With that weight off his shoulders, he'd gone home and, for the first time in months, rekindled things with his wife—they'd nearly divorced over the drama. Barney's got a saying: "A little time apart beats a fresh honeymoon." It's up there with breakup sex, makeup sex, all that urban legend stuff.

Shepherd couldn't not be glowing today. Everyone got a smile.

Bailey glanced at Meredith, signaling her to explain.

"Here's the deal..." Christina stepped up—bestie to the rescue. She might've been laughing, but with Meredith about to faint, she took over and ran through the case.

"Hmm," Shepherd nodded, not overthinking it. He stepped to the bed, lifted the sheet covering Steve, and took a peek.

"When did this start?"

"Last night after I, uh, finished, and it was still like this when I woke up," Steve said, oblivious to Shepherd's history with Meredith, answering naturally.

"Dr. Shepherd, if I'm not needed here, I've got stuff to do," Bailey said, clearly done with the soap opera about to unfold.

"Sure," Shepherd nodded, turning back to Steve. "When was your last, uh, finish?"

Adam smirked with a playful glint. Christina's sideways glance at her bestie was pure meme material.

Meredith wasn't even registering Adam or Christina—her face screamed "kill me now," silently begging for this nightmare to end.

But the more you dread something, the faster it comes.

"I don't remember," Steve said after a pause. No answer came to mind, so he turned to Meredith casually. "Meredith?"

Her eyes slammed shut in agony.

Shepherd froze mid-note, pen hovering. He looked up at Meredith, disbelief wiping out his day-long high in an instant.

Chapter 489: "One Slice to Cut Through the Drama"

Medical Center

Inside the Ward

"I... uh, Dr. Bailey gave me some stuff to do..."

Cristina couldn't even look anymore. She mumbled an excuse and bolted for the door, shooting Adam a "let's bounce" glance.

But then she regretted it instantly.

Because Adam? He just stood there, cool as a cucumber, totally ignoring her signal with a smug little smile. It was blinding.

Oh no!

I messed up!

Cristina felt like she'd been zapped by a lightning combo—five hits, full body jolt. But she'd already opened her mouth, and her feet were halfway out the door. No turning back now. She threw Adam a bitter "you're a dirty fighter" glare and sulked off.

Feelings really do screw you over! If Meredith weren't tangled up in this, Cristina would've stayed and fought tooth and nail for that surgery. She'd already done Steven's enema and needle aspiration—she had the edge!

Adam watched her exit stage left, then turned back to the awkward-as-hell vibes in the room.

A juicy surgery and prime gossip? No way he was bailing just to spare Meredith's feelings. Plus, she probably didn't want to face her "dream guy" solo in this mess anyway.

What's that? She broke up with her dream guy last night for good? She's free to do whatever, no judgment?

Oh, please.

If it was a hate-filled breakup, maybe. But a peaceful split? When you leave things too open-ended, the spark doesn't fizzle out that fast. Plenty of folks rekindle the flame after a "friendly" goodbye.

Meredith and Dr. Shepherd? They definitely still had feelings lurking. That's why this was so damn awkward.

"Meredith," Steven said, the only one clueless about the tension. He was still... standing at attention. When she didn't respond, he tried again. "So, when are we..."

He trailed off, all considerate-like, tilting his head with a "you know what I mean" look.

"Yeah, Meredith," Dr. Shepherd chimed in, snapping out of his shock. His smile didn't reach his eyes. "When did you two..."

He couldn't finish either.

This was his ex, after all. The ex he'd officially split with last night—the one he'd loved deeply.

Well, damn!

She'd said "see ya" to him, and now she'd gone and... broken some guy?

Should I thank you for not breaking me instead?

"Dr. Duncan, here's Mr. Warden's CT scan," a nurse interrupted, handing over the films and slicing through the thick air.

"Dr. Shepherd, the CT shows a tumor at the lower spine, pressing on the nerves causing the priapism," Adam said, glancing at the scan and dropping his verdict like it was no big deal.

"Tumor?" Steven blinked, still lost in the vibe. "Wait, should I be scared? Yeah, I should totally be scared right now!"

He grabbed Meredith's hand on instinct.

"..."

Dr. Shepherd's eye twitched. Forcing himself to look away from the blinding scene, he snatched the CT from Adam and gave it a dramatic shake.

Crinkle.

Crinkle.

The film whimpered in his grip. He held it up to the light, face blank. "Yup, tumor alright. But a quick surgery'll take it out—no biggie."

"Right," Meredith said, awkwardly trying to pull her hand free. "Dr. Shepherd'll set you up for surgery. Once it's gone, you're good as new."

"Yeah, cut it out clean, and everything's back to normal," Shepherd said, locking eyes with Meredith. He mimicked her "solemn goodbye" stare from last night—loaded with meaning.

"Adam, can you take this one?" Meredith's voice cracked as she turned to him.

Last night, she'd dumped Shepherd, full of self-righteous "I'm cutting ties" pride. No real sadness back then. But now, with her dream guy throwing it back in her face? She was drowning in bitterness and hurt.

"Sure thing," Adam said with a nod.

He'd stuck around through this trainwreck for the surgery—why wouldn't he jump at it?

"Steven, Dr. Shepherd and Dr. Duncan'll take care of you. I... I've got stuff to do..." Meredith forced a smile at Steven and bolted.

"Normal as in normal normal?" Steven asked, panicking a little.

"Yup," Adam said, grinning. "Urology'll chat with you after, but yeah—normal normal."

"Phew, good," Steven sighed, then frowned toward the door. "What's up with Meredith?"

"She's got stuff," Adam covered for her.

"Oh," Steven said, disappointed. "I was hoping she'd call my mom for me."

"How long have you two been dating?"

Oh, and hey—patreon:belamy20—support the story if you're vibing with it!

Dr. Shepherd's face darkened. He could feel the green creeping in—from a desert wisp to a full-on prairie.

"We met last night at Joe's," Steven said, a goofy smile spreading across his face.

Adam knew that smile. It was the same one Leonard had when his professor asked, "What makes me worthy of marrying a billionaire?" and he'd shot back, "Yup, I'm just that good."

Erm... More like Leonard's "I'll take one for the team" grin before a fight—early rounds only. The later rounds? All Dr. Shepherd's current scowl.

"Joe's bar?" Shepherd forced a smile. "I met a girl there once too... long time ago, though. Duncan, you handle Warden's pre-op."

"Yes, Dr. Shepherd," Adam said, keeping his face neutral.

A smile right now? Bad move. Trouble bait.

After Shepherd stormed off—

"Why's everyone acting so weird?" Steven finally clocked it.

"Doctors, y'know," Adam said with a light shrug.

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Operating Room

"Duncan, wanna take the lead on this one?" Shepherd asked out of nowhere while scrubbing in.

Adam blinked, then jumped. "Yes!"

"You confident?" Shepherd pressed.

"Absolutely," Adam said, steady as a rock.

"Good. You're primary on this," Shepherd said. He fired off a few surgery questions, and Adam nailed every one. No wonder they say he's attending-level, Shepherd thought, nodding.

"Thanks!" Adam said, quick and grateful.

"You earned it with your skills. Still—think about neurosurgery, yeah?" Shepherd said with a small smile, heading into the OR.

"Heh, I will," Adam said, playing along.

Then it clicked. Why was Shepherd being so generous?

Steven, the guy on the table, was basically Shepherd's rival. The surgery? Remove a spinal tumor without nicking the priapism nerves. One slip, and Steven's out of the game—permanently celibate.

Even a pro like Shepherd couldn't be 100% chill about that. What if, mid-cut, he flashed back to this whole mess starting with that guy? One emotional twitch, one wrong move?

Satisfying, sure—but not a consequence he'd wanna live with.

With any other intern, Shepherd would've taken it himself. But Adam? He knew Adam could handle it.

Better to toss him the reins—and a favor—than risk a slip-up over buried feelings.

Chapter 490: The Rock Queen

Noon.

The cafeteria.

"Adam, this totally makes up for that rare surgery."

Christina barged in, dropping a bombshell like it was no big deal.

"Keep dreaming," Adam snorted with a laugh.

"I did the enema and the needle aspiration. That surgery was supposed to be mine," Christina pressed, not letting it go.

"But you bailed," Adam said, munching on his food with a grin. "So don't get your hopes up."

"Fine, maybe it doesn't cover that rare surgery, but it could at least cancel out that favor you owe me, right?" Christina finally revealed her real angle.

"Nope," Adam shook his head. "I earned this one myself, risking Dr. Shepherd's wrath. You just took off—those eyes of yours didn't exactly scream 'I'm handing this surgery over to you.'"

Psh, she thought she could out-negotiate him? Nice try.

No matter how much she flipped out, he wasn't budging.

"You're not me! How would you know what my eyes were saying?" Christina shot back confidently. "That's exactly what they meant."

"Heh."

Adam just chuckled, giving her a look that said, "Good luck owing me anything."

Christina deflated instantly.

She'd been hoping to haggle, but Adam wasn't giving her an inch. Asking outright for mercy? Nah, she had too much pride for that.

And the real kicker? She couldn't afford to piss Adam off.

One time, she'd ticked off a nurse and nearly got herself wrecked. If she crossed Adam? She had no doubt the nurses would hear about it and make her life a living hell—probably worse than before. Group payback, hospital style.

Just thinking about it gave her chills.

Women really knew how to get under each other's skin.

Guess that rare surgery and favor would have to wait for another day.

"Adam," Meredith walked up, hesitating like she wasn't sure what to say.

"Don't worry, the surgery went great," Adam answered her unspoken question.

Meredith nodded, then clammed up, retreating into her own little world.

With everything blowing up like this, there was no hiding it—the whole hospital knew by now.

A lot of the guys kept looking at her, their eyes a mix of nerves... and excitement.

Yup, you heard that right—excitement. 😊

George and Izzie strolled over with their trays just then.

Izzie had that classic BFF smirk, all sly and knowing.

George, though? His face was dark as a storm cloud.

His goddess Meredith caught up in another wild rumor? It was killing him.

And worse, he couldn't help but think back to that brief fling with her—nothing wild, just her crying the whole time.

His heart was practically breaking all over again.

"What?" Meredith snapped, her shut-down vibe cracking under Izzie's shameless grin.

"Nothing," Izzie said, shaking her head innocently.

Meredith just rolled her eyes.

"Heh heh heh."

Even chubby Stu waddled over, giggling like a creep—which was rare for him.

"What are you doing here?" Christina and Izzie snapped in unison, dripping with disgust.

Sure, George was chubby too, but he was their buddy.

Stu? He was the grossest kind of fat guy.

Why?

The dude was a total sleaze.

They all knew why he wanted to go into plastic surgery later—word got out, and that specialty's rep would be toast.

"Come on, don't be like that," Stu said, all fake-humble and 讨好 (trying to suck up). "We're all colleagues here~"

"..."

Christina and Izzie didn't even bother responding.

What could they say? The guy was so pathetic, anything more would've been overkill.

Adam shook his head to himself.

The lower you sink, the harder you are to beat.

"Hey, Meredith~"

Stu, ignored by Christina and Izzie, smirked triumphantly and turned to his real target.

Adam, Christina, and Izzie exchanged a look, leaned back, and switched to spectator mode. 🍷

George, though, was fuming. "Just talk normal, dude! Quit with the creepy voice!"

"What's your deal?" Meredith grumbled.

Even a seasoned pro like her couldn't handle Stu's sleazy energy.

"Nothing," Stu said, still giggling like an idiot. "Just saying hi. You free tonight? Joe's bar—drinks on me!"

"..."

The whole table went dead silent.

Everyone knew Stu was a shameless perv, but this? This was next-level.

Just last night, Meredith had been at Joe's with Steven—right before his surgery.

And now, with her latest spicy gossip blowing up, Stu dropping this invite was basically him screaming, "Don't go thinking I'm some delicate flower you need to spare~"

The guy was a total horndog.

Unmatched.

Meredith's face flared with embarrassment and rage. She shot up, ready to snap—but one look at Stu's "honest" chubby face and the curious stares around her, and she grabbed her barely-touched tray and stormed off.

"Shameless!"

"Gross!"

Christina and Izzie gagged, grabbed their trays, and bailed too.

"You—" George clenched his fists, looking like he might swing, but he held back, snatched his tray, and left.

"What'd I do?" Stu whined, playing the victim.

"Alright, you've disgusted everyone enough. Chill," Adam said, half-joking.

They were on the same team, so he was closer to Stu than most.

Plus, the guy's sleazy vibe was kinda funny—in a twisted way.

And Stu wasn't clueless; he knew who he could mess with.

So Adam didn't mind him too much.

"Heh heh heh."

Stu dropped the pitiful act fast, leaning in with a hushed giggle. "Adam, you know Meredith has a nickname now, right?"

"What nickname?" Adam perked up.

It definitely wasn't anything flattering... but he was curious.

"A lot of the guys are calling her..." Stu waggled his eyebrows and rambled on.

Adam just heard a bunch of bleeps.

But from Stu's lip movements and goofy face, he could sum it up as "The Rock Queen Who Breaks Guts."



Adam's mouth twitched.

Those seven little words packed a lot of meaning if you thought about it.

"A ton of the guys are all nervous and hyped about it," Stu said, finally audible again.

"If that's the case, you've got some guts asking out the Rock Queen," Adam teased. "Not scared?"

"Nah, I'm good!" Stu puffed up proudly. "I've got a low center of gravity—nothing to fear!"

"..."

Adam's lip twitched again. Words failed him.

Even he was floored by Stu's shameless perv energy this time.

The guy owned his flaws so hard, even a soap opera villain would have to bow down and say, "Stu, you're something else."

"Stu," Adam finally said.

"Yeah?"

"Tone it down a bit," Adam warned. "This version of you belongs in a 2D anime world. Keep acting this wild in real life, and someone's gonna beat you to a pulp someday."