

## TV Show 561

Chapter 561: Kinda Get It, Kinda Get It

Medical Center.

"Me!"

"Me!"

Adam and Liz raised their hands at the same time.

George, meanwhile, hung his head low. Clearly, he was still salty about his goddess Meredith getting cozy with this jerk in front of him so fast. Stubborn as ever, he was showing his displeasure in his own quiet way.

As for Cristina?

She was currently Dr. Shepherd's golden girl, always tagging along with him for surgeries.

And her bestie Meredith? Naturally, she was following her boyfriend, Dr. Burke, into the OR.

A perfect swap!

Obviously, Dr. Shepherd hadn't given up on Meredith. This was his sneaky way of looking out for her from afar.

Dr. Burke, of course, knew what was up but played it cool.

Now, this kid with lionitis? Dr. Shepherd had assigned Cristina as his bedside doctor.

"Great."

Mark Sloan glanced at the two volunteers. His eyes skimmed right past Adam and landed on Liz, a dazzling smile spreading across his face.

Emmm.

Adam was 100% sure that was the smile of a total player.

Don't ask him how he knew! 😊

Liz, under that gaze, blushed a little. But no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't hide the grin tugging at her lips—a classic "I'm saying no but meaning yes" vibe.

Clearly, when she'd said before that she wouldn't mind a handsome, buff lover like him, she wasn't kidding.

"Come with me."

Mark Sloan waved them over—mostly Liz, of course—and walked side by side with her, flashing that killer smile. "Dr. Liz Stevenson?"

"Just call me Liz," she said with a shy little laugh.

"Looks like you're out of luck," Cristina muttered to Adam as they trailed behind.

"Not necessarily," Adam replied with a sly smile.

"It's all up to the attending," Cristina said, shaking her head. "He picks who he wants, and clearly, he's a pro at this game. He only wants to take hotshots like Liz."

"You're looking at it too surface-level," Adam chuckled.

"What do you mean?" Cristina shot him a confused look.

"Did you see how they were arguing earlier?" Adam grinned. "Dr. Sloan was obviously begging Dr. Shepherd to forgive him."

"So?" Cristina blinked, totally lost. "That's normal, right? It's not like Dr. Shepherd would beg Sloan for forgiveness."

"You're missing the key point," Adam hinted. "When Sloan said it, he sounded so confident, like it was supposed to be this way. It was all, 'Alright, stop sulking already. You've been mad long enough, right? I didn't mean to break up you and your wife—I just wanted to join the party!'"

"..."

Cristina just stared at him, dumbfounded, her brain scrambling to replay the scene. "Wait, what? Was it really like that?"

"Think about it. Chew on it!" Adam teased.

"Hiss..."

Cristina mulled it over for a sec, then gasped. "Okay, yeah, it kinda was!"

"And that's not all," Adam added in a low voice, smirking. "This surgery—did it really have to happen together? Sloan could've just waited for Shepherd to finish, then taken over. With his rep and the trust he's already built with the patient by giving them a fresh perspective, no one could've stopped him.

But nope!

He insisted on clashing with Shepherd, demanded they do it together right now—even if it meant dragging it to the surgical chief or dealing with the patient's parents freaking out.

And after it worked? He even threw in that line to Shepherd: 'Round two goes to the jerk.'

Who's the jerk? Him, obviously.

Calling himself that shows he knows he screwed Shepherd over, but he's still so smug about it and keeps poking the bear. What's that all about?"

"'I'd rather you hate me than not see me at all...'" Cristina murmured, piecing it together.

"Now you're getting it," Adam said with a playful grin.

"Yeah... wait, huh?" Cristina nodded at first, then froze, exasperated. "Getting what? Even if Sloan's some love-everybody type, what does that have to do with him picking Liz over you? Unless you're saying... ew, no way!" 😬

"Stop overthinking it," Adam said, giving her a light tap. "I never said this was about him choosing between me and Liz. I'm just debunking your 'Sloan only likes hot girls like Liz' theory.

Unless a miracle happens, yeah, he's probably sticking with Liz this time."

"..."

Cristina rolled her eyes hard. "So you're calling yourself a miracle now?"

"He didn't totally shut the door at first—gotta keep his options open, right?" Adam smirked. "Makes sense, though. If he'd picked Liz right away and she wasn't into it, that'd be embarrassing. The East Coast's top plastic surgeon can't afford to lose face like that!"

"You seriously think you can turn this around and make him pick you over Liz?" Cristina asked, genuinely curious.

"Can't say for sure," Adam said modestly. "But I can give it a shot."

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In the patient's room:

"I don't agree!"

After Dr. Shepherd's nudge, the patient's parents were super against the idea of doing two complex surgeries at once.

"Dad!" the lionitis teen called out.

"Jack, we're not rushing this," his dad soothed. "Let's do the tumor surgery first. Once you're better, we can talk about the plastic surgery later."

"Yeah," his mom chimed in. "You're already handsome enough in my eyes. We just want you to live."

"Doing both surgeries together is actually safer," Mark Sloan stepped in, trying to convince them.

But the parents? They couldn't get past the bruise on Mark's face from earlier. Compared to the polished, gentle Dr. Shepherd, their trust in him was shaky. They just wouldn't sign the consent form.

Mark sighed and glanced at Liz.

"Mr. and Mrs. Burton," Liz started, "Dr. Sloan's the best plastic surgeon on the East Coast. He's the only one who can guarantee a successful surgery for your son. This is a rare chance—Dr. Sloan doesn't even work at our hospital. He could leave any day. Missing this would be such a shame."

"Dr. Sloan, could you leave us your card?" Jack's dad asked, turning to Mark. "If this surgery goes well, we'll come find you later if we need to. You'd do it for Jack then, right?"

"Of course," Mark said, meeting his gaze with a forced smile.

"Dad, Mom, I want to do it now," Jack finally burst out. "I trust Dr. Sloan. I'm not scared of the risk. I know you think I'm handsome enough, but that's your job as parents. Other people don't see it that way—and neither do I. I need this surgery."

"Jack, you don't even know what the outcome will be," his dad reasoned. "It probably won't be as perfect as you're imagining..."

"I don't need to know," Jack said firmly. "Whatever happens, I'll take it. Look at me—what's worse than this?"

His hand trembled as he pointed at his face.

"Wahhh..."

His mom covered her mouth, tears streaming down. She knew this was her son's deepest pain.

He was usually so funny and chill, but saying this now? It hit hard.

"Mr. and Mrs. Burton," Adam piped up, stepping forward. He'd been quietly scribbling on a chart off to the side. "You can know what the plastic surgery will look like ahead of time. Check this out."

He slid a piece of paper in front of them.

On it was a sketch of an ordinary-looking teen, smiling softly.

The Burtons instantly recognized it—it was Jack.

So spot-on!

"Is this me?"

"Can I really look like this?"

Jack and his parents gasped in unison.

"Dr. Sloan?" Adam didn't answer them, just turned to the stunned Mark Sloan.

"Y-Yeah..." Mark stammered, staring at Adam. "That's exactly what I had in mind for the surgery. How'd you do that?"

"I know a bit about human anatomy and plastic surgery," Adam said with a humble smile. "Plus, I've got a decent memory, some imagination, a knack for math... oh, and I can sketch a little."

Everyone: "... 😊

Chapter 562: Merry Christmas

Inside the restaurant,

Katie stepped out with her phone in hand.

"God bless!" Robin clasped her hands together, praying to the heavens.

She wasn't kidding around. Having nearly fallen into a rough life herself back in the day, she was dead-set against her little sister going down the same path—and it worried her sick.

"Don't stress," Adam said with a reassuring grin. "They've probably had this planned out for ages. Now Katie's testing him, pushing things off, and a hormonal high school guy like that? No way he's gonna handle it. Bet you he'll dump her in a huff."

"Really?!" Robin's face lit up.

"Totally," Adam laughed. "Ask Matthew if you don't believe me."

"Yup," Matthew nodded, relating all too well. "When Lily and I first got together, I wanted to wait too, but I just couldn't. And, uh, I might've told a few white lies to make it happen."

"Like the olive theory," Lily chimed in, rolling her eyes. "I actually bought it back then."

Girls love pulling this move—saying they don't want something at first. But once their boyfriend orders it, they're all over it, eating from their bowl and eyeing his plate, chowing down like it's a competition. The boyfriend might be annoyed about getting shortchanged, but what's he gonna say? After all, he's still hoping for a happy night ahead! 😊

Lily got lucky with a nice guy like Matthew, who just grinned through it and even accidentally stumbled into "creating" a love theory: the olive theory. You know, opposites attract—one doesn't like it, the other does, no fighting over food.

Now, if she'd been with a food-obsessed guy like Joey? That stunt would've ended in a breakup on the spot.

"See?" Adam smirked. "Even a sweetheart like Matthew couldn't resist. That spiky-haired, slimy-tongued Carl? He's flipping out for sure."

"Fingers crossed!" Robin said, practically glowing with hope.

Back at the airport, when she saw that creep stick his tongue out at her little sister, she'd barely stopped herself from charging over and beating him senseless.

"Adam, you're such a jerk," Lily teased. "At least in high school, you totally were!"

"Oh, come on!" Adam huffed. "You're taking it seriously? I told you, I made all that up!"

"Oh, sure," Lily said with a sly grin. "Made-up stories don't feel that real and relatable."

Her outburst earlier wasn't fake—she'd gotten so caught up in Adam's vivid storytelling that her sense of justice kicked in, and she let him have it for real. That's why it hit so hard!

"Exactly," Adam said, shrugging like it was obvious. "You forgetting I'm a famous writer or what?"

"No way," Lily shook her head. "Your Lord of Mysteries stuff is all wild imagination. This? Totally different. Those details you threw in? You don't come up with that unless you've lived it."

"That's just prejudice," Adam laughed. "Never eaten pork, but I've seen pigs run. I've read tons of books on this stuff—no need to live it to spin a good tale with juicy details."

"Quit pretending," Robin cut in. "I don't buy it either. You're a top-tier jerk—just the kind who owns it loud and proud."

"Ahem," Adam coughed, steering them back. "Tonight's about Katie, okay? Let's not derail this. The past is the past—digging up what's true or fake is pointless. I'd rather spend that time saving lives at the hospital."

"..."

Robin, Lily, and Matthew had nothing to say to that.

No matter how much they might scoff at Adam's possible jerk phase, his current rep as a hardworking life-saver was rock solid. Even Ted and Barney, who had their gripes with him, couldn't argue.

If they had Adam's setup, they'd be a million times wilder. No chasing random pretty girls at the airport, buying last-minute tickets to follow them onto planes, only to find out they're visiting their boyfriends—and then bailing because those guys are too tough to mess with.

If they were Adam? Even if those boyfriends were jacked-up football players, they'd not only go after the girls—they'd take on the whole team and leave them crying!

Owen Lee would call that a pro move. Back in high school, he'd left his school's entire football team green with envy.

"Alright, Katie's back," Adam said, snapping them out of it.

Everyone's eyes shot over to her.

Katie walked up, phone in hand, looking like her whole world just flipped upside down.

"Katie, what happened?" Robin asked, barely holding back a cheer. She forced a neutral face, playing it cool and concerned.

"I told Carl I wanted to wait, and he dumped me. Waaah!" Katie sobbed.

"Oh, that's too bad," Robin said, rushing over to hug her. Her mouth was full of comforting words, but her face—turned toward Adam, Lily, and Matthew—was pure glee, grinning ear to ear and pumping her fist.

"Everything's gonna be okay. You came here to spend Christmas with me, right?"

"Yeah," Katie sniffled, wiping her tears. She glanced at Adam, then back at Robin. "Am I still crashing at your place tonight?"

"Of course!" Robin practically shouted. "We'll sleep over, drink juice, watch *The Little Mermaid*!"

"What about him?" Katie nodded toward Adam. "Don't tell me you're just friends."

"Let him go to heck!" Robin waved him off.

"Heh," Katie giggled through her tears. "Then you've gotta put a big scoop of sugar in my juice."

"Deal," Robin nodded, reluctantly agreeing. "Just tonight, though—and don't tell Mom."

Westerners love their sweets, especially girls. But sugar's the enemy of a good figure, and any decent mom keeps a tight lid on it.

The vibe lightened up after that.

Katie kept hinting that Adam and Robin shouldn't cancel their plans for her sake, but Adam took the hint and bailed.

Who knows what'd happen tonight? He wasn't about to face Robin's gun for real!

Life's too short—keep learning, keep growing.

On this Christmas Eve, he decided to head to New Jersey to hang with Peggy, brushing up on math and diving into the universe's deepest mysteries. Nothing beats the joy of expanding your mind! 😊

When Adam got there, Peggy's apartment was already decked out festive-style, thanks to Lisa.

"Boss, everything's set," Lisa said, her expression a little odd.

She'd been with Adam long enough to see his quirky side—heck, she'd arranged half of it herself—but she still couldn't help thinking, "This guy knows how to have fun!"

Adam ignored the look.

It's just a little life spice, no big deal.

At Lisa's nudge, he found the gift, unwrapped it, and pulled out a red Santa outfit. Unlike the usual bulky ones, this was sleek and tailored—custom-made to Peggy's measurements, per Adam's orders.

Hmm...

White's got its charm. Red's got its perks.

Grown-up Adam wasn't a kid anymore—he wanted it all!

This little red Santa dress? Straight out of an artsy film from his past life that stuck with him.

After shooing Lisa out with a glance, he handed it to Peggy, helped her into it, and they kicked off a merry Christmas Eve and Christmas Day together.

Chapter 563: Jingle Bells, Ponytail Style

Christmas Eve zoomed by in a flash.

Then Christmas hit!

Adam and Peggy had already celebrated Christmas Eve together, seamlessly rolling right into an early Christmas morning.

Bright and early, Adam said goodbye to a still-snoozing Peggy, humming a tune as he drove to the Medical Center.

"Jingle bells, jingle bells,

Jingle all the way!

Oh, what fun it is to ride

In an open sleigh, hey!

Dashing through the snow,

Laughing all the way,

The ponytail bells go jingle-jangle,

Spirits high today..."

"Merry Christmas, Dr. Duncan! You're in a great mood today, huh?"

The sweetest little nurse spotted Adam's cheer and bounced over to say hi. She'd moved up to the OR now, shadowing the veteran surgery nurses.

"Merry Christmas, Violet!" Adam grinned back. "It's Christmas—how could I not be happy?"

"This is the first time I've seen you this chipper, humming and everything!" she said, curious.

"This song's a total classic," Adam said with a laugh. "Don't you think?"

"Totally!" Violet nodded.

Jingle Bells is hands-down the ultimate Christmas jam. Sure, it started as a Thanksgiving tune by some teacher, but the lyrics and melody? Perfect for the holiday vibes.

Over a hundred years later, the second that melody hits, everyone's thinking Christmas.

For Adam, it brought up even more.

Hmmm... Pair Jingle Bells with the goofy remix culture from his past life's favorite little video site, and you've got the secret sauce for his good mood all day. Too bad he couldn't share that joy with anyone—some happiness is just too niche to explain. Music's magic, though, right? 🎵🎵

In *The Big Bang Theory*, when Leonard whipped out his cello, even Leslie—who'd brutally shot him down—suddenly found him irresistible, begging him to play a duet on her "violin."

Peggy's always been into music too, strumming and singing during research breaks. Since Adam came along, duets became their thing. But last night and this morning? That was a whole new level of "playing together."

In novel terms, it was the ultimate harmony of "human and instrument as one." Adam couldn't wait to team up with Peggy again for more joyful tunes in that perfect vibe.

"Get moving while you're young,

Take your girl tonight,

Sing that sleigh song loud,

With a short-tailed mare,

Speed at 240010..."

After waving bye to Violet, Adam kept humming as he headed to the locker room.

"Adam, got plans tonight?" Liz asked, buzzing with holiday energy like always. "We've got the Christmas tree all set up—wanna join us for Christmas tonight?"

"You mean you set it up," Meredith quipped.

"Sorry, I've actually got a lot going on tonight..." Adam said, chuckling as he changed. "So, you guys have a blast without me!"

"Told you," George piped up. "Adam's all work—no play. He doesn't even hang out after shifts, let alone celebrate Christmas with us."

"Come on," Adam protested. "We're together all day at work, burning the midnight oil. We practically live together except for sleeping! Can't a guy have a little me-time?"

"Haha!" Meredith cracked up.

"Maybe George doesn't want any me-time..." Cristina drawled.

"It's Christmas—don't gross us out," Adam teased, giving her a playful scold as he finished changing and left the locker room.

First stop: Green Clinic.

Like Thanksgiving, no big surgeries were lined up. Christmas is even bigger than Thanksgiving here—the most important day of the year for Americans, like Spring Festival back East. It's all about family time.

Unless it's a dire emergency, who's booking surgery today? You really want a antsy doctor, itching to get home, accidentally botching it?

Every surgery's got risks, after all!

"Adam, come over to my place tonight for the holiday?" Leonard offered.

"Nah, no clue how late I'll be stuck here," Adam declined politely.

"You work too hard," Leonard said, shaking his head. "With your skills, you don't need to grind like this. Take a break like us attendings—go home, enjoy the holiday. You'd be fine."

"I love the feeling of helping people," Adam said with a smile. "They say holidays bring out all kinds of crazy, happy accidents—ER might get wild."

"You really love being a doctor, huh?" Leonard marveled. "With your talent and that dedication, I can't even imagine what you'll become. A legend among legends? Wild to think about."

"Heh," Adam laughed, switching gears. "Where're Rachel and the gang celebrating tonight?"

"Hmph!" Leonard's face darkened at the mention. "I spoiled her for nothing. She's taking Emma to the Gellers' for Christmas! Emma's my granddaughter—she's a Green!"

"Don't blame Rachel," Adam said, trying to smooth it over. "She and Ross are married, and he's the Gellers' only son—their golden boy. She already spent Thanksgiving with you, Ross, and Emma. If she skips Christmas with them too, the Gellers would flip."

"I'd rather she spent Christmas with us," Leonard grumbled.

"Just rotate it," Adam suggested with a grin. "First year: Thanksgiving at the Greens, Christmas at the Gellers. Next year, flip it. Keeps it fair."

That's the compromise tons of young couples back in his old life had to make—two families, two sets of parents, only one couple to go around. If both sides had only kids, it got even messier. Merging everyone? Drama city. Rotating was the only way.

"Hmph," Leonard huffed. "Should've made them divorce right after Emma was born legit. Then Rachel and Emma could spend every holiday with me."

"..." Adam's mouth twitched.

Ross really couldn't catch a break with Leonard. Once Emma got the "legitimate kid" stamp, Ross—the bio dad—was basically useless in Leonard's eyes...

After chatting with Leonard a bit more, Adam headed to the ER.

Emergency Room.

"God, it's already ten! The kids must be lined up around the block—I gotta go!" a Santa Claus stumbled toward the exit.

"You need to see a doctor," John Carter said, steadying him.

"I'm fine now, thanks, kid!" Santa brushed Carter off, fixed his hat, and rambled as he bolted. "I've gotta run—the kids are waiting!"

"Hold up!"

Adam, fresh from treating a few patients and in a great mood, stepped out of an exam room, spotted the scene, and dashed over, catching Santa before he could escape.

Chapter 564: Fortune and Misfortune

At the medical center,

in the ER:

"Doctor, I've got stuff to do—the kids are still waiting for me!" the Santa Claus pleaded, sounding frantic.

"No matter how urgent, we've gotta check you out first," Adam replied, brushing aside the big white beard and decorations to start the exam. "Have you taken any meds lately?"

"Nope," Santa shook his head firmly. "I'm fine. Just a little dizzy before—probably from overdoing it lately. But when I think about the kids' happy faces, I get my energy back. Doc, just let me go, please!"

In good ol' American tradition, tons of folks dress up as Santa during Christmas to hang out with kids—think sitting on Santa's lap for photos and all that jazz.

Hmm...

Not just kids, though. If this were Rachel a few months into her pregnancy around Christmas, she'd probably plop down on every Santa's lap in New York City!

Here in the States, everything's a hustle. These Santas? No exception. Some do it full-time, others part-time, mostly hired by the Santa Claus Association to show up at store entrances and draw crowds. Stores pay the association, the association pays the Santas, and the middlemen skim the difference.

Same deal with clowns and other classic characters. Like in that Joker movie—the guy starts out as a clown, holding a shop sign, bringing in foot traffic.

So, are there Santas who try to cut out the middleman and deal directly with stores? Sure. But going up against the association? Light punishment is getting your turf snatched and a beatdown from their Santa squad. Worst case? You're toast.

Christmas is short, and to rake in enough cash in that tiny window, forget 9-9-6—think 0-0-7, nonstop. Of course, the official line is all noble: "It's all worth it to bring joy to the kids!"

"Sorry, no can do," Adam said, shaking his head. "You don't want to freak out the kids, right? Imagine Santa, the symbol of joy, keeling over right in front of them. How many nightmares would that spark?"

"What?!" Santa froze. "Is it that bad?"

"You need an MRI first," Adam said, gesturing him back. "Any meds lately? What's your name? Got a medical history?"

Santa was starting to panic under Adam's serious vibe. Sure, he said it was about the kids' happiness, but let's be real—it's a gig. Dying for it? Not worth it. He wasn't that selfless.

Suddenly, all those symptoms he'd been ignoring—dizziness, weakness, nausea—came rushing back, and the more he thought about it, the scarier it got.

"Duncan, I told him to see a doctor, but he wouldn't listen," John Carter piped up, finally adding his two cents.

"I get it," Adam nodded.

Doctors give advice; patients choose whether to take it. If Santa had insisted on leaving earlier, Adam wouldn't have stopped him.

After all, it's your life.

Americans, right? Born free, die whenever.

In the MRI room:

"Call Dr. Shepter," Adam said to Carter after glancing at the scan.

"On it," Carter replied, dashing off.

Moments later, Dr. Shepter showed up.

"What's up?"

"Our Santa's got late-stage brain cancer," Adam said, pointing at the MRI.

"Man, that's rough," Shepter agreed after a look, shaking his head. "The kids are gonna cry when they hear this."

"Good thing Dr. Duncan stopped him," Carter said, still shaken. "If he'd collapsed in front of all those kids, it'd haunt them forever."

"Let's go convince him to get surgery," Shepter said. "If it works, he could get a few more years. Today might just be his lucky day."

"He might not see it that way," Adam countered, shaking his head.

Sudden death versus knowing you've got terminal brain cancer with months to live? Tough to say which is the "better" news for Santa. Both suck!

Sure enough, when Santa heard, his hefty frame wobbled, and his face went pale as a ghost.

"How long do I have?"

"Hard to say," Shepter mused. "With successful surgery and good post-op care—plus a positive attitude—maybe 2 or 3 years, maybe more..."

"And without surgery?" Santa cut in.

"With your condition, a few months tops," Adam explained. "Plus, you could drop dead any second."

"Got it," Santa said, voice hollow. After a long pause, he nodded, grabbed his Santa hat, and stuck on the white beard.

"Sir, you're not getting the surgery?" Shepter asked, stunned.

"I just wanna go home to my family," Santa said, heading for the door.

"Sir, I strongly recommend surgery now," Shepter warned. "You could collapse any moment."

"I know," Santa mumbled, brushing it off as he walked out.

"Ugh," Shepter sighed, watching him go. "People only realize what matters most when they're staring death in the face."

"Hope so," Adam sighed too.

"Hm?" Shepter glanced at him, surprised. "You don't think so?"

"I just hope he's really going home to his family," Adam said grimly. "Otherwise, after today, some kids might never want to celebrate Christmas again."

"You mean..." Shepter's eyes widened.

"If he drops dead on the job, even with late-stage brain cancer, his company's gotta pay something to his family, right?" Adam said. "Or maybe he steps outside and 'gets hit by a car'—the driver and insurance would have to cough up some cash too."

"..."

Shepter and Carter were speechless.

But thinking back to Santa's attitude, it didn't seem so far-fetched.

Most people, hearing this, would opt for surgery to squeeze out a few more years. Not Santa—he was way too resolute. And if he was just going home to his family, why slap on the beard and hat here, dressing up as Santa again?

"We're not doing anything?" Carter asked hesitantly.

"We're doctors," Shepter sighed. "We treat. That's it. The rest? Not our job, and we can't control it."

With that, he turned and left.

"Come on, back to the ER," Adam said, patting Carter's shoulder. "Better to save a few patients than stand here daydreaming about what-ifs."

They headed off.

Chapter 565: Raising Kids Should Come with a License

Medical Center. Emergency Room.

"Help! Help! Help!"

A frantic string of cries for help echoed from the entrance.

"Doctor! Please save my daughter!"

A middle-aged man burst into the hospital, cradling a little girl in his arms. "My daughter's dying!"

"What happened?"

Adam dashed forward like the wind, passing Susan and reaching the man first. He gently took the child from the father's trembling arms.

"She fell into the lake!"

The girl's father wailed in agony. "Molly! Molly!"

"She's drowning—her body's frozen stiff."

Adam shot a quick glance at Susan before sprinting toward the treatment room with the girl.

"She's not breathing. Start pulmonary suction!"

While directing the nurses, Adam pushed back the father, who was hovering over the bed, refusing to leave. "Step outside—take him out!"

"It's all my fault! Molly, please don't die! I'm not leaving—I'm staying with her!"

The father stumbled as he was pushed but immediately lunged back, shoving a nurse aside and practically throwing himself over Molly.

"Do you want Molly to die?"

Adam grabbed the man by the collar, lifting him off the ground with one hand and pinning him hard against the wall. "If you don't, get out now and stop interfering with her treatment!" he barked.

"Doctor, please save her!"

After struggling helplessly, the father finally snapped out of it, his eyes pleading as he looked at Adam.

"We'll do everything we can. Now go!"

Adam released him with a stern shout and returned to the resuscitation.

"Laryngoscope!"

"5.5 endotracheal tube—intubate her!"

"It's in! Suction the water out and attach the ventilator!"

"Connie, get her bloodwork—coagulation levels—and a chest X-ray!"

Adam worked methodically, racing against time to save her.

Molly's father couldn't stay away. He crept back in, tears streaming down his face as he watched Adam fight for his daughter's life. This time, he didn't rush forward to interfere.

"What exactly happened?"

Adam finally had a moment to ask.

"I took her fishing. Molly was so excited—she ran ahead and fell through a hole in the ice."

The father sobbed, guilt-ridden. "It's my fault! Why did I take her fishing?!"

He slapped himself hard across the face, the force leaving half his cheek red and swollen.

"How long was she underwater?"

Adam ignored the self-inflicted punishment, pressing for details while continuing the resuscitation.

"I don't know!"

The father cried out in torment. "I smashed the ice like crazy to pull her out—maybe five minutes or so."

Adam glanced at the man's swollen, bleeding hands. "Carter, go treat him."

"No!"

Molly's father waved Carter off. "I'm fine—I need to stay with her!"

"Treat him here, then," Adam ordered.

"Blood pressure's 30, pulse is faint."

"Bradycardia—heart rate's 32."

"Body temp's 27."

A nurse called out the stats.

"Heating blanket!" Adam snapped. "We've got to warm her up, or we'll lose her!"

The nurse rushed to grab one and draped it over Molly.

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus..."

Molly's father ignored Carter entirely, clasping his hands together and praying desperately for his daughter. His voice broke as he wept. "God, please don't take my daughter—please don't take her..."

"The heating blanket's not enough. Switch to humidified, heated oxygen!" Adam directed.

"Yes, Doctor!"

The nurse sprang into action.

"Lydia, grab two 36-gauge chest tubes for closed pleural drainage. We're doing a pleural lavage to warm her heart directly."

"Right away, Doctor!"

"Cardiac arrest!"

A nurse shouted.

"Epinephrine—now!"

Adam began chest compressions, his hands steady on Molly's tiny chest.

"Oh, God!"

Molly's father's legs gave out, and he crumpled to the floor, hands clasped tighter as he prayed harder.

Everyone's eyes were glued to the flatline on the monitor.

Adam kept up the steady rhythm of CPR.

The room was silent except for the monitor's relentless beep and the father's murmured prayers.

Ten minutes later—

"She's got a heartbeat!"

"She's alive!"

A nurse, who'd been watching the monitor like a hawk, couldn't hold back her excitement.

"Good girl!"

Adam exhaled in relief, brushing Molly's slightly warmer cheek. "Now let's keep it going and get that warm pleural lavage done."

"Doctor, Molly's clotting factors are normal," Connie reported, holding the test results.

"Great."

Adam nodded and started the lavage.

Molly's father, hearing the incredible news, scrambled to his feet, staring at Adam with desperate hope.

"Come here," Adam said, giving him a nod.

"Doctor, is Molly okay now?"

The father finally dared to step closer, his voice trembling with anticipation.

"So far, things are looking up," Adam explained. "But she's not completely out of danger yet. We need to keep warming her. There's still a risk of rewarming shock, brain damage, or other complications."

The father clapped a hand over his mouth, fighting back more tears.

"Your hands need treatment. How are you going to take care of her when she wakes up if you don't get them fixed?" Adam pointed out. "Carter!"

"Yes, Dr. Duncan," Carter replied, stepping over to tug at the father's arm.

This time, he didn't resist. He shuffled aside, holding out his battered hands for Carter to bandage, his eyes never leaving Molly.

Half an hour later—

"What's her temp now?"

"Up to 36 degrees. Blood pressure's stable."

"Molly? Molly!"

The father, hands now wrapped in gauze, had been glued to her bedside. He was the first to notice her eyelids flutter.

"Hey, kiddo, what's your name?"

Adam stepped over, checking her pupils while asking gently.

If she was awake and her vitals were stable, rewarming shock was off the table. Now the big worry was brain damage.

"Molly, it's Daddy," her father whispered softly.

But Molly didn't respond.

"Schedule an ECG and an MRI," Adam said with a quiet sigh.

After the tests—

Adam relaxed a bit and turned to the father, who was staring at him anxiously. "ECG's normal, and the MRI shows no brain damage. Physically, she's fine. She's probably just in shock. Stay with her, talk to her—I'll check back later."

An hour later—

"Thank you, thank you, Doctor! You saved my daughter! I'm Dante Valanio—I'll never forget what you've done for us today!"

When Adam returned, Molly's father rushed over, grabbing his hands with overwhelming gratitude.

"She's talking?" Adam asked with a smile.

"Molly, this is Dr. Duncan. He's the one who saved you," her father said gently, leading Adam to the bedside where little Molly lay blinking up at them.

"Dr. Duncan," she murmured in a soft, fragile voice.

"Hey there," Adam said, ruffling her hair with a grin. "Don't be scared, kiddo. You're safe now, and everything's going to be okay."

Chapter 566: A Long Illness Leaves No Devoted Caretaker

Medical Center. Emergency Room.

"Molly, you okay?"

A pretty woman in her twenties rushed in, her face full of worry as she looked at Molly.

Molly shook her head.

"Dante! Look what you've done!"

The pretty woman turned and yelled at Molly's dad. "You can't even watch a kid properly!"

Molly's dad gave a bitter smile.

He couldn't argue with that one. 😊

"Doctor, how's Molly doing?"

The woman spun around to face Adam.

"Mrs. Varlanio, your daughter's fine now," Adam said with a grin.

"It's Miss Varlanio," she corrected, relaxing as the worry melted off her face. Suddenly, she flipped a switch and turned flirty. "Molly's my niece, you know."

"Oh!"

Adam glanced at her, then apologized. "Sorry about that. You two look so alike, I just assumed you were her mom."

"It's totally normal for a girl to take after her aunt, right?"

Miss Varlanio's eyes roamed over Adam like she was sizing up her next snack. "Doctor, you've been to the Fifth Street Gym, haven't you?"

"Nope, never," Adam replied, meeting her gaze.

"My bad~"

She bit her lip, giving him a playful look. "But I know you work out a lot, don't you~?"

"..."

Adam shot a glance at Molly's dad, who just smirked silently. Then he peeked at Molly on the bed, her little face breaking into a knowing grin. Yup, Miss Varlanio was clearly a pro at this game. 😊

And honestly, it made sense. In his past life, Adam had seen all sorts of gossip and scandals. The stuff that went down at gyms? It was practically the same vibe as people obsessed with ballroom dancing.

Was Miss Varlanio really talking about fitness?

Nah!

She was after Adam's bod! 😊

"I don't work out," Adam said with a laugh, then turned to leave.

"Dr. Duncan, Room 2!"

A nurse called out as soon as he stepped out.

"What's going on?"

Adam walked in and saw a Black kid getting CPR from a nurse.

"Trouble breathing. He passed out during a checkup. Heart rate dropped from 35 to nothing. Temp's at 40°C. Blood culture's already sent to the lab," the nurse rattled off quickly.

"Septic shock," Adam said, taking over CPR. "Give him a shot of epinephrine, 1 mg of atropine, and 1.5 mg each of erythromycin and cefazolin."

Then he glanced at a middle-aged Black man standing there, expressionless. "You're his dad? Has this happened before?"

"Once. He had pneumonia back then," the man said flatly.

"Cerebral palsy?" Adam pressed.

"Brain damage," the man replied, still emotionless.

"We've got a pulse!" the nurse chimed in.

Beep beep beep beep.

The monitor started blaring again.

"He's in V-fib!" the nurse warned.

"Lidocaine, 50 mg, IV push," Adam ordered. "Peaked T-waves, unstable rhythm, potassium's too high. Kidney failure. Give him 15 ml of calcium gluconate."

After some intense work, the boy pulled through.

"Okay, prep glucose and insulin!" Adam said after checking him over.

"Will he make it?"

For the first time, the kid's dad spoke up on his own.

"Looks like he will," Adam said, glancing at him.

But then he caught something in the dad's disappointed eyes. Oh boy. Probably another case of a parent who'd need a license to raise a kid. 😊

Nighttime.

"Dr. Duncan, the patient's struggling to breathe!"

A nurse called Adam again.

"Put him on a ventilator and get him to the ICU," Adam said after a quick check. "Where's the kid's dad?"

"Can't reach him," the nurse sighed.

"Ugh," Adam sighed too.

This kid—Adam had saved him once already—but with severe pneumonia in his past, his body was wrecked with complications. Without a ventilator, he'd be toast in hours. But keeping him on one? Most families couldn't handle that cost.

The dad clearly knew the deal.

The medical chart showed two solid years of treatment, in and out of hospitals. That numb look on his face earlier, and now ditching the kid to the hospital? He was probably just burned out beyond repair.



8 PM.

Adam changed out of his scrubs, left the hospital, and got ready to drive to New Jersey to spend Christmas with Peggy. Morning Christmas was just the warm-up—nighttime was the main event! 🎄

Outside the building, a shadowy figure sat against the wall. If it weren't for the glowing cigarette tip, even Adam's sharp eyes might've missed him.

He squinted. Yup, it was the kid's dad—the one who'd supposedly given up.

"Ben's on a ventilator now, in the ICU," Adam said, walking over after a moment's thought.

"Good," the man muttered, taking a drag, his face still blank.

Adam glanced at him, then turned to go.

Every family's got its own mess to deal with.

You love your own kid your own way.

Outsiders can only do so much.

But a few steps later, the man's voice stopped him.

"I got a job managing a recycling plant in Detroit."

Adam paused, turning back but staying quiet.

The guy just needed to vent.

"I'm moving. I kept thinking—if Ben died, it'd all be so much simpler... But then I wondered, what kind of person even thinks that?"

What kind of dad hopes his only kid kicks the bucket?

For two years, it's just been me and Ben, holding on together!

No job!

No friends!

No help!

He needs me 24/7—flipping him over, feeding him, singing to him when he cries...

I love my son.

I've given two whole years to Ben.

Two. Whole. Years!

I just can't keep going.

I need this to end.

God... sob sob sob..."

The big guy broke down, bawling right there. 😞

"If you had a chance to work and take care of your son, would you keep going?" Adam asked after a quiet moment.

Some old saying popped into his head: "A long illness leaves no devoted caretaker."

Or in this case, no devoted dad. Two years of constant hospital runs, no job, no money, no life—just nursing a half-dead son. A guy breaking down like this? Totally understandable.

If he hadn't already given up, Adam would've offered help earlier instead of walking away.

"Of course!" the man shouted, wiping tears. "If I could've kept going, what father would abandon his only kid?!"

"I can hook you up with a job," Adam said, rattling off a phone number. "Call this, take Ben with you. You can work and look after him at the same time."

It was the number for the Ellis Charity Foundation, set up by Caroline. Thanks to Adam's funding and investment tips, it was growing strong. The Ellis Estate had all the gear—like ventilators—and the man could work as a caregiver there. He'd look after Ben and a few others too.

Two years of solo caregiving? That kind of love in action beats most people by a mile. Plus, the regret hit him fast after giving up.

Help yourself, and the universe steps in.

He'd earned this shot.

Chapter 567: Rocket Attack Incoming!

Outside the Medical Center.

After casually doing a good deed, Adam waved goodbye to a grateful middle-aged African American man and hopped in his car, heading for New Jersey.

That night, it was all festive vibes and good times as usual.

Emmm... let's just skip about a million words of shenanigans here. 😊

After Christmas, time seemed to fly by even faster. Before you knew it, New Year's Day rolled around. The year? 1999.

"Adam, Old Friends Bar tonight—New Year's party!"

Lily called bright and early to lock it in.

"Cool," Adam chuckled. "I might be a little late, though. Don't wait up—just start having fun without me."

"Got it!"

Lily was about to hang up when she suddenly remembered something. "Oh, and Robin's coming tonight, so don't you dare show up with another girl!"

"..."

Adam's mouth twitched as he hung up. What did she take him for? Some kind of player? She was seriously underestimating him! Unless it was a total surprise, Adam always had his schedule locked down tight—no chance of any awkward run-ins.

Medical Center. Emergency Room.

"AAAAH!!! AAAAH!!! AAAAH!!!"

An ambulance screeched to a halt. Adam, who'd gotten a heads-up, stepped out to meet it. The back doors flung open, revealing a blood-soaked middle-aged woman in total shock—shaking like a leaf and screaming her head off.

The real patient, though, was lying there, tended by a pretty young paramedic who had her hand plunged into his chest, apparently stopping the bleeding with her bare hands.

Adam moved to take the stretcher, but a jolt of dread hit him hard. His instincts kicked into overdrive, and time seemed to slow—like he'd entered bullet time.

"Hold it!"

He backpedaled fast, retreating into the hospital before snapping back to normal speed. "Nobody move!" he shouted at the stunned paramedics and the nurses who'd come out to help.

"Dr. Duncan?"

The staff exchanged confused looks.

"There's danger—stay still!"

Adam zeroed in on the young paramedic's hand, still buried in the patient's chest. "Especially you—don't budge!"

In that slow-motion moment, he'd scanned everything and pinned the threat to the patient himself.

"What's the patient's condition?" he asked, voice dead serious.

"James Carneson, 46. He was unconscious when we got there. I tried gauze to stop the bleeding, but it wouldn't work, so I had to use my hand. Is something wrong?"

The young paramedic's voice shook with nerves.

"How'd he get hurt?" Adam pressed. "What caused a wound that big?"

"No idea," she stammered. "On the way here, we tried asking his wife, but—well, you can see—she's been screaming hysterically the whole time."

"Nobody move!"

Adam barked it again, then stepped up to the patient's wife. "Ma'am, how did your husband get injured?"

"AAAAH!!! AAAAH!!!"

Her eyes were vacant, her screams raw with terror.

"Doctor, he's bleeding out—we need to treat him now!" the paramedic urged.

"I know!"

Adam had a hunch forming. He waved a hand at her. "You—don't move a muscle!"

"AAAAH!!!!"

Time was ticking, and the wife was too far gone to respond. Adam grabbed her shoulders, faced her head-on, and mimicked her scream—louder. It cut through her cries like a knife, stunning her into silence.

"How did your husband get hurt?" he demanded.

"Uh... guh... guh..."

She was calmer, but all she could manage were weird goose-like noises—no real words.

"What's going on?"

Dr. Burke, who'd been waiting to take over, strode up, frowning. "Why isn't the patient inside yet?"

"I stopped them," Adam said. "I sensed danger. We need to know exactly how he was injured before we bring him in."

"That's ridiculous!"

Burke stared at him, incredulous. "What do you mean, 'sensed danger'? He's dying—we need him in there now!"

"I'm not okay with that."

Adam locked eyes with Burke, voice low and firm. "Dr. Burke, I've got a sharp instinct for danger. Trust me—trust my judgment!"

Burke hesitated. "Dr. Duncan, you're sure?"

"Dead sure."

Adam turned back to the wife. "How did your husband get hurt? If you don't tell us, we can't save him. Do you want him to die out here?"

"H-he... he..."

She grasped the gravity of it, struggling to form words but failing miserably.

"Is there a bomb inside him?"

Adam stared into her eyes.

Not much triggered this level of alarm in him, but that massive chest wound? His first guess was a human bomb. It wouldn't be the first time in the good ol' free USA.

Whoa!

The crowd gasped, then shuffled back in a hurry.

"R-rocket... b-bomb..."

Spurred by Adam's guess, the wife finally choked out something coherent. "James... hit by a rocket bomb..."

"Rocket bomb?!"

Another wave of gasps—people backed off even farther.

"Doctor, what do I do?!"

The paramedic, now clued in, trembled as she shouted.

"Is what you're pressing on hard? Like metal?" Adam asked.

"I-I don't know... maybe!"

She was on the verge of tears.

"Call the bomb squad—now!" Burke ordered a nurse.

"You—stay still," Adam told the paramedic again, then turned to Burke. "The rocket didn't explode yet, but it could any second. We can't let him inside, especially not near the OR."

The operating room had oxygen tanks. One spark, and with that much O2 fueling it, you'd get a chain explosion—goodbye hospital.

"Right."

Burke nodded, clearly on the same page. He was even starting to wonder if this was a terrorist plot—disguise a human bomb to take out an entire hospital. The shock value would be off the charts.

"Black alert," Burke told a nurse. "Evacuate the building."

Who knew how powerful this thing was? The best move would be to drive the ambulance far from the hospital, far from people. But who'd risk it? One wrong move, and—boom—active or passive detonation.

Chapter 568: Everyone's a Genius in Their Own Way

Medical Center. Front Entrance.

An ambulance sat all alone out front. Inside, a young, pretty woman in a uniform was sweating bullets, her right hand buried in a bloody chest, her eyes wide with pure terror. 😱

"You guys, hurry up and save my husband!"

The patient's wife, who'd been screaming in panic earlier, finally snapped out of it. She noticed everyone standing a mile away, not lifting a finger to help, and lost it.

"Sorry, we can't go near him until the bomb squad gets here," Adam said, shaking his head.

No way, dude.

Sure, he had that bullet-time trick and was faster than your average Joe, but that didn't mean he could just stroll over, take over for the uniform chick, yank a rocket out of the guy's body, and chuck it like a pro.

The bomb's explosion speed? Unknown.

The blast power? Unknown.

But the vibe it was giving off? Super bad news.

If it went off in his hands—or even near him—he'd be toast. 🎵 Cue the funeral dirge. 🎵

Yeah, Adam was all about saving lives—super dedicated, even.

But let's not forget why: he did it to rack up safe, steady rescues and extend his own lifespan. You know, to keep living.

Now, asking him to risk his neck for some random stranger?

Sorry, not happening!

He'd worked way too hard to forget who he was.

He wasn't some saint!

Shouting, "Don't worry, I'll raise your wife for you!" might sound cool as hell.

But having someone yell that at him? Total crapshow.

If he messed up now, who'd end up with all his stuff? No clue!

Only an idiot would take that gamble. 🤡♂️

"You're doctors! Saving people is your job!" the wife shrieked again, totally losing it.

"Saving people? Yup, that's our gig. Defusing bombs? Not so much," Adam shot back, ice-cold. "We've gotta wait for the bomb squad to neutralize the threat before we can do anything."

Dr. Burke stood off to the side, looking torn. After wrestling with it, he stayed quiet.

If he'd jumped in blind at the start, he might've stuck it out for his own sense of duty. But now? Not only had he not touched the case, he was half-convinced the guy was a human bomb terrorist. No way was he playing hero.

"Exactly! We're medics, not bomb techs!"

"Who knows if they're terrorists pulling some stunt?!"

"What normal person has a rocket in them?!"

"If she really loved her husband, she'd drive that ambulance to the middle of nowhere and pull the rocket out herself. That's true love. Why's she expecting us to play bomb squad?"

"She totally knows about the pink mist—that's why she's not budging."

"Pink mist?"

"You don't know? When a bomb goes off, anyone caught in it gets shredded into a million pieces. If it's strong enough, you're liquefied—or even vaporized. One second you're a person, the next you're a bloody cloud. Nothing left but mushy bits."

"OMG! That's horrifying! We're just regular medics, not battlefield docs!"

"In the U.S., is there even a difference?"

"Thank God Dr. Duncan's got sharp instincts. He sniffed out the danger and warned us early, or we'd all be dead—and this hospital would be a crater."

The staff, huddled way back, were buzzing with shaky voices.

Relief mixed with gratitude for Adam—and some serious shade thrown at the couple who started this mess. 🙄

"We're not terrorists!" the wife yelled, overhearing them. Her face went red as she roared at everyone, but her feet didn't move an inch.

"Mindy, what're you doing here? Where's James?"

A car rolled up and stopped. Out stepped a white guy in his forties, decked out in a WWII Allied uniform, blood splattered on him. He called out to the wife.

"You idiot! You killed James!"

Mindy spotted him and went off. "Hurry up and save him!"

"I'm not a doctor!"

The guy blinked, totally confused, looking at the crowd. "You're all doctors—why aren't you saving James?"

"Because there's a freaking rocket in his body!!!" Mindy exploded. "You and James, you morons—how old are you two? Still playing these dangerous games..."

"It's not a game!" the guy cut in, annoyed. "We're reenacting! We perfectly recreated the WWII Allied anti-tank weapon—the M9A1 rocket launcher!"

"Wait—you fired the rocket?" Adam asked, floored.

He'd heard Americans were wild, but this? This blew his mind all over again. ☹

"We were testing it in the backyard. I was the gunner, James was the loader. We followed the specs to a T—60mm caliber, 1.5 pounds, absolute perfection..." The guy rambled, slipping back into geek-mode about his flawless replica.

"How big's the blast?" Adam interrupted.

"Uh, no idea," the guy said, thrown off. "It's an anti-tank weapon, though, so... pretty huge."

"And now that huge rocket you fired is lodged in James's body, ready to blow any second!" Mindy snapped. "If you're really his best friend and war buddy, then get over there, drive the ambulance somewhere empty, pull the rocket out of him, and let the doctors save him! Time's running out—James is dying!"

"..."

The WWII cosplay dude froze, finally realizing the rocket he'd launched hadn't gone off—it was sitting in his buddy's gut, ticking like a time bomb.

"Mindy, you know I'm French-Italian. I'd love to save James, but this isn't my thing. Let's wait for the bomb squad..."

"..."

Adam and the others twitched their lips.

What a legend.

French-Italian heritage, so he's cosplaying a French-Italian soldier.

Can't do squat, but tops at bailing!

No flaws there!

It's like Sheldon and Leonard's gaming crew—snagging the Blade of Essenor, letting Leonard's team get wiped out, then teleporting away shouting, "I'm the Swordmaster!"

Auctioning it off pronto, then hitting Leonard's crew with, "I'm a Night Elf Rogue—didn't you read the character bio?" like it's no big deal. 😊

"What's the situation?"

The bomb squad finally rolled in, fast.

Adam filled them in, and the team leader just stared, speechless. This was next-level stupidity—and dragging everyone else down with it.

"How's the building evacuation going?"

"Still in progress," Dr. Burke piped up, keeping tabs. "Some surgeries can't stop mid-procedure."

Like Dr. Shepter, elbow-deep in a craniotomy. Stop now? Patient's 100% dead.

"I say we move the ambulance to an empty spot ASAP and defuse there," Adam suggested.

"No can do. Homemade bombs are too unstable—can't risk moving it," the bomb squad leader shot down.

Adam didn't argue.

This was pro territory now.

Chapter 569: Open the Door!

Outside the medical center.

"What's your name?"

The bomb squad leader shouted at the female paramedic, who was on the verge of losing it.

"Hannah Davis," she replied, her voice shaking.

"Okay, Hannah," the bomb squad leader said. "If we're gonna save Mr. Carlson, we need to get that bomb out now, and you're the only one who can do it."

"I can't!" Hannah cried out, tears streaming down her face.

"Yes, you can!" the leader yelled back. "You just need to be super careful and super slow when you pull it out. Keep it level, then hand it to me, got it?"

"No, I can't do it! I'm outta here!" Hannah's fear was spiraling out of control.

Pressing down on the bomb was terrifying enough—now they wanted her to remove it from the patient's body? Even with all the care in the world, that was a huge move. Just thinking about the danger made her stomach drop.

"No! You're a paramedic—you have to save my husband!" shouted Mindy, the patient's wife, her voice booming.

That did it.

But not in the way Mindy hoped.

Hannah's mind raced. She'd worked so hard to save this guy—breaking protocol by shoving her hand into his chest—and for what? To save someone who'd brought this on himself and nearly got everyone else killed too? And now his wife was screaming at her to risk her life?

She was only 22, fresh out of school, just starting her career—her life had barely begun! If this patient were a hero, or even just an innocent bystander, maybe she'd grit her teeth and take the chance. But this guy? He'd messed around with some World War II weapons game, and even his so-called "comrades" wouldn't come save him. Why should she?

Screw it. If this was the job, someone else could have it! She had a family—parents who adored her. How devastated would they be if she died?

The second Mindy finished yelling, these thoughts hit Hannah like a freight train. She yanked her hand back, jumped off the ambulance, and bolted into the distance.

"Nooo!!!" Mindy screamed again, her voice echoing.

But that was it. She didn't move an inch—just like the awkward French-Italian guy standing there sheepishly.

"Damn it!"

Everyone ducked behind walls. The bomb squad leader, being closest, hit the deck hard. It was pure instinct.

A few seconds passed.

No explosion.

Everyone let out a collective sigh of relief and peeked out. The bomb squad leader stood up, glanced at the patient, then back at the group. Gritting his teeth, he said, "I'm going in to get the bomb. Be ready to save him the second I do."

Adam frowned. The sense of danger hadn't faded—it was getting worse. That could only mean one thing. He was about to warn the leader to stay back when—

Boom!

A cloud of pink mist erupted.

The bomb's power and timing weren't enough to blow everyone away. Only the bomb squad leader, being so close, got knocked down by the blast.

"Save him!"

The danger finally lifted, and Adam was the first to sprint over. He checked the leader—out cold, back shredded with metal shards, bleeding like crazy.

"Stretcher!" Dr. Burke, the second to snap out of it, yelled through the ringing in his ears.

No one responded. The hospital nurses weren't used to this chaos—ears buzzing, they couldn't even process what was being said.

Adam didn't wait. He scooped the leader up with both arms, rushed him into the hospital, and laid him on a stretcher Dr. Burke had personally wheeled over. They pushed him toward the ER, checking vitals on the fly.

"Captain!"

A few bomb squad members crowded around. They were pros at dealing with the ringing ears and snapped into action.

"Go get the nurses," Adam ordered.

"Danger's over—get oxygen back to the ER now!"

"Prep the OR!"

"Get Dr. Sandy over here!"

Dr. Burke grabbed the ER's internal phone and called Richard, the surgical chief who'd been waiting for updates, telling him to restore oxygen.

The bomb squad leader was a mess. Before surgery, they'd need to stabilize him in the ER—oxygen masks and breathing aids were a must. The OR would take a bit to prep too.

With Adam and Dr. Burke working together, they got him stable enough to roll into Operating Room 3. Dr. Sandy, the plastic surgeon, was already waiting.

The leader had been so close to the blast—his back was full of shrapnel, and the explosion's heat had burned huge patches of skin. Plastic surgery was definitely in his future.

The one silver lining? He'd been facing away from the bomb. If he hadn't, his face would've been toast.

Back surgery versus facial reconstruction? In a world obsessed with looks, those are two totally different beasts. Modern plastic surgery isn't magic—fixing a ruined face just means going from "terrifying" to "less terrifying." Dreaming of a full recovery—or even an upgrade? Yeah, good luck with that. The back, though? Way easier to handle.

While Adam and the team fought to save the leader in the OR, all hell broke loose outside.

Mindy, the dead patient's wife, was sobbing and screaming her head off. The French-Italian guy in an Allied uniform was busy blaming the doctors and paramedics for being useless. It was a total mess—until the FBI showed up, hauled them off, and finally gave the hospital some peace.

Sure, America's the land of "guns every day"—the Second Amendment says you can carry, and no one's taking that away. But there's a line, and it doesn't include anti-tank rockets. Mindy could scream all she wanted about her husband "just making a big gun," but the FBI wasn't buying it.

It's 1999—no 9/11 yet—but Americans are already jumpy about bombs and attacks. Can't blame them. When your country's stirring up trouble worldwide and making enemies left and right, you know retaliation's a risk. They won't say it out loud, but they're scared.

This is New York, the economic and cultural heart of the U.S., and a top-tier hospital almost got blown sky-high. The FBI wasn't messing around—they were digging deep.

You can whip up a rocket in the suburbs today and fire it off your shoulder. What's stopping you from a full-on terrorist attack tomorrow? Even if you don't, what if that stuff falls into the wrong hands?

When the feds get serious, no one's off the hook.

Adam stepped out of the OR, exhausted, only to find a young, stunning woman in a sharp suit waiting for him. She stood up, flashing a dimple he couldn't resist, and held up her badge.

"Dr. Adam Duncan, I'm Jessie Paige, FBI. Got a minute? I've got some questions for you..."

Chapter 570: Gather Three Peggys to Summon the Dragon

At the medical center, outside the operating room.

"Peggy?"

Adam froze for a second, chuckling to himself.

Foreign names are just so funny sometimes—Peggy can be a first name or a last name.

And here's the kicker.

Every Peggy Adam's met has been drop-dead gorgeous.

Take Peggy Adler, the icy snow maiden who stepped into the mortal world—stunning doesn't even cover it.

Then there's this Jessie Peggy right in front of him. Not only is she dazzling, but she's got those cute dimples too. 😊

Hmm.

Juno's full name is Juno Peggy McGough.

Another Peggy...

If you put them all together, you'd get a first-name Peggy, a middle-name Peggy, and a last-name Peggy—a total Peggy trifecta!

But Adam's no nutcase like some "Emma-obsessed, explosion-loving" weirdo. He doesn't have a thing for collecting people with the same name, so no plans to summon a dragon with three Peggys here. 😊

"Something wrong?"

Agent Jessie Peggy gave Adam a curious glance.

"Nah, nothing."

Adam grinned. "Just that I know a bunch of Peggys."

"Dr. Duncan..."

"You're here about that explosion case, right?"

Adam cut in. "Let's talk somewhere else. Follow me."

With that, he headed toward his office.

Agent Jessie Peggy had no choice but to trail behind, looking a little helpless.

Adam's office.

Yup.

You heard that right.

Adam's got his own office.

Before the nurse strike last time, he shelled out his own cash to rent it from the hospital.

It's decked out—luxurious, fully equipped, the works.

For someone who basically lives at the hospital, it's super convenient.

There's this orthopedic resident who used to crash in an empty hospital storage closet—she was so jealous. It opened up a whole new world for her.

She followed Adam's lead, rented her own room, spruced it up, and made it home. It's way safer and comfier than the storage closet, plus it cuts out the commute to a hotel.

Her family's loaded anyway, so the cost's no big deal.

"Tea, coffee, or a drink?"

Adam sat down, motioning for Jessie to take a seat too. The on-duty nurse he'd hired for Alice Grey popped in right on cue—super attentive, asking what they needed.

The boss was here, so service had to be top-notch.

Adam's a tea guy, and the nurse knew it. This question was for the guest.

"Thanks, I'm good."

Jessie shook her head.

Then her jaw dropped.

Adam opened a safe.

The nurse stepped over, pulling out tea leaves, a fancy unopened bottle of water, and a kettle. She set it all on the table and started boiling water right there to brew tea.

"Hospitals are busy places. Gotta be extra careful about food and drink safety," Adam explained casually.

Jessie's eyes screamed, "You rich folks are way too paranoid—this is overkill!"

Adam just smiled.

She's still young. She doesn't get it.

Even if it's safe, precautions are a must—especially in a place as wild as the U.S.

Adam's not about to test if his taste buds can detect poison or if his "show-off" stamina can outlast a toxin.

His apartment, his hospital office, Peggy's place, the old friends' bar—any spot he frequents has a stash of antidotes and antivenoms, fully stocked.

Hmm.

It's a habit he picked up after recalling some news from his past life.

With billions in wealth and a big name, there's always some jerk out to get you. Totally normal, right?

Better safe than sorry.

The room went quiet for a bit. They'd wait till the nurse left to talk.

Adam snuck a glance at the familiar dimpled beauty.

Yup.

She's the FBI agent from The Big Bang Theory who vetted Howard's background.

Those dimples stuck with him.

He peeked at her left hand.

No ring.

Makes sense.

It's still ten years before she checks out Howard. By then, she'd be in her thirties—plenty of time to get hitched.

Right now, she's only in her early twenties.

Her future six-foot-something SEAL husband? Probably not even in the picture yet.

"Anything I can help you with?"

After the nurse finished brewing tea and left, Adam smiled.

"Here's the deal."

Jessie straightened up, grabbing her pen and notepad, locking eyes with Adam. "Can you walk me through the details of this explosion case?"

"Sure."

Adam gave his version of events.

Totally objective, no personal spin.

"Got it."

Jessie scribbled some quick notes, then looked up at Adam, her gaze sharpening. "One question, Dr. Duncan. How'd you know this patient was dangerous? And why'd you ask the wife if there was a bomb in him?"

"Gut feeling."

Adam braced himself internally—Here it comes—but kept a calm smile.

"Gut feeling?"

Jessie's eyes screamed disbelief.

"Yup."

Adam grinned. "Agent Peggy, when you deal with life and death day in and day out, you start to get a sixth sense about danger.

Don't believe me? Ask any doctor or nurse.

Take my colleague Meredith—she was saying this morning she might die today. Refused to come to work, dead set against it.

For interns like us, unless the hospital forces us to rest and recharge, we'd happily pull 24/7 shifts here.

If that weird vibe wasn't so strong, why else would she skip out?"

"Your colleague's name?"

Jessie picked up her pen again.

"Dr. Meredith Grey."

Adam chuckled. "Her roommate and fellow intern, Dr. George O'Malley, and Dr. Izzie Stevens couldn't talk her into coming. Took her best friend and coworker, Dr. Cristina Yang, to drag her in.

And turns out, she was right.

If I hadn't sensed the danger and stopped that patient from coming inside, standard procedure would've sent him to OR 3—right next to the oxygen supply hub.

Boom. Whole hospital goes up.

Meredith, working in there? High chance she'd be toast.

That gut feeling—pretty convincing, huh?"

"I'll talk to her."

Jessie didn't commit, but the doubt in her eyes faded a bit.

"Still not sold?"

Adam sipped his tea and grinned. "One more story then. This morning, the surgery schedule board in the hallway was practically empty—not the usual jam-packed mess.

Our chief of surgery, Dr. Richard Webber, the head of cardio, Dr. Preston Burke, and the neuro chief, Dr. Derek Shepherd, all walked up to it and said at the same time, 'Uh-oh, something bad's going down today.'

That's the instinct of seasoned docs.

And guess what? They nailed it, didn't they?"

"..."

Jessie had no comeback. She just scribbled down every name Adam dropped, planning to check them later.

But stuff like this? Hard to fake.

It's too easy to verify.

She bought Adam's "intuition" excuse, though inwardly she was rolling her eyes: "What the heck? What kind of hospital is this? Why do all your doctors have some freaky superpower intuition?"