

TV Show 541

Chapter 541: A Miracle Within a Miracle

Medical Center

"Hey, what brings you here?"

"I heard someone's out to kill you?"

"Just another impulsive weirdo. They'll cool off eventually, no big deal."

Adam grinned at Cristina, who was supposed to be off duty. "Dr. Burke didn't show up today? He didn't come looking for you?"

Emmm.

That's what he said, at least.

But Adam had already tipped off the old cop and added this Black Widow fan to the watchlist. Doctor-patient tensions are a global headache—especially in the U.S., where every day's a rollercoaster. Someone bold enough to blurt out a death threat? No way steady-as-a-rock Adam was letting that slide. Sure, the guy couldn't touch him, but what if a friend got caught in the crossfire? That's a risk Adam wasn't willing to take.

"Enough about that!" Cristina rolled her eyes. "Burke's like a clingy shadow I can't shake off. Right now, he's at Meredith's place, teaching Izzie how to cook a turkey dinner using surgical techniques."

"Easy fix," Adam teased. "Just say that to Dr. Burke's face, and I guarantee he'll stop hovering. Question is, could you bring yourself to do it?"

Dr. Burke, a top-tier surgeon, had pride as high as the sky. No matter how much he liked Cristina, if she dropped a line like that, a breakup would be inevitable.

"I'm gonna check if there's any surgery to jump into," Cristina said, dodging the topic. "I told them I was stepping out to buy booze. Can you believe it? Meredith, the booze hound, doesn't have a single bottle at home!"

She clearly wasn't ready to let Burke go. In her career, he was the authoritative expert she idolized. In life, he was the domestic type—breakfast and coffee in the morning, dinner at night. His family owned a restaurant, and he loved perfecting recipes with surgical precision. The food? Delicious. During that whole medical center poisoning scare, Cristina lined up for a checkup, but Burke told her not to bother—he'd only ever been intimate with her. Living that hospital-home grind, he was a rare gem who stayed faithful. And he was always the one making the moves. For someone as passive as Cristina, a boyfriend like that was a gift from the heavens. No matter how much she griped, deep down, she cared too much to let him go.

"You're joking again," Adam laughed. "Does a booze hound have to keep a stash at home? Who's she drinking with—Izzie? George? Nah, she'd rather hit a bar, get wasted, hook up with some random guy, kick him out at dawn, and strut into work refreshed. She's not just a booze hound; she's a seasoned pro. A boozy veteran!"

"Say that to Meredith's face and see if she doesn't come for your throat!" Cristina shot back before heading toward the surgical wing.

She couldn't stand how effortlessly her boyfriend had won over her friend group. It felt like her personal space was being invaded. For someone dreaming of becoming a "god" in her field, it was suffocating. That's why she'd used the "buying booze" excuse to escape to the hospital, hoping a few surgeries would calm her nerves.

"Adam!"

Meredith rushed around the corner, her eyes lighting up when she spotted him.

"You're here too?" Adam asked, surprised. "Aren't you Izzie's biggest cheerleader?"

"I am, but I'm useless in the kitchen. George is helping her—that's enough," Meredith said sheepishly before getting to the point. "Come quick! A permanent vegetative patient from 16 years ago just opened his eyes and looked at me!"

"Calm down," Adam said as he followed her. "Some leftover reflexes are normal. What's the patient's deal?"

Most of the attending docs, like Dr. Shepherd, had already gone home. Even if they were around, Meredith avoided him whenever she could.

"His name's Holden McKee, a firefighter," Meredith explained quickly. "He got hit by falling debris on duty and ended up in a permanent vegetative state. He's been in a nursing home ever since. Today, a nurse flipped him over and accidentally dropped him off the bed. The insurance company wanted him checked out—scalp damage on his skull, plus a hematoma. I was about to clean the wound, stitch it up, and order a CT to rule out brain bleeding or swelling, but then he opened his eyes and looked at me!"

They reached the room. Adam noticed the patient's eyes were indeed open. After a closer look, he saw them twitch slightly, tracking Meredith's voice.

"He's definitely watching you," Adam said with a smile. "Let's get an MRI. You might be his angel today, guiding a vegetative patient back to life. This is straight out of a cheesy drama!"

Meredith's self-pitying vibe faded, replaced by a spark of hope as she gazed at the patient.

MRI Room

"We need to call Dr. Shepherd," Adam said, studying the scans. "His brain hasn't atrophied. He's got minimal consciousness—he's not vegetative at all."

"What?!" Meredith gasped. "Not vegetative? But he's been in a nursing home for 16 years! No one noticed?"

"Surprised?" Adam glanced at her. "Not everyone gets a spot in Dr. Grey's fancy nursing home. He's just a firefighter with standard insurance—nothing fancy. The place he's at isn't top-tier. Otherwise, he wouldn't have fallen off the bed during a routine turn."

"No one cared about him," Meredith murmured, her voice heavy with empathy. "He's been lying there for 16 years."

"Not much anyone could do," Adam pointed out. "His brain's been slowly recovering all this time. If we hadn't watched him closely, we'd have chalked it up to reflexes too. Imagine 16 years ago—he couldn't even open his eyes. A CT back then would've screamed 'vegetative,' and any doctor would've agreed."

"So what now?" Meredith asked.

"Call Dr. Shepherd, obviously," Adam grinned. "With his condition, we can wake him up with meds."

"Really? That's amazing!" Meredith's excitement drowned out her awkward history with Shepherd. She was genuinely thrilled for the patient.

"Don't celebrate yet," Adam warned. "Waking up might not be a blessing for him. Sixteen years changes everything. He might not handle it."

Emmm.

Think about Yang Guo jumping off a cliff after 16 years, only to find not just Xiao Longnu waiting, but Xiao Longnu, Zhen Zhibing, and their kid living happily as a family of three. He'd probably wish he'd smashed into the rocks on the way down.

Or maybe Xiao Longnu and Zhen Zhibing, feeling guilty, spot Yang Guo first, hide, and send their daughter to trick him into leaving—tying up the Condor Heroes story with a neat bow. Think Yang Buhui—she'd know the playbook. "One look at Yang Guo, and I'm hooked for life." The daughter might feel the same. Otherwise, with Xiao Longnu older than Yang Guo, 16 years later he'd be a weathered uncle while she's still in her prime? Too far-fetched.

And in the author's eyes, Xiao Longnu's real-life inspiration had an unfulfilled life—since she didn't return his love. Emmm. With Yang Buhui's antics in mind and the author's habit of tying real-life vibes into his pervy characters like Yun Zhonghe... it's easy to let your imagination run wild.

Wonder if this patient's about to stumble into his own soap opera twist? 😊

Chapter 542: Adam, Envious of Karen

At the medical center.

While Meredith was contacting Dr. Shepherd, the pagers started going off like crazy.

Adam checked his and immediately rushed to the ER.

The TV screen at the nurses' station was broadcasting a car accident.

"At the south exit of the highway, 28 cars and 3 trucks were involved in a massive pile-up. According to reports from the scene, the crash was caused by a car suddenly making a U-turn, hitting surrounding vehicles. At least 41 people are injured, and several are still trapped..."

"Time to get to work!"

Susan Lewis, who was in charge of the ER, walked over and clapped her hands to get everyone's attention. "Activate the disaster response plan!"

The nurses sprang into action, following the emergency drills they'd practiced. Wheelchairs, stretchers, IVs, surgical gowns, common medications, and surgical tools were all pulled out of storage and stacked together to save time when patients started flooding in.

Adam and the other doctors put on their surgical gowns and waited at the ER entrance.

"Wow, an actual accident—and a big one! This is great!"

Christina, also in her surgical gown, ran up next to Adam, lowering her voice but clearly excited.

"Watch yourself," Adam warned. "This is a humanitarian disaster. Can you not act so thrilled about it?"

"What? Don't tell me you're not excited!" Christina shot him a sideways glance.

"That's not the same thing," Adam said, brushing it off. "This kind of major accident is already being broadcast on TV. Reporters are definitely going to show up with the injured, filming how the hospital handles it.

If they catch that excited look on your face, congrats—you'll overshadow the entire accident and become the star of the show. You'll be socially dead in no time!

And, uh, if there happens to be a hot-headed family member among the patients... you might not even make it to social death. You could just be... dead."

"Is it really that dramatic?" Christina said, but the smile had already vanished from her face.

She knew Adam was right.

With the media's habit of stirring up drama, if they caught her smiling, she'd go viral overnight—and not in a good way.

Sure, she wanted to be famous, but as the best cardiothoracic surgeon, not like this.

"Green for minor injuries, yellow for serious, red for critical, black for deceased!" the head nurse reminded the newer nurses not to forget the triage system.

"Duncan, you're handling the red patients!"

"Yang, you're on green!"

"I'll take yellow," Susan Lewis instructed. "The attending physicians and other residents are on their way to the hospital. Until they get here, we need to stabilize things. Got it?"

"Got it."

"Got it."

Adam's response was enthusiastic, while Christina's was laced with disappointment.

She didn't want to deal with the minor green injuries.

Adam gave Susan a smile, but she turned her head, avoiding eye contact.

Adam gave a wry smile to himself.

It seemed like the last time, with Susan's sister, his cold attitude had really hurt her. Now she was all business with him.

Still, he was grateful.

He loved working on the critical red patients the most. Saving one of them was like adding 0.01 to his lifespan, after all.

Susan clearly remembered his preference and hadn't let their strained relationship stop her from assigning him what he wanted.

Of course, it also helped that she knew her skills were far behind his.

Regardless, Adam appreciated the favor.

After all, in this world, weren't there plenty of people who thought, "If I'm not doing well, neither should you" or loved to drag others down for no reason?

Ambulances started speeding in.

"25 years old, truck flipped, no seatbelt, lost his heartbeat on the scene."

An EMT was straddling the stretcher, continuously performing CPR on the patient.

"Alright, I'll take it from here," Adam said, stepping forward to take over.

Once that patient was stabilized, he moved on to the next.

"Second to third-degree burns, 25% of the body surface, low blood pressure."

"Unconscious, T4 spinal injury, step deformity, relaxed muscles in both legs."

"Derek Jones, 25, run over by a van, left leg amputated below the knee, already lost several liters of blood."

One critical patient after another was brought in. Adam stabilized their conditions before sending them off to the appropriate departments.

"Juno, Karen, what are you guys doing here?"

In the middle of the chaos, Adam suddenly spotted Juno and Karen coming in with the EMTs. His heart skipped a beat. "Did you get caught in the accident too? Are you okay?"

"We're fine," Juno shook her head. "Do you need help?"

"You don't have medical licenses for this center..." Adam glanced at the chaotic ER. Many minor patients weren't getting timely care, and the cries of children echoed everywhere. After a moment, he said, "Follow me!"

He found Susan and quickly introduced them. "Dr. Lewis, this is my friend Juno, a Harvard Medical School graduate. She's currently an intern at Mass General. Can she help with treatment?"

"Sure," Susan said, glancing at Juno. "You can help with the green-tagged patients."

"Got it." Juno didn't hesitate.

Karen, meanwhile, grabbed a surgical gown from the hallway, swiftly helped Juno put it on, and went with her to treat patients.

They were busy until nightfall.

More doctors arrived, and all the patients were properly treated. The tense atmosphere finally eased.

"That's Dr. Duncan's friend, huh? She's amazing."

"Yeah, she seems way better than Dr. Yang!"

"Figures, being Dr. Duncan's friend and all!"

"She's a top student from Harvard Medical School and interning at Mass General. Of course she's amazing!"

"What do you think their relationship is? They seem so in sync."

"Either his girlfriend or someone he's flirting with. Didn't you see the way she looks at Dr. Duncan? So lovey-dovey."

"No way, didn't you notice the girl with her? The way she looks at Juno is off. They're probably the couple!"

"That girl seems like a nurse too. She looks pretty professional."

After the chaos, the gossip started flying.

Juno and Karen's teamwork instantly took some pressure off Christina.

But it also sparked Christina's competitive side.

Without a word, she silently started competing with Juno, trying to see who could treat patients better and faster.

But to her frustration, it felt like facing Adam all over again: she was completely outclassed.

Just a few months ago, she and Juno were classmates.

Back then, Juno didn't seem this good.

Was Mass General's training really that much better than the medical center?

Had she made a mistake coming here with Meredith?

Then she dismissed the thought.

"It's definitely because of Karen!" Christina thought sourly. "Having a nurse like her, who knows exactly what to do with just a glance, would make anyone way more efficient..."

She wasn't the only one feeling jealous.

After finishing in the OR, Adam watched Juno and Karen work together for a while and couldn't help but feel envious.

They were too in sync.

It was like watching a perfectly choreographed dance.

If only he could have a personal nurse like that too.

Chapter 543: Cutting Thoughts with a Cleaver

It's nighttime.

At the medical center.

"Why aren't you guys here yet?"

Monica's on her third call, and she's full of complaints 🙄.

"We'll head back soon," Adam says, sounding apologetic. "You know how it is—can't get away from the hospital. Ever since that highway pile-up, the patients just keep piling up too."

"Hurry up already!"

Monica lowers her voice, but you can tell she's losing it. "Me and Chandler are stuck here with Peggy and Karen, and it's getting so awkward."

"What about Phoebe?" Adam asks, surprised.

"You think she's any help?" Monica snaps back. "We're lucky if she doesn't make it worse!" 😊

"Heh," Adam chuckles, totally getting it.

After wrapping up the crash chaos, Juno had told Karen to head to Adam's apartment first to help Monica prep the Thanksgiving feast. Karen, though? Good luck handling her—only Juno's got that magic touch.

Then, as night falls, Peggy shows up with her bodyguards in tow. She's another ice queen, no surprise there. Phoebe tries to liven things up, bless her heart, but she's a bit of a mess herself—rambling, jumping from topic to topic. All she gets are eye rolls from Monica and zero reaction from Peggy or Karen.

One's quietly working away in the kitchen.

The other marches straight into Adam's study and shuts the door.

Eventually, Phoebe just throws her hands up like, "Whatever, I'm done!" She flops on the couch, grabs her phone, and starts flirting with that young cop, Gene. Total slacker mode activated 🍷📱.

Lisa, the assistant who could help, is off today. It's Thanksgiving, after all—can't really argue with giving her a break.

So picture this: Monica and Chandler standing there, Monica rubbing her hands anxiously, Chandler forcing a awkward grin. They lock eyes, and it's just... peak awkwardness 😬.

"Stop laughing and get over here!" Monica yells into the phone.

"Alright, how about this—I'll send Juno back first," Adam suggests.

"Yes!" Monica perks up instantly. "That'll fix everything!"

She's met Juno a few times and totally vibes with her.

Call ends.

"Juno, why don't you head back?" Adam says to Juno, who's just finished wandering around the medical center.

"It's getting late anyway," Juno replies, glancing at her watch. "Let's go together. Saving lives can wait a little."

"Fair enough," Adam agrees, checking the time too.

It's already 8 p.m. Another big surgery now would push them to midnight. Skipping out on a Thanksgiving they'd all planned to spend together? Yeah, that'd be lame. Plus, today's been a goldmine—half a month's earnings in one day. Time to call it quits.

They pack up, leave the hospital, and Adam drives Juno back to the apartment.

"Oh, you're back too!" Monica says, lighting up when she sees Adam.

"You gave the order, so I figured I'd better hustle," Adam teases.

"Cut it out," Monica shoots back, not buying it. "If I had that kind of pull, I wouldn't have had to call three times. Juno's the one who dragged you back, right?"

She steps in for a big hug with Juno.

"Hey, Juno! Long time no see!"

"Hey, Monica!"

Juno hugs her back, then waves at Chandler, who's standing there with a shy smile. "Hey, Chandler."

"I'll go grab Peggy," Adam says, heading to the study with a grin. "Everyone's here—let's eat!"

"Hey, Peggy!" Juno greets her with a warm smile.

Peggy nods back, still a little frosty. Juno doesn't mind, though—she gets everyone seated and, with just a few words, makes the whole room feel cozy and relaxed 🌸. Even Peggy's caught off guard and actually chats with her a bit.

The long table's loaded with food, and the massive turkey in the center? Total show-stealer. It's shiny, juicy, and huge—taste aside, it's a feast for the eyes.

Adam and Juno take the ends of the table. Peggy's next to Adam. Karen and Phoebe flank Juno. Monica and Chandler sit across from each other in the middle.

Phoebe's already chowing down on some turkey Adam brought back, clearly obsessed with it 🍗❤️👍.

Guess it's a love-hate thing with her!

Since Adam's the glue holding this crew together, he chats with everyone about funny stuff from the past few weeks. But soon enough, Juno effortlessly takes over as the star of the show.

Monica and Phoebe jump in, swapping life and love stories with Juno. Chandler's suddenly back in his prime—ditching the tired, married-guy vibe for his old sarcastic charm. He's cracking jokes that could sell magazines 😊.

Karen's beaming with admiration (and maybe a hint of wariness) as she watches Peggy warm up under Juno's spell. She also shoots Adam a random glare. He's clueless but shrugs it off—Juno's got this under control.

All he has to do is enjoy the food, chime in now and then, and laugh along when Juno spills some playful dirt and the others pile on. Super chill.

For a second, he wonders if inviting Heather, Max, Caroline, Kate, Robin, and the rest of the gang would work this well with Juno running the show.

Chop! That thought gets axed fast. Adam knows his limits.

After a few rounds of drinks, the phone rings.

"Lilly?" Adam picks up.

Everyone glances over.

"Adam!" Lilly's voice comes through, panicked.

"What's wrong?" Adam asks, concerned. "Weren't you and Matthew heading to his hometown for Thanksgiving?"

"I ran off by myself," Lilly says, her voice cracking with tears. "Fifteen pounds, Adam! It's terrifying!"

It takes a while, but Adam finally gets the full story.

Lilly went with Matthew to his family's place for Thanksgiving. The Erickson wives, led by Matthew's mom, were prepping the big meal. They start talking about babies, and right then, the turkey comes out of the oven. Matthew's mom casually points at it and says, "When I was pregnant with Matthew's brother, he was a 15-pound chunker—bigger than this turkey!"

Now, this turkey's already massive—Ericksons are a big family, so they got the king of all birds. Lilly takes one look at that monster turkey, hears it's smaller than an Erickson kid, and bolts out in tears, driving off.

Her period's late, she's been nauseous, and right now, she's at a convenience store buying a pregnancy test. The thought of something that huge growing inside her tiny frame? She's freaking out 😱.

"Relax," Adam says, half-laughing, half-soothing. "Erickson kids are big, sure, but you'll be fine. Just the other day, we delivered quintuplets at the hospital. Fifteen pounds? That's like twins—maybe triplets. It's not as wild as you're picturing."

"Are the quintuplets and mom okay?" Lilly asks, calming down a little.

"Uh..." Adam freezes.

Why'd he pick that example? One of the quints didn't make it, the others have issues, and the mom's depressed.

"Waaaaah!" Lilly's so on edge she doesn't even need an answer—she just starts bawling again.

Chapter 544: Schrödinger's Panic

Adam's apartment.

"I'll talk to her," Juno said with a smile.

Adam sighed, got up reluctantly, and handed the phone to Juno.

"Lily, don't worry," Juno said soothingly. "It's not even confirmed if you're pregnant yet. And even if you are, the baby you and Matthew would have is totally different in size and weight from the one Matthew's parents had.

And don't you love Matthew?

You do, right?

If you love each other, you'll eventually have your own little bundle of love, won't you?

You're already engaged and about to get married.

Even if you had a baby now, it wouldn't be that scary, would it?

Okay, calm down for a sec. Take a deep breath..."

On the other end of the line, Lily quickly calmed down under Juno's reassurance.

"I got it. I'll hang up now," Lily said, a bit embarrassed, before ending the call.

The pregnancy test process, while doable with one hand, wasn't exactly something she'd livestream over the phone. 😊

"Does this scene feel familiar?" Juno asked, grinning at Adam.

"...What do you mean?"

Seeing the weird looks from everyone else, Adam's mouth twitched.

"I mean Sheldon's brother, Little George," Juno said, still smiling as she looked at Adam.

"Heh." Adam forced a smirk.

If you're talking about Little George, just say it. Why stare at me like that and leave me hanging?

It makes it seem like I did something!

Chandler chimed in humorously, "Pretty normal, right?"

"Hm?" Monica immediately turned to him. "You sound experienced."

"You're not?"

Caught up in Juno's playful vibe, Chandler got carried away and looked at her in surprise.

But when he met his wife's dangerous gaze, he realized his mistake.

Don't let Monica's beauty fool you. Forget this "Schrödinger's panic" over a late period—she didn't even have a boyfriend back then.

Even her first kiss... she thought it was with him during some romantic midnight moment...

"Little George?" Peggy, who rarely joined in, spoke up. "The first time we went to Sheldon's house, he and Erica were sneaking around, getting all cozy."

"You guys were so mature for your age," Monica said, a bit jealous.

"Erica told you about that?" Adam asked, surprised, looking at Peggy.

"Yeah," Peggy nodded. "I was pretty curious about that stuff back then, and Erica was happy to talk about it."

"Little George almost thought he was gonna be a dad," Adam said with a laugh. "He was scared out of his wits. Those 10 minutes waiting for the test result? He said it was the longest 10 minutes of his life. Even when it came back negative, he totally lost interest in his girlfriend. Didn't even dare hug her—still traumatized!" 🤔

At this, Adam and Chandler exchanged a knowing look, both feeling a sense of shared understanding.

This life was a bit better.

Since they knew the world of American TV shows could be messy, Adam took precautions—except in certain special cases.

This "shared understanding" was more from memories of their past lives.

Back then, Adam's reaction was almost identical to Little George's.

Panic and torment.

When the scare was over, that overwhelming sense of relief? Indescribable.

Of course, unlike carefree Little George, past-life Adam didn't let loose and celebrate wildly after the scare passed.

He also didn't say something as dumb as Little George did: "I was terrified. I was scared I'd have to marry you. My legs were shaking!"

Instead, like most guys, he played it cool: "Eh, it's not a big deal. If it happened, we'd just get married and raise the kid, right?"

Emmm.

It wasn't panic before.

Definitely not!

Guys always get confident and chill once they know the outcome.

And it's not being a jerk!

Because afterward, they find out their girlfriend knew there was no danger all along.

It was just a test, something she learned from her roommate.

They're all just as bad as each other.

It's all just instinctual reactions forced out of them.

Of course, if the girl suddenly flipped the script and said, "Oh, great! I was just messing with you earlier, but actually, I'm really pregnant..."

Well, if you meet a girl like that, you might as well go along with it.

Otherwise, you might be in for some trouble. 😊

"Still traumatized? Lost interest, huh?" Juno asked with a teasing smile. "How long did that last?"

"..." Adam and Chandler were speechless.

"Hah! Men!"

Except for Peggy, all the other women scoffed in disdain.

"That's not the point," Adam said with an awkward smile, changing the subject. "I should call Lily. It's been 10 minutes—her test results should be out by now."

Just as they mocked, that "traumatized" state didn't last long.

As Lu Xun said: The greatest lesson humanity learns is that we never learn our lessons.

Even if they were terrified by the Schrödinger's dilemma of whether a period would come, swearing to stay cautious and keep a safe distance...

That resolve didn't even last as long as a "wise man" moment.

The call connected.

"Lily, did the results come in?" Adam asked.

"This is the police. Ms. Aldrin has been arrested," a man's voice came through.

"For what?" Adam asked, confused.

"Public urination," the officer said.

"..." Adam's mouth twitched. "Can you pass the phone to Lily? I need to talk to her. She's the fiancée of the Erickson family. You know the Ericksons, right?"

Lily drove out to buy a pregnancy test, so she wouldn't have gone far—just nearby.

In small-town America, the police usually know a bit about every family.

Especially a family like Matthew's—big guys, and with Matthew being a future lawyer, they should be well-known.

"The Erickson family's fiancée?" The officer immediately connected the dots. "Matthew's fiancée?"

"Yeah," Adam nodded.

"Heh," the officer chuckled and handed the phone to Lily. "Matthew will come pick you up soon. By the way, I'm Mike, Matthew's classmate."

"Hi, Mike. I'm Lily," Lily said awkwardly as she took the phone.

"Public urination, huh?" Adam said, trying not to laugh.

"I didn't want to!" Lily said, mortified. "The convenience store didn't have a bathroom, and the clerk told me to just find a spot... Ugh, damn it! This is all Matthew's fault! Now I'm as bad as Barney!" 😞

Emmm.

Barney once peed in public too—on a church wall, no less. He got caught and was sentenced to community service.

He's still doing it to atone for his sins.

"So, what about the result?" Adam got back to the point.

"I don't know," Lily said, frustrated. "I just stood up when Mike caught me. I didn't even get to check the test."

"It's negative!" Officer Mike's voice came through.

Clearly, he was eavesdropping.

"Thank God!" Lily exclaimed, overjoyed.

"Now you can relax," Adam said. After chatting with Lily a bit more, he hung up.

"I'm so jealous of her," Monica said, looking envious. "I don't even get the chance to panic like that."

Chandler: "..."

Chapter 545: No Way, That Worked?

At Adam's apartment.

"Oh, come on!"

Chandler's riding high until Monica lets out a dramatic sigh. Suddenly, his legs feel like jelly again, and he whines, totally wronged.

"What's wrong?" Monica says, all innocent. "I wasn't even talking about you! I'm just jealous that Lilly almost got pregnant."

"Quit pretending," Adam cuts in, smirking. "Like you've never felt that rush yourself? Need me to jog your memory?"

"I haven't!" Monica fires back.

"July 23, 1998, 8:12:35 p.m.," Adam says, pulling the exact moment from his brain like a human timestamp, leaving no room for her to wiggle out. "We were all hanging out, talking about Rachel's baby."

While Chandler was in the bathroom, you got this wild idea and asked if we wanted to see something fun—said you'd show us how to scare Chandler good.

So, when he came back, you sidled up to him all serious and said, 'Maybe it's because Rachel's pregnant, but I think I'm ready to have a kid with you.'"

"Hahaha! I remember that!" Phoebe bursts out laughing. "Chandler just said 'okay' and freaked Monica out so bad her voice cracked!" 😊

"It wasn't just one word!" Monica protests, covering her face. "He said a whole bunch! He was like, 'I've been thinking about it too, and I think we're ready.' That's not one word!"

"Doesn't change the outcome," Adam teases. "You jumped back, hands up like you were ready to fight, totally shocked, waving at him to shut up and chill."

"You even asked if I was joking," Chandler adds, jumping in now that Adam's got his back. "Then you went, 'You think we're ready to get pregnant now?!'—dragging out the 'now,' arms flailing, looking like you'd seen a ghost."

"Heh," Adam chuckles. "You wanted to scare Chandler's voice up an octave, but you ended up scaring yourself instead. That panic? Probably not far off from Lilly freaking out over a 15-pound baby."

"It's not the same!" Monica insists, digging in. "Back then, we didn't know we'd have trouble having kids. We'd just gotten married and weren't ready for a baby anytime soon."

Plus, it's totally different—I'm talking about that pregnancy panic, you know, the thrill of sneaking forbidden fruit but not being able to handle the consequences..."

"Ohhh," Adam drags out the word playfully. "Got it. What you're really jealous of is the high school forbidden-fruit vibe, huh?"

"Exactly!" Monica doubles down, desperate to dodge admitting she was griping about Chandler. She spills some secret big-girl dreams from back in the day.

"You don't need to be jealous of anyone," Adam says, dead serious. "Didn't you and Rachel get your own taste of forbidden fruit when you went to Columbia?"

"Hahaha!" Phoebe's laughing so hard her stomach hurts. "Ross..."

"Shut it!" Monica slaps a hand over Phoebe's mouth and glares at Adam.

"Alright, enough joking," Adam says, wrapping it up. "Science says most guys pack on pounds after marriage, but look at Chandler—not only is he not chubby, he's slimmed down.

And those wobbly legs? Monica, don't you see how hard he's trying?"

"I'm not saying he's not trying..." Monica mumbles, deflating. "I'm not blaming him either. I'm just mad at myself... Look at Emma—so gorgeous. I want a baby with Chandler too..."

She covers her face and starts crying.

"Monica..." Chandler's up in a flash, pulling her into a hug.

"Monica," Juno says, shooting Adam a look before stepping in to comfort her. "I've heard from Adam that it's just tricky for you guys, not impossible. Isn't it nice like this?

No pressure, no precautions, just enjoying married life to the fullest. Who knows—maybe one day, an even bigger happiness will knock on your door..."

"Really?" Monica looks at Juno, teary-eyed.

"Really," Juno nods firmly.

"Thanks—ugh!" Monica starts to thank her but suddenly gags, pushes Chandler away, and bolts to the bathroom, hand over her mouth.

Blech! Dry-heaving echoes from the bathroom.

"No way..." Adam stares at Juno, jaw dropped. "That worked?" 🤔

Juno's just as stunned.

"What's 'no way'?" Phoebe asks, not catching on.

"Is Monica pregnant because Juno said it?" Adam half-jokes, half-gripes.

"Heh," Juno catches the playful jab in his tone and smirks. "Maybe I've got that power. Anyone you want me to knock up? I can help!" She glances at Peggy.

"..." Adam's mouth twitches.

"Pregnant?!" Chandler and Phoebe yell from the bathroom doorway at the same time.

"PREGNANT?!" Monica, who'd just finished puking and rinsing her mouth, screeches at an ear-splitting pitch as she steps out.

"Adam, what'd you say?" She shoves Chandler aside, rushing to Adam with hopeful eyes. "You think I'm pregnant?"

"Maybe," Adam says, dialing back her expectations. "Nausea's just one sign. You'd need a pregnancy test to be sure..." He pauses, then adds, "And even those aren't 100%—an ultrasound at the hospital's the real deal."

Snap! Monica doesn't even wait, grabbing her bag and darting back to the bathroom.

"Uh..." Chandler gives everyone an awkward smile. "Ever since Adam had us get checked and we found out it's tough for us to have kids, she's been dying to try... Like, super dying. She carries pregnancy tests everywhere—five in her bag at all times..."

He doesn't mention that she's burned through a dozen or so in the last few months.

Hmm. Even with no symptoms, if she gets a hunch, she's testing right away.

Chandler's nagged her about it plenty, but Monica's OCD doesn't budge. Eventually, he figured it's a nice break for him, so he let it slide. He's not sweating a few bucks for tests—his back and sanity are worth more.

"..." Everyone's just staring, dumbfounded.

She's really desperate for a kid!

Ten minutes later—

"Two lines! I'm pregnant, I'm pregnant!!!" Monica's ecstatic shriek could shatter the sky.

Chapter 546: A Contribution to the Merit List

Adam's apartment.

"Pregnant..."

Hearing the deafening shout in his ear, Chandler zoned out.

In that moment, Chandler—a guy who never lifted a finger and couldn't tell wheat from rice—finally understood how farmers felt.

Turns out, hard work does pay off! 🌾

And this payoff? It was pure happiness, beyond anything else!

Suddenly, all those late nights of effort and the exhaustion that left him clutching his back and feeling weak in the knees turned into sweet memories filled with pride.

Labor is glorious, after all! 🤰

"Adam, Monica's pregnant!"

"Congrats, but—"

Before Adam could finish, Chandler tackled him in a bear hug, repeating the news over and over. Adam smiled slightly, patting Chandler's back. "Congrats, Chandler! You're gonna be a dad."

For a moment, Adam felt a mix of emotions and relief.

In his past life watching Friends, one of the biggest regrets was that this lovable couple, who matched his values so well, couldn't have their own biological child.

Sure, they ended up adopting twins, which seemed like a happy ending.

But those twins? Their birth mom seemed clueless, not even sure who the father was.

And of the two possible dads, one was a murderer.

Not to mention, this adoption wasn't kept secret.

What if one day the twins' birth parents regretted it or turned malicious?

It'd be a total mess, with no peace at home.

At the end of the day, having your own biological child is just better.

A kid with your genes, their features reflecting you and your partner—there's an innate love there, isn't there? ☹️

Chandler acted like he didn't care, even offering to use someone else's "gold" to fulfill Monica's dream of having a biological child.

But that was because he loved Monica so much.

In front of a Monica who was once desperate for a child, he had to act like it didn't matter, just to comfort her.

But now, Chandler was showing his true feelings.

Ecstatic beyond control!

"Honey! We're having a baby!"

At that moment, Monica walked out of the bathroom, her expression exaggerated, practically dancing as she repeated loudly, "We're having a baby!!!"

"Yeah, we're having a baby," Chandler said, letting go of Adam and pulling Monica into a half-hug, kissing her forehead.

"Don't get too excited," Adam said with a laugh. "You might be pregnant now, so you need to be careful for the baby. No more Geller Cup games or anything like that."

The Geller Cup—a violent football game between Ross and Monica, the siblings.

"Ugh~" Monica groaned, but her eyes were full of joy.

Who needs to play silly games with her dumb big brother when she's about to have a kid to play with?

She's gonna be a mom soon!

And maybe the Geller Cup will turn into a real competition in the future.

Ross already has two kids, and if he has a few more, and she and Chandler have a few more too...

Their kids could form teams and compete—wouldn't that be way more fun than just her versus Ross?

And she knew for sure: her and Chandler's kids would win!

Just like their mom always beat their Uncle Ross! 🏆

"Of course, playing now wouldn't even be fair," Adam teased. "Just stick out your belly, and let's see if Ross dares to fight you for the ball."

"He'd dare!" Monica and Chandler shouted in unison.

The soon-to-be parents' eyes were filled with protective and fierce determination.

"OMG! Monica, you and Chandler finally have a baby!" Phoebe jumped in to congratulate them, hugging both of them tightly.

"Yeah... sob!" Monica laughed, then burst into tears.

Juno gave Adam a playful look, smiling.

"..." Adam's mouth twitched, but after a moment's thought, he stepped forward and hugged Chandler and Monica from behind.

When in Rome, right?

Group hugs are a classic heartwarming scene in American TV shows.

The four of them stayed huddled together until Monica stopped crying.

Juno, Karen, and Peggy stood quietly to the side, watching the moment unfold.

When everyone finally let go, they stepped forward to offer their congratulations. "Congrats!"

"Thanks, thanks!" Monica said, wiping her tears and beaming.

"Adam, thank you!"

After thanking everyone, Monica and Chandler turned to Adam, sincerely expressing their gratitude.

If Adam hadn't suggested they get checkups and discovered their fertility issues early, they wouldn't have started trying for a baby at their physical peak, skipping birth control altogether.

With their situation, their chances of getting pregnant would've only gotten slimmer.

If they'd waited until they wanted a kid and then found out, there probably would've been no hope.

And if Adam hadn't pushed Chandler to exercise every morning—and dragged her along too—their bodies wouldn't be in such good shape now.

Chandler's "gold" wouldn't have been so lively, and it definitely couldn't have handled the intense "wear and tear" from a while back.

Without that, they probably wouldn't have this good news now.

Even though they didn't know that without Adam, they might never have had their own biological child, it didn't stop them from knowing who they owed the most thanks to for this outcome!

"You're welcome," Adam said with a smile. "I mean, I'm gonna be the godfather, right? Speaking of which, it's okay if I take that role, yeah?"

That's right!

Unlike his reluctant godfather role for Ross and Rachel's daughter Emma, Adam actively volunteered to be the godfather for Chandler and Monica's child.

"Of course it's okay!"

"You're the only godfather for our kid!" Monica and Chandler blurted out.

"Wow! Rachel's gonna be so mad when she hears this," Phoebe exclaimed. "Adam, do you have to play favorites like that?"

"No choice. I'm Chandler's best man, after all," Adam said, not bothering to deny the favoritism.

Emmm.

Yeah, it's favoritism.

He'd put a lot of effort into this child and already felt emotionally attached. So what if he played favorites?

Of course, he still needed a surface-level excuse to brush off others.

Even friend circles have hierarchies.

Adam was Chandler's best man, so it's totally reasonable to treat Chandler's kid a bit special, right?

And judging by Chandler and Monica's reactions, it was genuine, not like Rachel's obvious "I want it all" mentality.

"We need to tell Ross, Rachel, and Joey this great news!" Phoebe shouted.

"Hold on!" Adam stopped her. "Let's wait until it's fully confirmed before we share the news."

"Confirm it more?" Monica froze, her smile faltering slightly.

"Pregnancy tests are only 85% to 95% accurate," Adam said with a laugh. "It's already pretty high, but it's better to go to the hospital for an ultrasound and see it with your own eyes to be sure, right?"

"Then what are we waiting for?" Monica said, touching her belly and heading for the door.

"Let's go together," Juno said with a smile.

And so, everyone went with Monica to the medical center.

Chapter 547: Should We Have One Too?

At the medical center.

Adam was personally doing an ultrasound for Monica.

"Where is it? Where? Why can't I see anything?"

Monica craned her neck toward the screen but only ended up staring at a whole lot of nothing.

"Does that mean I'm not pregnant?"

Chandler asked nervously.

"Don't worry, she's definitely pregnant," Adam said with a grin, pointing at a tiny dot on the screen. "That right there is the embryo!"

"That's it?"

Monica sounded unsure, her emotions all over the place.

"I can't really make it out," Phoebe chimed in. "But it's gotta be it. Remember Ross's son Ben's ultrasound pic? It was like this too—we searched forever and still couldn't find it."

"Exactly," Adam confirmed with a nod. "Right now, it's less than 2 centimeters."

"But why can't we hear a heartbeat?"

Chandler asked, still on edge.

"Dude, it's way too early for that," Adam laughed. "At 30 to 40 days, it's just a gestational sac. At 40 to 50 days, the embryo starts forming. And it's only around 50 to 60 days—about two months in—that you can hear the heartbeat. Monica just found out super early, that's all."

"So how big is my baby right now?"

Monica pressed, eager for answers.

"No one knows for sure," Adam teased. "You two have been going at it like rabbits every day—could've happened any time! We can only guesstimate based on the last day of your period."

"Hahaha!"

Everyone burst out laughing at that.

Normal people don't usually go at it every single day unless they're in that honeymoon phase. The whole "seven times a night" thing? Yeah, that's just a fantasy—most folks can't keep up! So when there's a bit of a gap between sessions, it's easier to pinpoint when conception happened.

Hmmm.

Sometimes you could even figure out if the neighbor climbed over the fence, so to speak.

Of course, as knowledge about biology spread, people got craftier. Figuring out if the neighbor did sneak over became trickier. A sneaky pro could totally play it smart—make sure both the husband and the neighbor get equal action, no one left out. Go ahead and calculate all you want—if something's off, it's on you!

Unless the neighbor's genes are so obvious that people start pointing fingers and the husband ends up demanding a paternity test, it's a secret that could stay buried forever.

Take Ted's romantic mom and the oh-so-charming Uncle Ted next door—there's a story or two there...

"So it's been almost 40 days," Monica calculated. "In about two weeks, I'll hear the heartbeat!" 😊

"Yup," Adam nodded.

Then he started going over a list of things to watch out for.

"I've gotta call Joey and the gang—spread the good news!"

Phoebe couldn't hold it in anymore and started dialing up friends and family.

"Awesome!"

"I'm gonna be an uncle (or aunt) again!"

That was Ross and Rachel, super excited.

"My boy's all grown up! I'm proud of you!"

Joey, being Joey, was over the moon.

"Tell Adam thanks for me!"

That was Chandler's mom, Nora.

"Fingers crossed it's a girl!"

Chandler's dad, Helena, chimed in.

"Never thought our Monica would get here one day!"

Monica's parents were all sentimental.

After the whirlwind of calls, Chandler took Monica home. From now on, Monica was the VIP—treated like a precious panda. Chandler couldn't wipe the grin off his face—except for that one weirdly loaded "congrats" from his dad, Helena.

Not only did they have a kid on the way, but they'd also get a nice long break. Hmmm. At least the first three months would be chill. With one month already down, they had two more to take it easy.

Everything felt perfect.

Thanksgiving night wrapped up early, and everyone headed home.

Adam walked down the street, Juno on his left, Peggy on his right, and Karen next to Juno. The four of them strolled side by side.

"So," Juno said with a smirk, "seeing all your friends tying the knot and popping out babies—does it make you wanna jump on the bandwagon?"

"Nah," Adam shook his head. "They're all in their thirties. I'm barely past twenty—totally different vibe."

"What about you, Peggy?" Juno leaned over to peek at her.

"Me?" Peggy blinked, then shook her head. "Not interested."

She'd just hit adulthood, and her career was in full swing—no room for baby thoughts yet. Then she glanced at Adam, Juno, and Karen. "What about you guys?"

"I've thought about it," Juno said with a laugh. "Adam knows—back in high school, I used to wonder what it'd be like to get pregnant and have a kid. Sounds kinda fun, right?"

"..."

Adam's mouth twitched. This topic gave him a weird vibe. He shot a look at Karen, but she just stared blankly ahead. When she caught him looking, she silently pulled her hoodie up over her head.

Yup.

Juno and Karen loved their hoodies. Even though it wasn't a red one today, that move made Adam's heart skip a beat.

Uh-oh. That's a murder vibe! 😬

"What about now?" Peggy asked, curious.

"Now..." Juno dragged out the word, grinning. "I still think about it sometimes, but there's no rush. Like Adam said, we're only in our early twenties—plenty of time."

"You and Karen?" Peggy glanced at the stone-faced Karen. "Adoption, maybe?"

"We'll see," Juno said lightly. "Having our own would be cool, though. I think that patient Adam saw last time is a solid example."

"Ahem!"

Under the three girls' stares, Adam coughed awkwardly and forced a laugh. "It's not that great... Why are we even talking about this? It's like we're about to pop out kids right now. Guess this stuff really is contagious, huh? Haha!"

His awkward laugh was way too loud.

It drew some stares. People glanced around, scoping out the hot guy and pretty girls, half-expecting to spot a camera crew. Filming random scenes on the streets of New York? Totally normal.

"Let's go!"

Adam bolted ahead with an exaggerated sprint.

"Childish!"

"Dork!"

"Boring!"

Peggy, Juno, and Karen ignored him, strolling along at their own pace, chatting casually.

"Phew."

From around the corner, Adam watched them—Juno in the middle, Peggy and Karen on either side, walking and talking like it was no big deal. He let out a long breath.

"This Juno..." he muttered to himself, half-annoyed. "What's she playing at?"

That patient Juno mentioned? The one who bought Joey's "gold" and got pregnant at the same time as her bestie—planning to raise a pair of half-siblings as one big happy family.

"No way, right?"

Adam's mind flashed back to that drunken night he still couldn't piece together.

He still had no clue what went down. But now, he couldn't help but wonder...

"Nah!"

He shook it off. "Juno's too sneaky. She's probably just messing with me, trying to make me paranoid so she can get back at me for Heather's sake."

Yup.

No way he'd fall for it!

Chapter 548: The Student and the Mentor

Late at night.

As always.

Juno and Karen had settled in, while Adam and Paige, after diving into quantum physics, moved on to a deeper, more personal conversation.

"You're studying math?"

Paige's eyes glazed over for a moment before she suddenly asked.

"Yup."

Adam nodded.

His study, aside from medical books, had recently been stacked with a ton of math texts. The signs of studying were pretty obvious.

"Why?"

Paige propped herself up on her side, looking at Adam curiously.

"Uh..."

Adam paused for a second, then chuckled. "Well, naturally to become a better doctor! Math's the foundation of all science, right? The Duncan-Adler formula proves it perfectly. Since I've got the energy and the ability, learning a bit more can't hurt." 🤔

"You're such a weird guy."

Paige reached out, grabbed Adam's chin, and playfully tilted it side to side. "Back in the day, your IQ seemed pretty average—no real standout talent. But in just a few years, you're out here playing chess with me while reciting crazy complex data without missing a beat. And in between studying medicine like a madman, I saw your reading notes—your self-taught math progress is insane! Sure, IQ might improve over time, but not in such a massive leap. So, spill it—how'd you do it?" 🤔

"Can't I just say I was hiding my skills all along?"

Adam grinned cheekily.

"Nope."

Paige shook her head firmly. "That kind of dumb isn't something you can fake."

"..."

Adam's mouth twitched. Ouch.

"Hey, what're you doing?"

Paige frowned as Adam dramatically clutched his chest.

"I'm not sure. Gotta do some soul-searching first, then I'll let you know."

Adam said it with a straight face, barely holding back a laugh.

"Ugh, not this again! You're so annoying!"

Paige rolled her eyes hard. 😊 Last time they had a late-night heart-to-heart, Adam swore on his conscience while patting his chest. Now he's pulling this "soul-searching" nonsense? What even is this guy on about?

"Sorry."

Adam shifted his position, still grinning.

"..."

Paige didn't even want to respond anymore.

"I'm not Leonard, you know."

Adam's smug smile grew wider as he teased her.

"What does Leonard have to do with this?"

Paige couldn't help but ask.

She knew Adam's goofy friend—decently smart but always so timid, barely able to look girls in the eye when talking. No way he'd pull off something like Adam was doing now.

"Heh."

Adam couldn't hold back his laughter anymore and started spilling some of Leonard's most embarrassing moments.

Of course, Leonard hadn't met Penny yet at this point, so Adam just referred to "a certain girl" in the stories.

Basically, it was a little anecdote recorded in Leonard's mom Beverly's book *The Hopeless Loser*—a classic case of "a leopard can't change its spots."

Leonard had always been stuck on the left side, forever liking the left side, and... well, you get the idea.

Such a kid. Doesn't even understand the beauty of wanting it all! 😊

"You seriously want to study math, though?"

Paige, already used to Adam's shamelessness, breezed past his crude vocabulary and shifted the focus back to math.

"Yep."

Adam nodded.

"Then work hard and finish your undergrad and grad studies quick. After that, you could be my PhD student."

Paige said it with a serious tone.

"You're planning to teach?"

Adam looked at her, genuinely surprised.

In the States, university professors are split into two types: those who research and teach (assistant professor, associate professor, full professor) and those who only research (research assistant professor, research associate professor, research full professor).

Most PhDs start as assistant professors or research assistant professors. But since assistant professor is the main path to becoming a full professor, and with the growing number of PhDs, those spots are getting harder to snag.

Climbing the ladder further takes 3 to 7 years of probation, plus outstanding academic and teaching achievements, and the approval of your peers.

Associate and full professors, though, are tenured positions—kinda like a permanent gig in some countries. Unless you mess up big time, even the dean can't fire you. Plus, the pay and benefits are way better.

It's why when a tenured professor went nuts, everyone around Sheldon was celebrating and fighting tooth and nail for the spot.

Take Sheldon, for example. He started as a research assistant professor, focusing solely on string theory in theoretical physics. At that point, he could've become a lecturer and switched to teaching assistant professor.

But his first attempt at teaching ended with him spinning around in class only to get a collective middle finger from all his students.

Later, he read their brutal reviews: "Einstein's theory of relativity applies perfectly here—Dr. Cooper's class makes time crawl at a glacial pace," "Dr. Cooper's like a giant cockroach," "Just kill me already."

Sheldon, who thought he'd successfully "educated" a generation, was pissed. He also remembered how he failed miserably trying to teach his brother Georgie back in high school and decided to give up on educating "stupid humans" altogether.

So, he naturally ditched the teaching professor path.

But when his string theory research hit a dead end, and life threw too many changes his way, he just couldn't handle it and ran off. When he came back, Caltech—desperate to keep a "beautiful mind" like him—promoted him from research assistant professor to teaching assistant professor.

Sheldon's response? "I ran away for a bit, and now you're giving me a raise and promotion to teach the next generation? You guys are such freaks!" 😏

Anyway, a teaching assistant professor who juggles research and teaching is obviously tougher—and higher status—than a research-only assistant professor.

Sheldon had no choice but to agree, becoming a teaching assistant professor like Leonard.

Surprise, surprise!

Leonard's position was actually higher than Sheldon's all along.

He'd even once threatened to ditch Sheldon at the comic book store unless Sheldon gave a guest lecture to his students.

So yeah, Leonard was a teaching assistant professor—researching and teaching—though in the science pecking order, Sheldon still looked down on him.

To be fair, Sheldon only struggled with teaching because he couldn't connect with students, not because he lacked the credentials.

Once he accepted Caltech's "freaky" offer and became a teaching assistant professor, he was immediately able to mentor PhD students (like Howard, who wanted to study under him).

Normally, only full professors mentor PhD students, with a rare few exceptional associate or assistant professors getting the gig.

Paige, currently a research assistant professor, could easily switch to teaching assistant professor if she wanted—her school would jump at the chance.

And with her brilliance, even as an assistant professor, becoming a PhD mentor wasn't out of the question.

"I've been thinking about it," Paige said. "Undergrads and master's students are too many—I don't wanna deal with that. But a PhD student? I'd only take you on. Once you get your math PhD, I'd ditch teaching and go back to being a research assistant professor. By then, I might even be an associate or full professor." 😊

"You'd start teaching just for me?"

Adam felt a bit touched.

"I'd mentor you, and as long as you're up to par, you'd graduate easily," Paige nodded. "That way, you'd have more flexibility with your time and wouldn't delay your doctor career."

"Nah, I just wanna learn more math for the sake of it—I don't really care about a math PhD," Adam said with a smile. "Having you as my mentor would definitely make things easier, but it wouldn't look great to others. Even if I got the degree, people would probably talk behind my back."

"Oh, I see."

Paige blinked, processing that.

"But thanks anyway," Adam added, his lips curling into a mischievous grin. "Besides, you don't have to teach me in a classroom, you know..."

"..."

Paige was speechless.

Chapter 549: Pure Joy

Thanksgiving night.

Peggy wanted to be Adam's mentor.

Adam, determined not to be seen as someone sponging off others, decided to take the "soft life" and make it his own. 😊

So, he started asking Peggy about sports mathematics.

Even though this was an everyday world without any super magical powers, the moment Peggy tapped Adam's forehead with her finger, something wild happened. His soul felt like it got jolted right out of his body, floating in midair, watching his physical self on the bed—striking poses from the Yijin Jing one second and the Shenzu Jing the next.

It was like Doctor Strange getting his mind blown open by the Ancient One. 🌀

Suddenly, Adam gained a deeper understanding of Buddhist teachings. Everything felt like an illusion—dreams, bubbles, dew, lightning—something to just observe and let go.

"Hey, don't just stand there spacing out. Ask me your questions already!"

Peggy's soul floated up too, snapping Adam out of his Zen moment.

"Oh, right!"

Adam snapped back to reality and started bombarding her with math problems he'd stumbled over while self-studying. Peggy, being the genius mathematician she was, gave him quick, spot-on answers.

Hmmm...

Back in the day, Adam would've been totally lost listening to her. But now, with his brain syncing up to Peggy's level, her explanations were short, sharp, and crystal clear. It was like a light bulb went off in his head! 💡

His math skills shot up like a rocket.

And Peggy? She got sparked by Adam's quirky, genius-angle questions. Her eyes lit up with wisdom, a little smirk tugging at her lips.

That night, both of them were on cloud nine—mind and body in total harmony. 😊

The next morning, Adam saw Juno and Karen off, called his assistant Lisa to pick Peggy up at noon, and headed to the hospital, full of energy, ready to dive back into saving lives and extending lifespans.

At the ER:

"Morning, Dr. Duncan!"

The sharpest little nurse greeted him with a big smile.

"Morning, Violet!"

Adam grinned back.

"Were those two friends of yours yesterday a doctor and a nurse?" the sharpest nurse asked, curiosity bubbling. "I heard they worked together like a dream."

She'd been off duty yesterday—missed the highway pileup. It wasn't as crazy as that train derailment, though. Plus, it was Thanksgiving. Besides the surgical chief and a few department heads, a ton of staff hadn't made it back yet. She was one of them.

"Yup," Adam nodded, then thought about Juno and Karen's seamless teamwork. He glanced at the sharpest nurse.

Juno had Karen. Alice Grey had her dedicated OR nurse of 18 years. Maybe he needed a nurse who could sync with him too.

This nurse would need:

1. Talent—both technical skills and quick wits. His future medical team had to be top-tier; no point in a pro dragging along amateurs.

2. Youth—someone to stick with him long-term. Older meant communication gaps and eventual replacements. Too much hassle.

3. Vibe—they didn't have to be a supermodel, but they should be easy on the eyes, with a good attitude. No hero worship required, but a healthy respect for him was a must.

Fans weren't necessary, but a loyal supporter? That'd do. Otherwise, things could get bumpy.

The sharpest nurse checked all those boxes.

Her skills and smarts? No question—she didn't just earn the nickname "sharpest" for gossip. Her nursing game was top-notch, one of the best in the hospital. Without that, she'd have no clout to back up her sass!

Young? She'd just turned 20.

Vibe? She was one of his biggest hospital cheerleaders, with above-average looks that suited his taste just fine.

Of course, even if she fit perfectly, she still couldn't touch Karen's level of synergy with Juno. That was next-level stuff.

As these thoughts zipped through his head, Adam chatted with her a bit more, asking how she'd spent Thanksgiving. If he was serious about grooming her for his future team, he'd need to get a feel for her personality and lifestyle too. In this drama-filled world, life and work could clash hard—plenty of people proved that.

"Doctor!"

A woman burst in, supporting a man. "My husband's got stomach pain!"

Adam stepped over, checked him out, and asked the usual, "Did he eat anything unusual?"

"Nope," the man groaned, while the woman hesitated.

"Alright, we'll need an X-ray," Adam said, spotting a sleepy John Carter shuffling over. "Carter, take..."

"Moe Paszkiewicz," the woman cut in, catching Adam's glance.

"Take Mr. Paszkiewicz for an X-ray," Adam directed.

"Yes, Dr. Duncan!" Carter perked up and jogged over.

The sharpest nurse had already rolled up a wheelchair, settling Moe in and reminding Carter, "Mention Dr. Duncan's name."

Carter nodded and wheeled him off to the X-ray room.

"How's he been lately?" Adam asked, watching Carter go.

"Not bad," the sharpest nurse replied. She knew Adam was keeping an eye on Carter and had been quietly observing him too. "Among the med interns, he's got a solid foundation, a good attitude, and he works hard. Yesterday, while the other interns went home for Thanksgiving, he stayed. Crashed in the on-call room when he got tired."

"If he's that dedicated, why doesn't he hang around me more?" Adam chuckled.

"Oh, I know this one!" she laughed. "He's still hung up on making those authentic Eastern-style braised pig trotters you like. He's been practicing, but he hasn't nailed it yet, so he's too shy to get close."

"Not flexible enough," Adam said, shaking his head. "But his heart's in the right place."

New Year was coming up soon. In a few months, Adam and his batch of interns would finish their year-long internship. Pass the exam, and they'd be full-fledged residents, mentoring the next wave of interns.

John Carter, one of those lucky pre-grads who snagged an early internship, had a good shot at sticking around. If he kept up the effort, he could land a residency spot at the medical center and join the next intern crew.

And if Adam vouched for him? Done deal.

Since Carter seemed eager to learn from him, Adam had been quietly sizing up his character, ethics, and talent. He was willing to give him a shot. The pig trotter thing? Just a casual joke. Still better than Dr. House next door humiliating his team! 😊

"Dr. Duncan, here's the X-ray," Carter said, jogging back with the film.

"What's this?" Adam asked, glancing at it.

"Gastrointestinal blockage?" Carter guessed.

"Treatment?"

"Injection to stimulate bowel movement," Carter said. "Let it pass naturally."

"No way something this big comes out on its own," Adam shook his head. "Come with me. Let's ask Mr. Paszkiewicz what he really ate."

Chapter 550: The Struggling Author

In the hospital room.

Mr. Paskowitz, the patient, lay there with a vacant look in his eyes.

His wife sat beside him, knitting a sweater.

"Mr. Paskowitz, the X-ray results are back. There's a large mass of foreign objects in your stomach, and even laxatives won't help dislodge it," Adam said, holding up the X-ray for them to see.

"Oh, great," the patient's wife quipped without looking up from her knitting. "Doc, can you just reach into his backside and yank it out?" 🤔

"Sweetheart, please!" Mr. Paskowitz snapped, clearly annoyed.

"No can do," Adam replied, the corner of his mouth twitching as he maintained a professional smile. "It's a sizable mass blocking things up. Surgery's the only way to get it out. But here's the thing, Mr. Paskowitz—can you tell me what exactly you ate?"

"Garbage. Absolute garbage," Mr. Paskowitz mumbled, glancing at Adam.

"Could you be a bit more specific?" Adam asked, looking over at the man's wife. "We need to know what we're dealing with to prepare properly."

"Tell him what you ate, Moll," the wife said, barely holding back a laugh. "Here's a hint, Doc—he's a writer, and he's been agonizing over his work."

"Writer's block, huh?" Adam nodded knowingly. "Yeah, that can be brutal."

"You know the feeling?" Mr. Paskowitz asked, eyeing Adam suspiciously.

"Oh, absolutely," Adam said with a chuckle. "That feeling when you can't write a single word, everything slows to a crawl, your brain's like a pot of mushy porridge—just bubbling and foggy. Every sentence feels like a stab in the temples, your head spins, you're drained of all energy, you wanna cry but can't, and it's like the world's crashing down with nowhere to run. Total despair." 😞

"Man!" Mr. Paskowitz slapped the bed and shouted, "That's it exactly! You nailed it! You really get it!"

The description of writer's block wasn't originally Adam's—it came from a character named Lü Xiùcái he'd heard in a past life, back when he was just starting out with online writing. He'd fall asleep to old reruns of Martial Arts Chronicles, and Lü's words hit him hard. They resonated so deeply, capturing the raw struggle of being a writer.

Adam had never been a natural at writing. He just loved reading novels. Over time, though, he couldn't find stories that scratched the itch anymore, so he decided to write his own. At first, he was all fired up, thinking, I'm the chosen one, a prodigy! I'll write a masterpiece and become a legend overnight! But when he sat down at the computer and couldn't type a single word, reality slapped him hard. Turns out, he wasn't the chosen one after all. 😞

That first attempt crashed and burned. Over the years, he'd get bursts of motivation, give up, then try again—a cycle that dragged on until he finally got the hang of it and officially started writing. Writer's block was a constant companion. Lü Xiùcái's words weren't just the screenwriter's truth—they struck a chord with Adam back then and even had this foreign patient nodding in awe.

It was just too real, too raw. A perfect summary of the miserable life of a struggling author.

"Dr. Duncan here totally gets it," Carter, standing behind Adam, chimed in. "He's not just a doctor, you know. He's a famous writer too."

"A writer? Duncan..." Mr. Paskowitz blinked, then it clicked. "You're the guy who wrote Lord of the Mysteries! Adam Duncan!"

"That's me," Adam said with a smile. "So, now can you tell me what you ate?"

"He ate his novel," the wife finally blurted out, unable to hold it in any longer as she knitted away.

"What?!" Carter's jaw dropped.

"I ate my manuscript—the whole thing! Every single page of that worthless pile!" Mr. Paskowitz shouted.

"I read all your drafts. They weren't as bad as you think," his wife teased. "If you hadn't eaten it all, you could've shown it to this talented doctor here. Maybe the ending wouldn't be so... awkward."

Mr. Paskowitz froze. Clearly, the thought had crossed his mind. If a successful author had seen his work and given it a shoutout, maybe he could've made it big. Too late now, though.

"It was absolute trash!" he growled, frustrated.

"Three years," his wife scoffed. "Three years of listening to your rants and complaints, just to watch you eat it in the end?"

"Three years?" Adam raised an eyebrow. "For one book? Mr. Paskowitz, have you considered getting a day job and writing on the side? Might spark some inspiration."

"I'm a writer!" Mr. Paskowitz shot back, fired up. "I don't need a backup plan!"

"Fair enough," Adam said with a shrug, not pushing further.

Three years on a book that didn't get published and ended up in his stomach, landing him in the hospital for pricey surgery. Talk about passion over profit. 🤔

Man... Adam couldn't help but feel a twinge of frustration. This guy had a wife who stuck by him through it all. Meanwhile, in his past life, so many writers slaved away at day jobs, stayed up late writing, risked burnout for meager pay, all for the love of the craft. Most had nothing to show for it. Even the ones who made a living off writing got judged hard in the dating scene. And here was Mr. Paskowitz—three years, no book, and still had a loyal wife? Talk about unfair! The struggles of those online writers from his past life were on a whole other level. Life's just not fair sometimes.

"Mr. Paskowitz, we've booked the operating room for you. An hour from now—" Adam started explaining the surgery plan when he suddenly froze.

"What's wrong, Doctor?" The wife, despite her teasing, clearly cared about her husband and grew worried.

"He's sweating," Adam said, his mind racing through possible causes. "How much paper did you actually eat?"

"A ton!" the wife answered.

"Carter, draw blood from Mr. Paskowitz and send it to toxicology for testing," Adam instructed.

"On it, Doc," Carter said, quickly stepping forward to take a sample.

"What's going on, Doctor?" the wife asked, her voice tinged with anxiety.

"I suspect Mr. Paskowitz might be poisoned," Adam explained. "Paper can contain harmful substances like lead or mercury from the printing process. If ingested in large amounts, it can lead to heavy metal poisoning. Given how much paper he ate, the risk is pretty high."

"You hear that?!" the wife exclaimed, torn between worry and exasperation. "Damn it! Even if it was all garbage, couldn't you just burn it? Did you have to eat it and turn yourself into a trash bin?"

"I wanted to put it behind me for good and start fresh with a new book!" Mr. Paskowitz said, pale and sweating buckets. "Eating it was... a ritual!"

Adam could only shake his head.

Soon, Carter returned with the test results. "It's mercury poisoning."

"Administer dimercaprol," Adam told the nurse. It was the standard treatment for mercury poisoning, helping to flush the metal out of the body.