

## TV Show 491

### Chapter 491: The Eye-Opening Sea King

Medical Center. Cafeteria.

The chubby guy, Stu, was acting all wild and rowdy, like something straight out of *Battle Through the Heavens*. Adam, though, was starting to feel queasy. He just put down his knife and fork, grabbed his tray, and bailed.

"Dr. Duncan!"

He'd barely stepped out of the cafeteria when he ran smack into John Carter, a med intern, strolling over with a lunchbox in hand.

"Carter."

Adam kept walking, giving him a quick nod.

For your average worker, slacking off and stretching out lunch breaks—maybe even sneaking in a paid bathroom break—was the ultimate win. The longer the lunch, the better. But for Adam, who was basically earning extra years of life, shorter lunches were the goal. These days, he was strong enough to hold his own. Sure, his status kept him from going all out, but in the ER, saving a life every couple of days was enough to balance out his lifespan usage and gains.

In other words, if things kept going like this, he could keep it up forever—or at least until humans didn't need doctors anymore, replaced by some sci-fi gizmo like the all-in-one medical pods from *Elysium*. By then, though, he'd be "Adam Trillionaire," and healing people wouldn't even be on his radar.

John Carter blinked, then hurried to catch up.

"Lesson two," Adam said, glancing over at Carter, who was practically jogging to keep pace. "You've gotta adapt to what your supervising doctor needs. Us higher-ups are usually swamped, so half the time, you'll be like this—rushing to give a quick, sharp report while they're on their way to the OR."

"Yes, Dr. Duncan!" Carter nodded like his head was on a spring.

"Something up?" Adam prompted.

"Oh, uh, yeah!" Carter fumbled, then held out his lunchbox with a grin. "I braised some pig's feet. Wanna try it, Dr. Duncan? Tell me what you think?"

Adam chuckled and stopped in his tracks.

They'd reached the ER by now. The sharpest nurse at the station—let's call her the "know-it-all nurse"—spotted Carter just standing there with his lunchbox, no follow-through. She smacked her forehead, strode over, popped the lid off the lunchbox, and grabbed a clean glove.

"Dr. Duncan?" she said, holding it out.

"Thanks, Violet," Adam replied, all smooth and practiced. He held out his hands, letting her slip the glove on like a pro. Then he picked up one of the braised pig's feet, gave it a once-over, and, under Carter's eager stare, took a bite.

"So? How is it?" Carter asked, practically bouncing.

"Too sweet," Adam said, shaking his head. He set the pig's foot down and clapped Carter on the shoulder. "But I appreciate the effort."

With that, he walked off.

"Too sweet?" Carter frowned. "Didn't taste sweet to me."

"Hmm, it's decent work," the know-it-all nurse said, already chowing down on the piece Adam had bitten. "Everyone's got different tastes. Dr. Duncan leans more Eastern—our Western stuff tends to be sweeter. We're used to it, so we don't notice."

Westerners love their sweets, after all. Candy, donuts—you name it. To someone not into it, it's like sugar overload.

"Eastern tastes?" Carter looked confused. "But isn't Dr. Duncan American?"

"Sure, but some Americans are all about Eastern flavors," she said, happily munching away. "I've noticed a bunch of times—his assistant brings him legit Eastern dishes. If you wanna impress him, find a real-deal Eastern chef and learn a trick or two. He'll definitely take notice."

"That sounds like a hassle," Carter groaned.

"Hah!" The nurse smirked. "A hassle? You've got no idea how many people would kill for a chance to 'hassle' over him. Next year, when he's a resident, med students like you won't even get close. I'm only giving you pointers 'cause you seem decent. No effort, no reward—if you're expecting handouts, steer clear of Dr. Duncan!"

"No, no, I didn't mean it like that!" Carter backpedaled fast. "Next break I get, I'll track down an authentic Eastern chef and learn something good."

"What about this pig's foot?" She'd finished one and was eyeing the last one in the box.

"You like it? It's yours," Carter said, finally catching a hint.

"Nice." She grabbed it with a satisfied nod, then gave him a look. "Since you're showing some heart, I'll do you one more solid."

Meanwhile, over on maybe someone's cooking up their own story—worth a peek if you're into that kinda thing.

She crooked a finger, motioning Carter to follow her to the nurse's station. Rifling through a drawer, she pulled out a card and handed it to him. "This is the chef from Dr. Duncan's favorite restaurant. If you've got the guts to learn from him directly, it'll save you a ton of trouble."

"Thanks!" Carter said, genuinely grateful.

That little tip? A total game-changer. Most people wouldn't dream of it—an amateur begging lessons from a top-tier chef? Get real. But Carter's family wasn't loaded or anything, just solid middle-class—above average, which, let's be honest, already puts you ahead of 70-80% of folks. Push time forward, with wealth piling up in fewer hands, not dragging down the average might mean outdoing 90% of people. Getting "averaged out" is gonna be the real curse someday.

Time flies in a hospital. Blink, and weeks go by.

The big news lately? Peggy finally "gave birth" to Adam's "first kid"—the Duncan-Adler Formula. He dropped a paper on it, and the medical world went nuts. Pair that with some "casual" leaked footage of his lecture with the legendary Alice Gray circulating among docs, and Adam Duncan, genius doctor, was getting serious props from the pros. Thrilled, he made sure to thank Peggy big-time.

Fast forward to November 1st—Halloween in the States. Adam was at work as usual. He'd planned to skip cooking after his shift and head to New Jersey to hang with Peggy for the holiday, but she wasn't feeling it. So, he stayed late at the hospital instead. With all those trick-or-treaters out there, someone was bound to end up unlucky—and the medical center was buzzing.

Late that night, back at his apartment, he was grinding through some math study—slow and steady wins the race, right? Then came a knock.

He peeked through the security cam and cracked a grin. Standing outside was a tall, slim figure in a black hooded robe. Sensing him watching, she glanced up at the camera, revealing a face half-covered by a brass filigree mask. Straight out of *Eyes Wide Shut*. Who else but Alice Kidman?

Adam opened the door, letting her in. She stepped inside without a word, peeled off the mask, and shrugged off the robe. Underneath? A tight white fish-scale outfit, a silver crown perched on her head, long wet hair clinging to her cold, stunning face. In her early twenties, dressed like that, she was drop-dead gorgeous.

"I love Halloween," Adam thought to himself, and that was the last thing on his mind.

Chapter 492: Marvel vs. DC Showdown

Late night.

The apartment.

"Who are you?"

"Atlanna, Queen of Atlantis!"

"Atlantis?"

"..."

Adam put on his serious face, representing humanity on land as he held his "first meeting" with the ancient Earth civilization of Atlantis, hailing from the ocean depths.

The wheels of history turned slowly.

One small step for Adam, one giant leap for mankind.

Okay, fine.

This isn't some superhero fantasy story—it's just everyday life.

Totally fake. All in Adam's head.

Truth is, Alice didn't show up for anything dramatic. She just wanted to chat about a surgery case from earlier that day.

Yup, the power of a good role model is unreal.

Ever since Adam—total rockstar that he is—kept showing off his hardcore dedication to learning, it's rubbed off on everyone at the medical center. Doctors are stepping up their game left and right.

Alice is the perfect example.

She used to just want to coast through as an eye doctor, rake in the big bucks, and live the high life.

Now? Her goals have shifted a bit.

Still all about the money and luxury, sure—but she's also chasing real skill in medicine, not just skating by anymore.

And that's all thanks to Adam.

They were deep in discussion when—ding-dong—the doorbell rang again.

Adam and the "Queen of Atlantis" peeked at the security monitor.

The queen went icy cold in an instant, her vibe dropping to subzero.

Adam flashed an awkward grin.

Standing outside was a woman in a sleek, tight-fitting uniform—looking every bit the badass female agent. Like she knew Adam was watching, she whipped out an ID and held it up to the camera. It had "S.H.I.E.L.D." stamped on it, complete with the logo.

"Holy crap! S.H.I.E.L.D. doesn't mess around!" Adam groaned inwardly. "The Queen of Atlantis barely steps on land, and they've already sent someone—freaking Deputy Director no less! But hold up, can a Marvel bigshot really boss around a DC superhuman?"

Then again, knowing S.H.I.E.L.D.'s bully vibes, if they could pull it off, they totally would.

Adam's head was starting to hurt.

Normally, people called ahead and set up a time—no awkward run-ins.

But tonight? Halloween. The night when all the freaks and ghouls come out to play.

Not a single person had bothered to check with him first.

Ugh.

He should've never handed out those custom costumes. Now they were all crashing his place at once, catching him totally off guard.

The late fall night was getting weirdly hot all of a sudden.

Then—boom—Adam's vision went dark, and he was out cold.

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The next day.

Medical center.

"Alice, what happened to your face?"

Steven Murphy spotted Alice first thing in the morning and couldn't hide his shock.

"It's nothing," Alice said, touching the bandage on her forehead with a frown. "Last night, some drunk lunatic dressed up as S.H.I.E.L.D.'s deputy director was running around grabbing people. She shoved me, and I banged my head."

"S.H.I.E.L.D. deputy director?" Steven blinked. "You mean Maria Hill?"

"You know her?" Alice shot him a surprised look.

Last night, she'd definitely heard some jerk call the woman "Agent Hill."

Not her real name, of course—same way that jerk had dubbed her "Atlanna, Queen of Atlantis."

That chick was obviously playing some role too.

A gorgeous gal like Alice? No way she'd waste time reading comics or knowing random characters.

"She's from Marvel comics," Steven explained with a chuckle. "Usually only nerdy guys are into that stuff—or dress up for Halloween. Didn't think a woman would cosplay as Agent Hill. She must be a hardcore Marvel fan."

Hmmm.

Don't let his rich-kid status fool you—Steven's read his share of comics. He knew all about geeky dudes dressing up as iconic female characters.

Some got way into it.

Like, cosplay Catwoman and strut around yelling, "I feel so powerful now~" with their chests puffed out.

"Pfft," Alice scoffed. "Yeah, right. More like some creep who's obsessed with Maria Hill paid some chick to wear that outfit. No normal woman's running around dressed like that!"

Just thinking about it pissed her off.

Oh, and speaking of—big props to the creators keeping the good vibes alive! 😊

Anyway, back to last night: that shameless jerk didn't even tell the chick to leave when things got awkward. Nope, he let her in!

Then he kept glancing at Alice with this over-the-top "I'm so sorry" face.

Please. She'd grown up around casinos—she'd seen every type of sleaze there is.

That look? It was code for "Please back off first."

And "back off" could mean a lot of things—none of them just "leave the room."

No way she was putting up with that.

Sure, she had her backup plans, but being treated like some sidekick? Hard pass.

Lucky for her, that chick had some spine too—she didn't even entertain the idea.

The second she saw the vibe, she flipped out and stormed toward the door.

Then, somehow, it turned into a screaming match between her and Alice. Next thing you know, they were throwing hands.

What the hell!

That chick didn't fight like a typical girl either—big, wild swings with some serious strength behind them.

Alice wasn't ready and took a hit—got shoved and smashed her forehead on the bedframe.

But she wasn't some pushover either. She jumped up, grabbed the chick, and went full-on with the scrappy girl-fight skills she'd honed back in the day.

Hair-pulling.

Gut-punching.

Clothes-ripping.

And some moves she didn't even want to think about.

But they worked.

Meanwhile, that jerk just stood there, flailing his hands and whining in this exaggerated, sing-songy voice: "Oh nooo, don't fight, ladies, don't fight~"

So fake!

It felt like he was mocking them.

Alice was so pissed—and offended—that she and the chick teamed up to jump him.

Too bad his "brute strength saves the day" rep wasn't a lie.

He pinned them both down—one hand each—like it was nothing.

After that, it's all a blur.

All she remembered was the chick snarling, "If I'd brought my gun today, you'd be done..."

Blah blah blah.

Alice tuned it out, too zoned out to care.

The threats went on so long, and the vibe was so off, they didn't even sound intimidating—just flirty in a weird way.

She just rolled her eyes, exhausted.

The chick kicked her torn-up uniform aside, grabbed some clothes from the jerk's closet like she'd done it a million times, and slammed the door on her way out.

Then that jerk had the nerve to laugh smugly: "If Howard finds out about this, he's gonna be so jealous he'll explode."

Pfft!

This "Howard" guy's gotta be a perv too.

Who actually enjoys watching girls fight?

"You're probably right," Steven said, not about to argue with his goddess. "Does it still hurt? Want me to deal with her for you?"

"Nah," Alice said, a glint in her eye as she shook her head. "She didn't get off easy either. I got her good a few times—trust me, she's hurting way worse than me. Might not even make it to work today."

"Heh."

Steven's eyes widened a bit. Seeing this feisty side of his perfect goddess? It was new—and honestly, kinda adorable.

He couldn't help but grin.

Chapter 493: Juno Benno

Medical Center. Locker Room.

"So, what'd you get up to last night? You're practically glowing," Christina said, squinting at Adam with her sly little eyes.

"I'm always a happy-go-lucky guy," Adam shot back with a grin. "Plus, it's a holiday—gotta be extra cheerful, right? Double the fun!"

"Yeah, something's fishy here," Christina muttered, not buying his excuse for a second.

She didn't dwell on it, though, quickly switching gears with a secretive smirk. "Hey, have you guys heard? Dr. Montgomery's officially on board. The surgical chief dumped a huge budget on her—top-tier private services, the slickest neonatal ICU, and a salary that's the highest of any surgeon in New York. Talk about a big move!"

"She's worth every penny," Liz chimed in. "She's one of the best in her field. With her here, our pediatrics department might actually have a shot at being number one."

"Lucky you, getting picked by her," Christina teased. "You're definitely gonna outshine the rest of us down the line."

"Hmph!" Liz scoffed. "Wanna trade? I bet if you asked, Dr. Montgomery would jump at the chance to take you instead."

"Not so fast," Adam laughed. "Not just anyone can handle pediatrics. Christina? No way she's cut out for it."

"Absolutely not," Christina said, waving her hands like she was shooing off a fly. "Adults annoy me enough—now throw in screaming, rowdy kids? I'd lose it just thinking about it."

"That's the only reason?" Liz smirked. "Come on, the real issue is you look down on pediatricians, don't you?"

Christina just grinned, saying nothing. Adam caught her drift and smirked back.

Pediatricians always get the short end of the stick in the doctor pecking order. Sure, Dr. Montgomery rolled in with VIP treatment and the fattest paycheck among surgeons, but that's as good as it gets for peds. She's the kind of outlier who drags the average up just enough so the specialty isn't always dead last—sometimes they snag second-to-last instead. Still, Christina couldn't hide her disdain for the gig.

"I don't know about the future, but I do know you're gonna regret today," Liz said suddenly, a sly smile creeping onto her face.

"Why's that?" Christina's head whipped around. "Does Dr. Montgomery have a juicy case?"

At that, Adam's eyes lit up too. He'd been interning at the medical center for months now, seen tons of surgeries, even taken the lead on plenty. But cases with kids? Those were rare. Tiny hands, tiny feet, tiny hearts—he figured he could use the practice.

Liz held up her hand, all smug, and wiggled her fingers. "Ever seen quintuplets?"

"You're kidding, right?" Christina's jaw dropped.

"Quintuplets?" Adam blinked.

It jogged his memory—back when Phoebe was set to be a surrogate for her brother and his wife. If Adam hadn't stepped in, they'd have implanted five embryos to up the odds. If all five took, boom—quintuplets.

"That's a hell of a risk," Adam said, shaking his head.

"No kidding," Liz agreed. "Word is, she already had triplets—all boys—and really wanted a girl. So they tried again. She got her girl this time... along with four others."

"Her husband's face probably went white as a sheet when he heard," Adam said with a chuckle.

"Who could blame him?" Christina snorted. "Unless you're loaded like you, Adam, good luck affording enough nannies to raise eight kids!"

"Maybe she could write a book," Adam quipped, recalling a meme from his past life. "First Pregnancy: Triplets. Second: Quintuplets. Ultimate Supermom!"

"What even is that?" Liz rolled her eyes. "Who'd read something that random?"

"Who knows?" Adam shrugged.

"I'm off to rounds," Liz said, slamming her locker shut and heading out. "Dr. Montgomery gets in early, and today's the official kickoff for the pediatric chief's first big win."

"I'd kill for a high-profile case like that," Christina groaned. "The chief's probably already got reporters lined up for this quintuplet bombshell."

"Not so fast," Adam cautioned. "This is quintuplets we're talking about—super high-risk pregnancy. Calling in reporters now? One slip-up, and it's less 'face in the spotlight' and more 'egg on their face.'"

Sure enough, the case was a total buzzkill—or buzzmaker, depending on how you looked at it. Rounds wrapped up, and the hospital was already abuzz with gossip.

"Liz, what's up?" Adam asked, spotting her in the hallway. Her vibe was off, and he couldn't help but pry.

"It's the quintuplet mom, Mrs. Lusabin," Liz said, frowning. "I just did her ultrasound. The numbers are... barely okay. She shouldn't be picking out names right now—she should be thinking about letting two go. That'd give the other three more time in the womb, better development, healthier outcome."

"How far along is she?" Adam asked.

"Only 32 weeks," Liz said, shaking her head. "She had to check in already."

Normal pregnancy? Forty weeks. Twins? Thirty-six. Quintuplets? Thirty-four weeks is pushing it for an ideal term. The shorter the pregnancy, the less time the babies get to grow, and the worse off they are health-wise. Premies come with a laundry list of risks—every mom wants their kids to cook a little longer. But with multiples, it's not like you can just will them to stay put. Five fetuses growing at once? The strain on the mom is unreal. There's a hard limit to what a body can take.

"Your attitude's off," Adam said gently. "It's her call, not yours. As a doctor, you can't let your feelings bleed into it. Besides, 32 weeks—two more, and they're out. You really think she'd ditch two of her kids now? That doesn't sound like you."

Liz opened her mouth, then shut it. Her face darkened, and she turned to leave.

"Man, what a mess," Adam muttered, watching her go. Something was up with Liz—something tied to kids, no doubt. She had a story, and he'd bet it wasn't a happy one.

Meanwhile, over on , maybe someone's crowdfunding their own wild tale—could be worth a peek.

"Could she be our Juno Benno?" Adam mused, cracking a smile.

In the original timeline, Juno got pregnant in high school and made waves. But with Adam flapping his giant butterfly wings, that story got shredded. Juno didn't chase after the shy jock—instead, she grabbed Karen's hand and charged full speed ahead. Now Liz was giving off those old Juno vibes, like she'd lived through something similar. A double-standard do-gooder like her wouldn't normally suggest sacrificing two kids unless she'd been there herself—maybe gave up a baby young and convinced herself it was the right call. Otherwise, she'd have to admit she screwed up, and that'd drive her nuts.

Chapter 494: The Vase Adam

Medical Center. Corridor.

"Dr. Duncan."

Adam was quietly muttering to himself as he watched Liz storm off when a voice piped up beside him.

"Dr. Shepherd."

Adam flashed a grin at the hospital's second officially hired Dr. Shepherd.

Though calling her Dr. Montgomery might've been more fitting.

But fresh off her victory over the "other woman," Meredith, and winning back her husband, Dr. Montgomery clearly preferred the "Dr. Shepherd" title. Sure, it meant explaining things to confused onlookers every time she appeared with her hubs—but she didn't mind one bit! Money can't buy happiness, and she was loving it. The "ohhh, I get it" reactions followed by compliments about what a golden couple they were? She ate that up!

Adam, being the seasoned pro he was, wouldn't dream of making the rookie mistake Liz had. Liz, tied to Meredith through roommate and friend vibes, had the guts to give a senior attending the cold shoulder. If Dr. Montgomery weren't so chill about it, Liz's impulsive, emotional antics would've gotten her crushed by someone like the Chief long ago.

That said, Adam wasn't blind—he could see the subtle game behind Montgomery's "chill" vibe. Was it really just kindness? Or was she cleverly crafting a good-guy image, dangling her authority like bait to pull Meredith's pals into her orbit, isolate her rival, and watch her crumble? Hard to say. After all, with

so many interns in the hospital, was Liz—the face-slinger—really the only one with killer pediatric skills? Hmm.

—sliding this in here, as promised!

Side note: this whole drama had Adam thinking of Wulin Waizhuan. That show's Jin Xiangyu would've called Montgomery a pro. In Wulin, when Tong Xiangyu's crew turned on her, she started off fighting back but eventually just rolled with it—"If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." Meredith, though? She got totally steamrolled by Montgomery's poise and presence at first.

On looks alone, the second Montgomery showed up, Meredith bolted to buy new lipstick, constantly touching up in the mirror and fussing with her hair. No way was she letting this "TV-star-level rival" grind her into dust. On skill? During Montgomery's surgery, Meredith was straight-up mesmerized. Afterward, she wailed to her boyfriend, Dr. Shepherd, "She's too good. She's an amazing doctor. You shouldn't even compare me to her!"

A few combo punches like that, and Meredith's fighting spirit was toast.

But then—plot twist! When Shepherd actually leaned toward his wife, Meredith's fire roared back. She swallowed her pride, begged her flaky boyfriend to pick her, love her, and even roped her friends into cussing out Montgomery before every convo. Cristina, George, Liz—they all let her have it. Thing is, deep down, they didn't really hate Montgomery anymore.

Adam, though? He wasn't buying into Meredith's self-hype nonsense. "Wanna sway me? Step up like Montgomery and throw some real incentives my way. Then we'll talk."

Totally different vibes. Tong Xiangyu and Meredith? Night and day. If Tong Xiangyu dropped into this medical center, Adam would've skipped right over Meredith's basic friend status—or even Cristina's—and treated her like Chandler and Monica-level BFFs. No question. (And no, this has nothing to do with Tong being the ninth-generation master of Dian Cang Mountain's Seven Wonders Palace or a hypnosis legend. Nope.)

Where there's people, there's drama. Can't go around hurting folks, but you'd be dumb not to watch your back. Adam kept his cool with Montgomery, never giving her a chance to pull a Jin Xiangyu or a Chief-level power move on him.

"Heard the news?" Montgomery asked, giving him a sly smile.

"You mean Mrs. Lusabin's quintuplets?" Adam grinned back. "Congrats, Dr. Shepherd! That's a headline-worthy case right there."

"Thanks!" She beamed. "You know it's gonna take a ton of hands on deck. Dr. Duncan, you interested in jumping in?"

"Absolutely." Adam nodded, then hesitated. "But what about Dr. Stevenson?"

"Oh, don't worry," Montgomery said with a chuckle. "You two can handle it together. This case is a big deal—can't get too much attention. And honestly, among all the interns here, who's more dependable than you? If you were into peds even a little, I'd say you could run this solo."

"You're too kind," Adam said with a humble smile.

But inside? He was more convinced than ever that Montgomery wasn't that sold on Liz. This woman was a force. And it made sense—she rolled in, faced a patient defending her honor, and still calmly explained Meredith wasn't to blame. Then dropped that killer line: "I might be a loose woman, but I could still be your soulmate." Absolute legend status.

Montgomery glanced at Adam, clocking his steady, unruffled vibe. No bite on her hook. She let out a little laugh, but her eyes betrayed a flicker of frustration.

Yup—she was trying to reel him in.

The neonatal unit was thriving under her, and she was riding high. But the pressure? Massive. All that capital pouring in wasn't charity—it was about boosting rep and raking in cash. If she flopped, she'd go from golden girl to laughingstock. Sure, a top doc like her would never hurt for money, but losing face? Unacceptable.

She needed a solid team. Problem was, the skilled residents were already locked into specialties under other attendings. She could call on them, but only when their bosses didn't need them. For a pediatric chief with big dreams and bigger stress, that wasn't gonna cut it.

Standard move? Pick a promising intern, train them up, and lock them in as her resident post-internship. Liz was her pick for that. But lately, Adam's rep had been echoing through the halls. Montgomery realized she might've overlooked a better option.

Adam—an intern with skills so wild they rivaled an attending's? She didn't fully buy that, but she'd admit he was on par with the legendary Dr. Bailey. If she nabbed him, her neonatal squad would level up fast—way quicker than grooming Liz.

Still, she wasn't delusional. Adam was destined for cardio or neuro, not peds. She'd never pitched him before, but this rare case gave her an opening to test the waters.

No dice. Expected, sure, but it still stung a little.

"Mrs. Lusabin's showing some depressive signs," Montgomery said, shifting gears with a half-smirk. "Her husband's swamped at home with their triplet boys. I think you could really step up here, Dr. Duncan. Science says handsome male docs are perfect for OB-GYN—puts the moms at ease, y'know?"

"..." Adam's lip twitched.

True? Yeah. Weird to hear? Oh, for sure.

Chapter 495: You Telling Me How to Do My Job?

Medical Center

"So, Dr. Duncan, we're all set then?"

Dr. Montgomery cracked a little joke, her mood lifting as she flashed a smile.

"Yep, sounds good."

Adam, who'd been labeled a "pretty face" more than once, swallowed his urge to snap back and nodded with a grin. "The chief said everyone's under Dr. Shephard's command right now, so naturally, we're all your people."

Dr. Montgomery's smile froze for a second. She shot Adam a deep, probing look before nodding and walking off.

How could she not catch the subtle jab in his words?

But Adam wasn't wrong either.

It was the surgical chief's call, and with such a rare case on the table, she did have the power to pull everyone together—for now. That kind of authority wouldn't stick around forever, though.

In fact, just earlier, when she'd been hashing things out with her husband (the neurosurgery chief) and Dr. Burke (the cardiothoracic surgery chief), she'd already taken some heat.

One of them had quipped, "Oh, no problem at all—since I don't have to run a neurosurgery department."

The other chimed in, "Yeah, obviously our departments are at your beck and call."

The unspoken punchline? "You telling me how to do my job?"

Even Shephard and her husband—equals in status but with a marriage on the rocks—weren't immune to this vibe. Same went for Dr. Burke and Cristina, who, despite their wildly unequal positions, were still in that "honeymoon phase."

Not long ago, they'd finally stepped out of the hospital for a legit date. But according to Cristina later, it was awkward as hell.

Picture this: the two of them sitting there in silence, glancing left and right, accidentally locking eyes for a split second before looking away—like some bad blind date from Adam's past life where neither side was impressed but still had to suffer through the meal.

When it came time to order, Burke tried to pick lobster for Cristina, saying it paired better with the red wine.

Cristina flat-out shot it down and ordered herself a steak.

"You eat red meat?" Burke had asked, stunned.

"You don't?" she fired back, fully aware he didn't touch the stuff but not budging an inch.

If it weren't for a guy at the next table suddenly keeling over, triggering their doctor instincts and letting Burke see the Cristina he fell for again, that relationship might've crashed and burned right then and there.

Point is, a top-tier surgeon like Cristina—or any of them—hates being told what to do when they don't need the lesson.

And Adam's little comment? It hit Dr. Montgomery right in the gut.

What she needed was someone she could boss around.

Sigh.

The incompetent ones? She wouldn't waste her time. The talented ones? Too much attitude.

Adam was clearly a lost cause.

Guess she'd have to pin her hopes on Liz—someone with a spark of talent and a bit of sass.

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VIP Ward

This case could put the medical center's neonatal unit on the map, so the hospital was rolling out the red carpet for Mrs. Rusabin.

"You're here?" Liz asked, spotting Adam and tilting her head curiously.

"Yeah, Dr. Shephard told me to join in," Adam explained casually.

"Oh, cool."

Liz didn't think much of it, probably assuming he was just backup. She turned to Mrs. Rusabin, who was lying there, and grinned. "This is Dr. Duncan, our center's star intern. Clearly, Dr. Shephard's pulling out all the stops to make sure everything goes smoothly for you."

"Hi, Mrs. Rusabin."

"Hello, Dr. Duncan."

Mrs. Rusabin beamed at Adam. "Dr. Shephard really knows how to make me feel special. Looks like I picked the right place."

Adam started checking her vitals, but his brow furrowed. He grabbed the ultrasound machine and got to work.

"What's wrong?" Mrs. Rusabin asked, her voice tight with nerves as she watched him like a hawk.

"You see something?" Liz added, wide-eyed.

"Call Dr. Shephard," Adam said, eyes glued to the ultrasound screen. "Both of them. We need a consult. Oh, and get Dr. Burke too."

"Okay."

Liz wanted to press him, but one glance from Adam, and she nodded, trusting him enough to run off and fetch the others.

"Is something wrong with the babies?" Mrs. Rusabin's voice trembled.

"Uh, yeah," Adam admitted, rubbing his neck.

Keeping a pregnant woman calm is crucial—especially with quintuplets—but he couldn't lie when he'd spotted a real problem.

"It's okay, though," he added quickly. "We should be able to handle it. Try not to worry too much."

"What is it?" she demanded, her fear spiking. No more admiring Adam's good looks—she was past that now.

"It's the third one, in the middle," Adam said carefully, choosing his words.

"Lucy!" Mrs. Rusabin gasped, already naming the unborn child.

"Yeah, Lucy," Adam confirmed, keeping his tone steady. "She's showing signs of hydrocephalus—basically, fluid buildup in the brain. Too much fluid can put pressure on her brain and might cause damage. But we caught it early, so we can treat it fast. As long as there are no complications, she'll recover fully."

He spoke slowly, buying time for the others to arrive.

"No brain damage?" she pressed.

"No brain damage," Adam assured her with a nod.

"How do you treat it?"

"That's for Dr. Shephard to map out once they get here," he said, sticking to protocol.

"Oh."

Mrs. Rusabin had seen enough doctors to know the drill. She nodded, but then another worry hit her.  
"What about Dr. Burke? Why him?"

"Dr. Burke's our cardiothoracic chief," Adam said, bracing himself.

Thankfully, the Shephards burst in right then.

"What's going on?" they asked in unison.

"Take a look," Adam said, relieved to pass the baton. He pointed at the ultrasound. "The third fetus has hydrocephalus symptoms. The second one on the left has an underdeveloped left ventricle. And the second on the right has organs protruding outside the body."

"Ha... haha..." Mrs. Rusabin let out a shaky laugh. "Three out of my five babies have issues. Haha!"

Her laughter turned wild, teetering on the edge of hysteria.

"Calm down," Adam urged, while the Shephards studied the fuzzy images. "These are all things we can fix with surgery."

It took a while—and a few nudges from Adam—before the Shephards zeroed in on the subtle signs he'd caught.

Truth is, in a day or two, a thorough scan would've flagged these issues anyway. But Adam spotting them now? It left them stunned—and a little impressed.

They agreed with his assessment and jumped in to calm the near-frantic Mrs. Rusabin.

It took forever, but she finally settled down, tears in her eyes as she accepted that three of her daughters had problems—but problems with solutions.

Adam, though, sighed inwardly.

He could see it in her eyes: endless regret.

He knew plenty of doctors—like Liz—had warned her to let go of two fetuses to give the others a better shot. Even her husband had agreed.

But she'd insisted on keeping all five.

Now? She had no one to blame but herself.

For a mother, that kind of guilt was pure torture.

Chapter 496: Step Aside, Someone's About to Go Big

Medical Center.

After calming down the pregnant mom, Liz stayed behind to keep an eye on her. Meanwhile, a crew of attendings filed into the conference room for a consult.

This case was a big deal, and even the Chief of Surgery, Richard, got wind of it and hustled over. Adam, being one of the residents managing the patient, got a seat at this high-stakes table too.

"Duncan, you were the first to spot it. Why don't you kick things off?" Richard said, his tone warm as he gave Adam a nod of props.

Emmm. Don't be weirded out. The security scanner at the hospital entrance is still being installed, and Richard's riding that wave of enthusiasm. It's the same vibe as when Adam first rolled in and donated a lab—Richard was all over him back then too. Give it a bit, though, and he'll snap back to his usual stern, fair-and-square Big Boss mode.

Tsk! That's just how it works—magic!

"Alright," Adam said, unfazed. He grabbed the ultrasound images, slapped them up front, and pointed at the tiny details. "The middle one, Lucy, is showing signs of hydrocephalus—brain swelling. If it gets worse, it could mean brain damage. We can pop in a shunt to drain the cerebrospinal fluid.

"Then there's the second one on the left, Emily. She's got hypoplastic left heart syndrome—underdeveloped left ventricle and a funky mitral valve that's way too narrow. We can go with the Norwood procedure. Step one's right after birth: reconstruct the aortic arch and set up a pulmonary shunt. Six to twelve months later, we do phase two—bidirectional Glenn shunt. Then, six months after that, phase three: a modified Fontan procedure.

"Over on the right, the second one, Julie, has her organs growing in a sac outside her body. After birth, we'll snip off the membrane, make a small incision in her abdomen, and tuck everything back inside.

"Here's the catch, though. These surgeries? The sooner, the better—especially for Lucy's brain swelling. But the other two need as much time in the womb as possible. Timing's a real headache. I'd say we monitor Lucy's intracranial pressure constantly, factor in how long the surgery'll take, set a red line, and if it crosses that, we operate ASAP."

"Solid work," Richard said, his old face blooming into a grin. He gave Adam a big thumbs-up before glancing around at the other department heads. "What about you all? Anything to add?"

Neonatal Chief Dr. Montgomery: "..."

Neurosurgery Chief Dr. Shepherd: "..."

Cardiothoracic Chief Dr. Burke: "..."

What the heck were they supposed to say? Adam had just stolen the show! A freaking intern knowing everything? No way—they weren't buying it.

"Duncan, you actually know the Norwood and Fontan procedures?" Burke piped up, ready to poke some holes.

He knew Adam had that photographic memory thing—HD screenshot-level recall. With a gift like that, cramming a ton of medical info wasn't a stretch if you put in the effort. But memorizing isn't the same as getting it or pulling it off. If Burke didn't call him out, what was the point of this consult? Just let Adam flex solo?

That'd mean one little intern was worth all three of their departments combined. No chance.

"I've read up on them..." Adam said, keeping it humble.

"Oh yeah? Then tell me—" Burke jumped in with some nitty-gritty surgery questions.

But soon enough, he was just shaking his head with a wry smile. Adam answered every single one—spot-on, with details so sharp even Burke felt a jolt of "Whoa, that's good."

What the heck?! These surgeries were rare as it gets. Burke hadn't even done them himself—just studied the texts and leaned on his years of experience to mentally map it out. But Adam? He seemed to know more, and it all made sense. Burke couldn't even argue back if he wanted to.

"You've done these before?" Burke finally asked, curiosity getting the better of him.

"Nope," Adam said, shaking his head. "But Dr. Grey has. We talked it over a while back, so I've got a decent grip on the details."

"..."

The room went quiet. Even Richard clammed up this time.

Dr. Alice Grey—the legend—was a permanent thorn in Richard's side. Back in the day, they were interns together. He was the hotshot—talented, charming, everyone's favorite. But Alice? She outshone him, hands down. It bugged him, sure, but her brilliance won him over too.

—slipping this in here like you asked!

So, with his slick moves, he wooed her—easy peasy. Didn't matter that she was married or that he had a fiancée (now his wife). Years of tangled drama later, Alice poured her whole heart into him. Her poor, patient husband finally snapped and bailed. But when she showed up with little Meredith in tow, begging him to ditch his wife and start fresh like he'd promised under the stars? He couldn't do it.

His wife didn't hold a candle to Alice, no contest. But Alice was a wildfire, an iceberg, a blade—maybe a ghost or a goddess, but definitely not human. His wife? She was real, flesh and blood.

Okay, fine—that's all poetic nonsense. Truth is, he couldn't handle Alice outshining him. Work was bad enough; he wasn't about to let it spill into his personal life too. He never planned to end up with her.

Crushed, Alice took off for Boston, leaving New York behind to build an even crazier, more epic career. Richard, meanwhile, climbed the ladder to Chief of Surgery—big fish, small pond. When Meredith

reached out years later, asking to intern here, he said yes without a second thought. Guilt from the past still nagged at him. Now that he'd made it, he figured he could make it up to her, ease that old ache.

Then he heard Alice had Alzheimer's—forgot everything. It hit him hard, but there was a flicker of relief too. The shadows of the past faded, and he decided he'd be an upright Chief, a kind elder, a genuinely good guy from then on.

But now Alice's name was back, crashing in like this, dragging him right back to those days when even his best wasn't enough to match her legend. For a guy holding all the power, it made him squirm.

"Should we bring Dr. Grey in for the consult?" Burke asked, hesitant.

"No way," Richard shot back instantly. "She's got Alzheimer's—she can't legally consult as a doctor anymore."

Worried his snap reaction looked shady, he added, "Duncan's already talked it through with Alice. With his skills, he can assist you just fine."

Burke nodded, no choice but to roll with it.

Adam gave a polite little smile.

The lead surgeon spot for this one? His. He knew the details better than Burke—there was no way he'd stand there as first assist, whispering tips to the attending. How awkward would that be? Nope. He'd take the scalpel, and Burke could play mentor from the sidelines, tossing out a few harmless pointers to keep his dignity intact. That's how you maintain the vibe.

"Sigh," Burke thought to himself. Who'd have guessed an intern could back him into a corner like this?

Teaching these days? Tough gig.

Chapter 497: The Heroine Who Came Knocking

Medical Center

VIP Ward

"...So that's the surgery plan. Once the babies are born, we'll need to operate right away—no time for Q&A then. So, if you've got any questions, now's the time to ask."

Dr. Montgomery, the neonatal chief heading up this case, laid out the whole procedure step by step.

But Mrs. Rusabin just stared blankly, lost in her own world. The bad news had clearly hit her like a truck.

"We get it. No questions," Mr. Rusabin said, his face etched with sorrow as he gave a stiff nod.

Ring ring!

His phone went off again.

"Sorry, it's from home. My mom's in her seventies, and she can only handle our three four-year-old boys for so long. Could you guys keep an extra eye on Doree for me?"

He glanced at his phone, gave a bitter smile, and made the request.

"Of course," Dr. Montgomery replied with a quick nod.

"Mom?"

Mr. Rusabin kissed his wife's forehead, picked up the call with a soft "Hey," nodded to everyone, and stepped outside.

"Dr. Duncan, Dr. Stevenson, you two figure out your schedules and handle round-the-clock care," Dr. Montgomery instructed.

"Yes, ma'am," Adam and Liz replied in sync.

Once everyone else cleared out—

"Wait, weren't you just on standby?" Liz asked, giving Adam a sideways look.

"It's all work, standby or not," Adam said, brushing it off with a straight face. "Let's sort out the shifts. With Mrs. Rusabin's condition, she's delivering tomorrow or the day after, tops. So, our main watch is these next few days. How about you take the first half of the night, and I'll take the second?"

"Deal."

Liz jumped at it. Night shift was Adam's burden now, and she wasn't about to complain about him picking up the slack.

She didn't mind an extra hand, honestly. But it still rubbed her the wrong way.

She'd started out as the "host" here, with Adam as the "guest." Now? He'd totally flipped the script and taken charge.

And the worst part? She had no choice but to roll with it. It felt like this damn, ruthless, shameless, unfair life all over again!

Adam, meanwhile, grabbed the ultrasound scans and headed to Dr. Alice Grey's office to go over Mrs. Rusabin's case. They brainstormed ways to optimize the surgery.

Dr. Grey's past ops hadn't involved quintuplets, after all. Some details Adam had tossed around with her back then hadn't even crossed their minds.

Every case is its own beast.

But Dr. Grey—legendary for a reason—brought experience, perspective, and ideas that sparked something in Adam when tackling this new challenge.

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Nightfall

After wrapping up the case discussion, knowing the next few days would be eaten up by the quintuplets, Adam slipped over to the ER while Liz held down the fort.

Might as well sneak in some work and bank a little "life credit" while he could.

Nurse Station

"Hey, Violet, any fun cases tonight?" Adam asked the sharpest nurse on the floor.

"Oh, you bet."

Violet smirked, fishing a chart from the stack and handing it over. "Dr. Duncan, this outpatient's a riot."

"Really?"

Adam grinned, snagging the chart and heading to Exam Room 7.

"Mr. Patrick? I'm Dr. Duncan," he said, stepping in and smiling at the young white guy inside. "What's bothering you?"

Then he clocked it: the guy's finger was broken.

Before Adam could point it out, though—

Mr. Patrick started talking. He poked his left leg with the busted finger. "Oof, hurts here." Then his right leg. "Oof, here too."

He kept jabbing at random spots—his arm, his side—wincing each time. "Oof, hurts everywhere."

Finally, he looked up at Adam with a dead-serious face. "Doc, am I dying? Is this some big disease?"

"..."

Adam's lip twitched. He studied the guy's expression—no sign of a prank—and a hunch clicked into place.

"Mr. Patrick, you been doing any drugs?"

"Nope," he said, shaking his head. "Never touch the stuff."

Adam nodded, holding up three fingers. "How many?"

"Three!"

"What day was yesterday? Halloween, right?" Adam asked casually.

"November 1st," Mr. Patrick said after a pause.

"And the day before?"

"Uh... October 30th? Or 31st?" He scratched his head.

"Here's one I've always wondered," Adam said with a chuckle. "Why's your reflection in a mirror flipped side-to-side, not top-to-bottom?"

"Uh..."

Mr. Patrick froze, scratching his ear, racking his brain, but came up empty.

"Guess I'm not the only one stumped," Adam cut in. "No one's got that figured out."

"Oh, okay," Mr. Patrick said with a goofy grin.

"But good news—I've got your diagnosis," Adam said, smiling. "You're not hurting all over. Your finger's broken. Every time you poke yourself, the pressure makes it hurt more, so it feels like your whole body's in pain."

"Ohhh, that makes sense!" Mr. Patrick's eyes lit up. "Can you fix me, Doc?"

"You bet."

Adam patched up the injury—nothing fancy, just enough to help.

But it was a band-aid fix. If he had to guess, Mr. Patrick wasn't exactly firing on all cylinders upstairs.

"Dr. Duncan, over here!"

He'd barely stepped out of the room when Violet waved him over.

Adam glanced her way, did a double-take, and hustled over.

A kid's face was stuck in a tiger head.

"He climbed a stool at home, shoved his head in, and started freaking out," the dad explained, exasperated. "I've taken him to see *The Lion King* nine times. Guess this is payback."

"The teeth are caught on his neck," Adam said, checking it out. "We'll need to pull the tiger's teeth off."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa!" the dad yelped. "This thing's been in my family for ninety years—my great-granddad brought it back from the Three Kingdoms with Teddy Roosevelt. It's a priceless antique!"

"Your kid's neck is bleeding," Adam pointed out.

"I tried yanking them out earlier—might've made it worse," the dad admitted, wincing.

"Dad, it hurts!" the kid whined.

"Do it," the dad said through gritted teeth.

Kid trumped antique, apparently.

"Dr. Duncan, I'll grab a saw," Violet offered.

"No need," Adam said, shaking his head.

He reached into the tiger's mouth, gripped a tooth, and with a quick twist, popped it loose from the root. A few more tugs, and all the teeth pinning the kid were out. He freed the boy's head and handed the stunned dad a fistful of tiger fangs.

While Adam cleaned up the kid's neck—

"ADAM!"

A familiar, furious female voice cut through the air.

Chapter 498: Shut the Door, Let the Dogs Loose

Medical Center. Emergency Room.

Adam was busy treating a kid whose neck had gotten stuck in a tiger-shaped toy when a familiar face stormed in, clearly on a mission.

"Hold on a sec," Adam said.

The moment he saw her, he knew exactly what this was about. Still, he shot her a quick "calm down" look.

She noticed the kid next to Adam, and her angry expression melted away in an instant. Concern took over as she asked, "Oh no, what happened here?"

"Got caught in something by accident," Adam explained casually.

Once he finished up with the case, he led Lily—who'd flipped back to her angry face—outside the hospital building, all while the nosiest little nurse watched with gossip-hungry eyes.

"Lily, what's so urgent you had to track me down at the hospital?" Adam said, putting on a stern face. "Don't you know I'm working? This doesn't look good, you barging in like this."

"Sorry," Lily mumbled.

She was a kindergarten teacher with a soft spot for kids, and seeing Adam tending to one just now had hit her guilt button hard.

"Just this once. Don't let it happen again," Adam said, secretly smirking inside but keeping his face straight.

He knew why Lily was here, so he figured he'd get the upper hand by putting her on the defensive first.

But Lily wasn't your average pushover. As a master of motivational clichés, she was quick on her feet. She switched back to her angry face, struck a Bruce Lee pose, and pointed a trembling finger at Adam. "Don't change the subject! What did you do to Robin?"

"Ahem." Adam coughed lightly, playing innocent. "What are you talking about?"

He knew Lily and Robin were besties—well, in the original timeline, anyway.

In this timeline, thanks to Adam flapping his chaotic butterfly wings, Robin never got tangled up with Ted. That meant she barely hung out with Lily and the gang, so their bestie bond had definitely taken a hit.

Given that, Adam seriously doubted Robin would've spilled the beans about last night to Lily.

Until he got the full story, he wasn't about to confess anything stupid.

"You know what I'm talking about!" Lily growled, her finger shaking as she spat out each word.

"What?" Adam, who'd faced plenty of scares in his time, had now mastered the art of acting. With his strength backing him up, he kept that innocent look locked in place.

"The marks on Robin's body!" Lily snapped. Seeing her tough-guy act wasn't cracking him, she upped the ante. "Don't tell me you have no idea what's going on!"

"Oh." Adam nodded lightly. "I know about that. But do you?"

"I—" Lily faltered.

Of course she didn't know.

If she did, she'd have screamed it out already.

All she'd seen were the marks on Robin's body. When she pressed her, Robin only let slip that Adam—this jerk—was involved. But no matter how much Lily prodded, Robin wouldn't give up the details.

That drove Lily up the wall.

We're talking indescribable injuries here.

The second Lily saw them, her mind ran wild with a million scenarios. She wanted Robin to confirm them, but Robin just clammed up.

It was the ultimate "pants are off, and this is what you show me?" moment.

Since she couldn't get answers from Robin, Lily marched over to confront the other guilty party—Adam—fuming with righteous anger.

Oh, and here's a little plug: .

But let's be real—Lily wasn't here for the juicy details (well, not just that). She was on a mission to get justice for her bestie. How could anyone treat a girl so rough? Those marks—Lily's heart ached just looking at them.

Oof. Like, really ached.

"It wasn't me," Adam said with a helpless chuckle. "Lily, you know me. Do you honestly think I'd do something like that?"

"Hmm, it doesn't seem like you," Lily admitted, nodding. Then she frowned. "But if it wasn't you, then who? Robin's been cursing your name left and right!"

"Uh..." Adam gave an awkward laugh. "It's kinda related to me, but I swear I didn't do it myself... Look, just drop it, okay? Robin doesn't want anyone else knowing."

"Anyone else? Am I just anyone to her?" Lily puffed out her chest, striking a "I'm Robin's number-one bestie" pose.

"Heh." Adam just looked at her, smiling without a word.

"...Okay, fine," Lily muttered, realizing her stance wasn't convincing. She softened her tone. "Adam, seriously, what happened? You know Robin didn't even go to work today."

"That bad, huh?" Adam said, genuinely surprised.

Robin was a total workaholic. Skipping out like this? That wasn't her style.

"You're a doctor, and you're shocked?" Lily's voice shot up again as she rolled her eyes dramatically. "She's hurt so bad she can't even wear a bra. How's she supposed to go to work?"

Adam thought it over and felt a pang of shame.

Normally, he'd have caught something like that right away. But back then, his brain was too fried—too overloaded with everything—to notice the little details.

Now, rewinding the mental tape and unlocking that encrypted memory file... From a pro doctor's perspective, those injuries...

Adam's guilt doubled, and he couldn't help but grumble inwardly, "Alice really lives up to her doctor rep. Way harsher than Robin ever was."

"She didn't see a doctor?" he asked.

"How could she?" Lily shot him a glare. "It's humiliating! She just took some painkillers."

"Hang on, I'll grab some ointment for her. You can go over and help her apply it," Adam said quickly.

"What?!" Lily's eyes widened. "She's in that state, and you're not going yourself?"

"I've got stuff to do," Adam said, hesitating. "The hospital just got—"

"How far is Robin's place from here?" Lily cut him off. "You can't spare a few minutes? What, are you the only doctor in this whole place?"

"Well, no," Adam said with a sheepish grin. "But me showing up right now? Not the best idea. You know Robin's got five big dogs and a stash of guns at her place. You're her bestie—you're the better fit for this. Don't you wanna help her out~?"

His tone and expression turned a little sly at the end.

Lily caught on instantly. Her mind slipped into the scenario Adam painted, and she zoned out for a sec, her eyes taking on a mischievous glint.

Adam snickered to himself.

He knew Lily couldn't resist this kinda bait.

Back in the original timeline, she'd always had a thing for Robin—tons of fantasies included.

Take this classic moment: When Robin and Ted were in their honeymoon phase, the two couples had a chat. Ted and Robin sat everyone down all serious, saying they had something to announce.

Once they spilled it, Matthew immediately teased Lily, "Told you they didn't mean that."

Lily had been mortified.

She'd rambled to Matthew more than once after a few drinks, dreaming up wild ideas about shaking up their little four-friend, two-couple dynamic.

Matthew thought it was hilarious and blurted it out without thinking.

Lily and Ted? Please. They were like left hand and right hand—no chance.

But he'd totally misread her.

With four people, there's more than one combo, right? Lily's real dream team was her and Robin, okay?!

Adam, with his god-tier perspective, saw it all clear as day. So right now, he landed a knockout punch with an offer Lily couldn't refuse.

Truth be told, he wasn't thrilled about going to Robin's himself.

Not because he was scared she'd sic her five massive dogs on him or blast him with a shotgun.

It was more like:

One, he did have stuff to do. Those quintuplets were a high-risk case—he had to stay on top of it.

Two, if he went over, how was he supposed to comfort Robin? To do it right, it'd take forever—and he just didn't have that kinda time.

If he half-assed it, the comforting wouldn't even work, so why bother going at all?

So, nah, he'd sit this one out and nudge Lily into action instead.

The besties could hash it out, slap on some ointment, trash-talk Adam a bit, and boom—negative vibes gone.

That's the winning move right there.

Chapter 499: I Bet There's No Bullet in Your Gun

At the medical center.

Outside the building.

Facing Adam's tempting proposal, Lily drifted into a daydream. Her eyes sparkled with a mischievous glint, her right eyebrow shooting up—once, twice—making it painfully obvious she was imagining something pretty darn nice.

Adam flashed a knowing smile.

Know your enemy, know yourself, and you'll win every battle.

The advantage is mine!

But then—

"No! No! No!"

Lily snapped out of her fantasy, stumbling back while frantically waving her hands, shouting her refusal. The sheer struggle to resist temptation was so intense that even Adam, her friend, felt a pang of sympathy watching her. It reminded him of a buddy from his past life—round as a ball after swearing to lose weight—flailing in panic when Adam and the gang teasingly dangled his favorite food in front of him.

"I can't do this!"

Lily thrust her hands out flat, keeping Adam at bay, her voice tangled with hesitation. "I'm me, you're you—I can't step in for you. In times like this, it's you who needs to go. That's what makes the most sense."

"You're overthinking it," Adam said gently, standing his ground. "What's a guy, anyway? Just a tool, right? Robin needs her bestie—you—way more right now."

"You're a doctor," he added. "You'd be better at helping her heal."

Lily shook her head.

"I've already checked her out. The ointment I gave you—just rub it on evenly."

Adam chuckled warmly. "Three circles left, three circles right—clockwise, counterclockwise, whatever works. If you want her to feel better faster, give her a nice little massage. Get that blood flowing!"

Lily's eyes gleamed again, that right eyebrow arching high.

But before Adam could smirk triumphantly—

"No!"

She shook her head hard, took a deep breath, and got serious. "Whether you did it yourself or not, this all started because of you. Robin's pissed at you. If you still see her as a friend, you've got to go yourself. That's what you, Adam Duncan, should do. Otherwise, how are you any different from Barney? At least Barney never lets a woman get hurt physically."

"..."

Adam's mouth twitched.

What kind of messed-up comparison is that?

Isn't heartbreak always worse than a bruise?

And seriously—him, Adam Duncan, the same as Barney?

No way in hell!

"Fine," he sighed, throwing up his hands as Lily transformed into some kind of fierce life-coach guru. "I'll go, okay?"

"Now that's the Adam I know!" Lily grinned. "Next time, I'll back you up when you're roasting Barney. Gotta have some solid ground to stand on, right?"

"Heh, thanks a bunch," Adam quipped dryly. "Really appreciate you and Matthew's support!"

Just that morning, he'd been comparing Meredith to some TV character, deciding they weren't alike. But now, as night fell, here was Lily channeling that same vibe. He couldn't help but wonder if some mysterious force was pulling strings behind the scenes.

So, what did Lily have in common with that character?

First off—and most obvious—they were both queens of dishing out feel-good wisdom. Lily was basically the go-to emotional therapist for all her friends. Whenever someone hit a rough patch in love or life, she'd swoop in to sort them out. Adam admired that about her. Her moral compass might not be perfect, but in the wild world of American TV drama, it was top-tier.

Second thing—they both took love seriously. Lily and Matthew's relationship blew Adam's mind. In this chaotic, mix-and-match soap opera universe, they were a rare pair who stuck it out, almost from start to finish. A real betrayal of the genre's norms! Even Chandler and Monica couldn't hold a candle to them. Their bond was so pure it reminded him of... well, his parents in this life.

Okay, fine—sitcoms can't compete with Disney family vibes for wholesomeness.

Point is, Lily was basically the American version of that character. When she poured on the heartfelt advice, Adam had no choice but to gulp it down, even if it made him roll his eyes.

"Where you headed?" Lily asked, noticing him turn to leave.

"Gonna swing by the nurses' station, let them know to tell my colleague," Adam replied casually.

Sure, Liz was covering the first half of the night, but he had a hunch this little errand might make him late for the handoff later. Better to give a heads-up now. After all—if you're gonna do something, do it right. This time, he was determined to get Robin to accept his apology.

"Oh," Lily said, not quite getting it. She figured he was still on shift, oblivious that it was barely evening—five or six hours shy of midnight—and Adam was already planning five steps ahead.

At the nurses' station—

"Got it, Dr. Duncan!" The sharpest nurse gave him a sly "I know what's up" wink.

"Thanks," Adam said with a nod, then headed out of the hospital to drive to Robin's place.

"Hey, what're you doing?" he asked, spotting Lily trailing him.

"Coming with you, duh," she said, like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

She'd worked so hard to convince him, securing justice for her bestie Robin. No way was she missing the follow-through! What if they fought? What if Adam pulled some shady move again? She needed to be there, keeping an eye on things—otherwise, she'd never relax.

"Nah, you don't need to," Adam said, shaking his head. "It'd be awkward."

"Why's that?" Lily's expression shifted, a little suspicious.

"You tell me," Adam said with a sly grin.

"Wait—you mean...?" Lily's face flushed, her eyes going all dreamy again.

As the resident love guru—amateur grandmaster level—she knew exactly what the best way was for a guy and a girl to bury the hatchet!

Yeah, her tagging along might get... complicated.

But now? She kinda wanted to go...

Emmm. Don't get the wrong idea! She was all talk, no action—just fantasizing like always. If push came to shove, she'd bolt straight back to Matthew's side in a heartbeat.

"Don't worry," Adam laughed. "I'll make sure she cools off."

"I trust you," Lily said, already picturing a dozen ways Adam might smooth things over. She slipped herself into Robin's shoes for a second and thought, If I were her, facing this, I'd have to forgive him. No choice!

"You know where Robin lives, right?" Lily called out, not climbing into the car as Adam settled into the driver's seat.

"Of course," he replied, starting the engine with ease. He shot her a grin, floored the gas, and peeled out, leaving her with one last line echoing in the distance:

"I know that road better than you do!"

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Robin's Apartment

Ding-dong.

Adam rang the bell.

"Woof woof woof! x5!"

A chorus of ferocious barking erupted from inside. Most people would've turned tail and run.

After a moment, the door swung open.

There stood Robin—one hand gripping leashes for five massive dogs, the other aiming a huge handgun right at Adam.

"You jerk! You've got some nerve showing up here!"

"I bet there's no bullet in that gun!" Adam said calmly, smirking.

Then he glanced at the five dogs—gifts from Robin's five exes—finding them way too loud. One look from him, and—

"Whine whine whine! x5!"

The once-rowdy pack whimpered and shrank back, legs trembling like they'd just met their alpha.

Click.

Adam stepped inside, shutting the door firmly behind him.

"Whine whine whine! x6!"

Chapter 500: The Dogs Are Feeling Wronged

Robin's Apartment.

"You jerk!"

"You jerk."

"You jerrrrk~"

The same phrase, but with each passing second, the tone shifted—like some kind of time-warped magic trick. That's the power of the years, huh?

"So, you're not mad anymore, right?" Adam said with a grin. "Can you put the gun away now?"

"Hmph."

Robin let out a noncommittal huff. Still, she struggled to her feet and stashed the oversized handgun from her nightstand into the safe.

"We good now?" Adam asked, flashing a cheeky smile.

"In your dreams," Robin shot back, rolling her eyes.

"So, what's the plan then?" Adam chuckled.

"Haven't figured it out yet," she said, shaking her head.

"How about I get you a gift? Something you'll love?" Adam said, slipping on sunglasses and a chunky gold chain. He popped a cigar in his mouth, his smirk tilting up a smooth 60 degrees.

"What do you take me for?" Robin scoffed. "If I could actually take you in a fight, you think I wouldn't have shot you by now?"

Oof.

Her logic was airtight.

"You're overthinking it," Adam said quickly, switching to damage control. "Last night wasn't on purpose, I swear. Hand on heart—I've got nothing but respect for you."

"..."

Robin slapped his "swearing" hand away, done with talking. This guy's tricks were endless—she couldn't keep up.

Adam caught her reaction and smirked.

After last night's wild clash, he'd still had the confidence to promise Lily he could smooth things over with an apology. That wasn't just hot air.

Sure, his apology was dripping with sincerity, but it was more than that. With his god-mode perspective, Adam probably knew Robin better than she knew herself.

Classic TV drama vibes: Childhood shapes everything. A happy one heals you forever; a rough one leaves you patching yourself up for life.

Robin Scherbatsky—or, if we're going ancient East Country style, Robin "Victory Man" Scherbatsky. Yup. Her dad had wanted a son. Too bad he got a daughter instead.

But no biggie! Raise her right from the start, and a girl can be just as tough as any guy.

"Baseball pro" Penny's dad would've nodded in approval—total expert move.

So, raised like a boy, Robin's personality and hobbies skewed hard toward the masculine. Guns, fighting, football—she was all about the rough stuff.

It all stemmed from habits she'd picked up as a kid, chasing her dad's praise. Naturally, that led to a textbook issue: what Barney once called her "super-hot daddy complex."

In Adam's all-seeing view, he'd watched Robin—decked out in a suit, puffing a cigar—open up about her past. Her cigar skills? Honed to impress her cigar-loving dad, hoping for some bonding time.

But hanging out in guy-world too long nearly turned her into something else entirely. She and Penny shared the same "problem": a little training, and their pecs outshone everyone at the gym, leaving the boys jealous and bowing down.

Later, as pop star "Robin Sparkles," she left the country for the U.S. and carved out a totally different path.

Deep down, Robin wasn't that hung up on last night. What really ticked her off was getting the short end of the stick in her showdown with Alice.

For someone as competitive as her, that was unbearable. And since Adam was the root cause, she'd redirected all that fury his way.

"So, who's that bitch?" Robin snapped, Adam's grin dredging up old grudges.

"Why do you wanna know?" Adam dodged with a laugh. "What, you planning to fight her?"

"Obviously," Robin said with a cold smirk. "I've never taken a hit this bad my whole life—especially not from another woman!"

Tsk!

Talk about some serious shade toward her fellow ladies.

"Heh," Adam chuckled, staying quiet.

No way. Last night was a fluke. Spill the beans now, and if it blew up at the hospital, it'd be a mess he didn't need.

"So, you're on her side?" Robin asked. She might've been all bold and brassy, but she was still a woman—instinctively pulling the "pick a team" card like a pro.

"Of course not," Adam said, shaking his head with a smile. "You know me—I'm always in the middle."

No matter how she pressed, Adam wouldn't budge.

Kidding? With his iron will, there was no way he'd sell out Alice.

"&% ¥ 3@..."

Oh, and here's a quick shoutout: .

Robin sneered and unleashed her trump card—an ultimatum over an encrypted channel.

"...You focus on healing up. I'll see what I can do later," Adam said, all noble and upright.

"Hah!" Robin let out a scornful snort.

Adam acted like he didn't hear it.

"Oh, by the way—you and Lily are tight, right?" he asked with a grin.

"Yeah," Robin nodded. "I don't have many friends around here. Lily's the newest, but she's the warmest. She's given me a kind of friendship I've never felt before. I guess that's what a bestie is, huh?"

"Heh," Adam laughed softly.

Robin "Victory Man" had only known brotherhood growing up—besties were a foreign concept. She thought Lily's enthusiasm was just pure gal-pal vibes.

Hmm.

Okay, fair enough. Adam wasn't a woman, so he couldn't exactly judge what "bestie vibes" were. Maybe he didn't have the right to laugh.

He remembered those sappy posts from his past life's social feeds: "All you need is one good bestie—shopping, eating, chatting. Who cares about a husband?" Probably written for someone like Robin.

"How're she and Matthew doing lately?" Adam asked casually.

"Huh?" Robin gave him a weird look. "Aren't you the one closest to them? Why're you asking me?"

"Ugh," Adam sighed dramatically. "Us doctors are too busy. Even with my best buds, I barely get time to catch up. Just taking the chance to get the scoop."

"..."

Robin was floored by his shamelessness again, feeling deeply offended.

What did he take her for? Some all-purpose errand girl?

"Quit it," Adam said, effortlessly catching the kick she launched at him.

If he were Juno, the mind-reader, he might've heard her inner rant and fired back, "What, I'm not a tool to you?"

Mutual tool status.

If she weren't so useless—barely taking up 10% of his CPU—he wouldn't bother unlocking new features out of boredom.

Ring ring!

His phone went off.

"Be right there," Adam said into it, then started throwing on his jacket and heading out.

"Hospital stuff."

"Drive slow," Robin called.

"Don't worry."

"...When're you coming back?"

"When you're healed up. I'll call. Just don't crash into anything again."

Her reply? A high heel, hurled at Mach speed.

Bang!

Adam shut the bedroom door just in time, hearing the shoe slam into it. He smirked.

Living Room.

Robin's five big dogs—gifts from five ex-boyfriends—were huddled on the couch, looking pitiful. When Adam glanced their way, they ducked their heads even lower.

They were dying over there.

Normally, when they needed to pee, they'd nudge the bedroom door open, jump on the bed, and lick their owner's face to wake her up for a bathroom break.

But with this scary guy around? No chance—they didn't dare get close.

And their owner had strict rules: no peeing or pooping inside.

It was a doggone nightmare.

The newest pup, Number Five, was extra miserable.

The OG dog, a gift from Ex Number N, let out a mournful woof in dog-speak: "Don't be sad. Every time, she starts out all lovey-dovey, but then those guys turn into dead men in her eyes and get kicked to the curb."

Dog Two, from Ex N+1, chimed in: "Can confirm. The guy who got me? Same deal."

Dogs Three and Four, from Exes N+2 and N+3: "Us too."

Number Five blinked, thinking back to the dude who'd bought him—leaving the apartment with a "what even is life" look on his face. Suddenly, he perked up and barked happily.