

TV Show 601

Chapter 601: Savage Adam

Medical Center.

"So, quit wasting my time," Adam said, turning to leave.

"Wait!" Liz shouted. "I need to see Danny before he goes into surgery!"

"No need," Adam waved her off, then recapped his "single life makes you stronger" chat with Danny.

"How dare you!" Liz froze, then exploded with fury. "So, what—you're saying if Danny doesn't get a heart, he can't see me for a year, maybe two?!"

"That's my advice," Adam shrugged. "You two lock eyes, sparks fly, and he's itching for something he can't have right now. For a guy in his condition, that's torture long-term. Better to just skip it."

"You came up with this?!" Meredith stared at Adam like he was the devil incarnate.

"What's the problem?" Adam grinned. "Didn't you just say you're swearing off guys? Going to bars but skipping the booze for knitting? Said drinking makes everything look flirty and, uh, 'colorful.'"

But let's be real—why bother? If you're serious about chilling out, skip the bar! Work your surgeries, then go home and learn some tricks from your mom—boost those brainy skills.

Dump all your time and energy into that, and you won't need knitting to keep the hormones in check!"

"Knitting helps my hand dexterity for surgery," Meredith mumbled, flustered. "And I can't just work with no downtime, right?"

"Why not?" Adam shot back. "Hanging with your mom and studying isn't downtime? Plus, you'd get more mom-time. Bet Cristina would join you too. Isn't that why you hit the bar anyway—to chat with her?"

"..." Meredith had nothing.

What could she say? Sure, she talked a big game, but deep down, she still craved a little fling. Ditching bars for mom-and-Cristina time? No chance!

Let's not call it out and stay pals—except her friendship with Adam was teetering on the edge.

"Don't change the subject! Back to Danny!" Liz cut in. "You don't believe in love?"

"Oh, I do," Adam said, meeting her fiery glare. "Just not love at first sight. No matter how you dress it up, it's all about lusting after someone's looks!

Come on, Liz. How many times have you even met Danny? Now you're losing it, swearing it's some cosmic insta-love.

Tell me—beyond his brooding hot face and witty charm—what do you actually know about him? Name one thing, and I'll let you see him."

"He..." Liz blanked, mouth open, speechless.

"Guess that's a no," Adam smirked. "Guys can be more rational sometimes. Danny figured it out quick—love's not everything. Staying alive is. He's moved on from the mushy stuff."

Meredith's lip twitched as she glared at Adam. "Surgery's soon—go prep already!"

This guy's tongue was pure poison—stabbing right where it hurt! So infuriating! 😡

Adam chuckled and walked off.

Liz? She's the type to dive in headfirst, usually for no good reason. Take Alex—pinned her risqué pics all over the hospital, humiliated her, trashed her dignity. Normal people would hate his guts.

But nope! She forgave him fast, then fell hard after his "brothers" got wrecked—nursed him through his grumpy outbursts like a saint, no complaints.

Now Danny? A few flirty lines, and she's all "he's my soulmate," ready to throw everything away to get close.

She clawed her way up from a trailer park to become a surgeon—years of grit! Like that case with Montgomery's patient—a pregnant Black teen. Liz was moody about it because she'd lived it. High school pregnancy, had a daughter, gave her up for a better shot at life.

She used that story to convince the teen to do the same—until the girl's mom flipped out at the hospital. Liz insisted she meant well, that it was the right call. Raising a kid traps you forever, she said.

So, kid < future, but future < random insta-love?

Adam didn't wanna overthink it. Either Liz was unhinged, or she was playing a long game. Danny's got cash—obvious to anyone. Was she pulling a Leonard's-teacher or Rachel's-sister-Amy move, eyeing the prize? Who knows!

Adam leaned toward "unhinged."

Before the OR Board.

Liz was a nervous wreck.

"Ugh, another one bites the dust," an intern muttered, stepping out of an OR, shaking their head.

"That's five. Probably two more coming," another chimed in.

"Meredith?" Liz looked up as Meredith approached.

"Dead too," Meredith sighed. "This woman—she won't be stalking her ex anymore."

"That's six," Liz said, voice trembling with dread. "Now it's just Danny's surgery left."

"Don't stress," Meredith soothed. "It's only morning. Seven deaths on the table wouldn't all hit before lunch..."

Plus, it's Burke and Adam working on Danny. Adam's a jerk with that sharp tongue, but don't forget—he's the 'miracle doctor.'"

"Right!" Liz lit up with hope. "Adam's a miracle worker. He won't let Danny die!"

The wait was agony.

"Adam?" Liz's voice shook as he emerged from the OR.

"He's fine," Adam said, rolling his eyes but giving her the good news.

"Thank God!" Liz squealed, arms wide, lunging for a hug.

Adam dodged like a pro, leaving her crashing into Burke instead.

"Thanks, Dr. Burke!" Liz said, awkwardly letting go.

"Dr. Duncan, keep an eye on Danny's recovery," Burke said with a nod to both, peeling off his lucky yellow scrub cap and twirling it between his fingers as he sauntered off.

Clearly, that little yellow hat proved its magic again on this wild day. Burke was one happy camper.

Chapter 602: Fallen Angel

Medical Center. ER.

After handing Danny's care over to the nurses, Adam couldn't wait to get down here.

Taking on Danny's case had felt like a loss at first. The long hospital stay meant splitting his focus, keeping an eye on him constantly. But it was also a challenge Adam had never faced before—a chance to level up his skills. Plus, with the nurses pitching in, he didn't have to be glued to Danny's side. If something went wrong, they'd page him ASAP. And when they did? It'd be a life-or-death moment—Adam's favorite kind of save. 🤖

ER.

"Dr. Duncan, perfect timing!" Nurse Carol lit up when she spotted him. "Do you speak Russian?"

"Yeah," Adam nodded. "Russian patient?"

"Yep, come with me—quick!" Carol grabbed his arm and tugged him along.

In the exam room, a little girl—maybe four or five, looking like an angel—lay on the bed. Her big, innocent eyes blinked up at Adam and Carol.

"Dr. Duncan, this is Tatiana. Fever and cough. Her mom brought her in, but then vanished the second I turned around. We can't reach her, and none of us speak Russian, so we're stuck," Carol explained.

"Checked her temp?" Adam asked.

"37.8°C," Carol replied.

"Tatiana, I'm Dr. Duncan," Adam said in Russian, starting his exam. "Where do you feel bad?"

"You can talk!" Tatiana's face broke into a happy grin. She reached out with her tiny hand, brushing his white coat's name tag.

"Yep," Adam said, leaning in so she could touch it. He pressed gently around her body, smiling. "Is it here that hurts? Here?"

"No," she shook her head, then grabbed his hand and guided it to her forehead. "Bad here."

"How long has it felt bad?" Adam asked, looking at her.

"A long time," she said after a little thought.

"Was it your mom who brought you here?"

"No," Tatiana shook her head, then nodded. "But she and some uncles and aunties said she's my mom now. They told me to call her that."

"Is this new mom nice to you?" Adam asked.

"Yes," Tatiana nodded softly. "At first, she was so happy. After we flew here, I got sick. We went to a doctor, and then she wasn't happy anymore. She cries a lot now."

"Probably adopted," Adam said to Carol in English. "Get a blood test for Tatiana. Let's figure out what kind of illness would make a mom desperate for a kid ditch this angel after all the effort to adopt her from overseas."

"Got it," Carol nodded.

"Tatiana," Adam switched back to Russian, "the nurse is going to take a little blood. It'll sting a bit, but just hang in there, okay?"

"Okay," Tatiana agreed with a sweet little nod.

The more obedient and adorable she was, the harder it hit Adam. A kid this cute, this perfect—how could anyone abandon her in a hospital? The most likely answer: Tatiana had something incurable, and her adoptive mom couldn't handle the endless road ahead.

"Tatiana, do you remember the name of the hospital you went to before? What's your new mom's name? Where do you live?"

She shook her head.

"No worries," Adam said, patting her forehead. He grabbed his phone and called his assistant. "Ada, send someone to buy a teddy bear or something a four- or five-year-old girl would love. Get it to the hospital fast!"

Cuteness is justice! Adam couldn't help but want to spoil her a little. 😊

Then he dialed Kate. "Detective Beckett, I need a favor. Look into someone—Tatiana, a four- or five-year-old Russian girl, recently adopted here in the U.S. Her adoptive parent dumped her at the hospital. Can you find out who it is?"

"Damn it! Who's that heartless? On it—wait for my call!" Kate didn't hesitate.

Tatiana watched Adam quietly. When he hung up, she asked in the most innocent voice, cutting straight to his heart: "Did my new mom not want me anymore?"

"..." Adam froze, at a loss. He couldn't say "no"—even if they found her, that woman probably wouldn't be her mom anymore. He softened his tone. "Don't worry, everything's gonna be okay."

Tatiana nodded, falling silent.

"Do you know what's going on?" Adam couldn't help but ask.

"Yes," she said, nodding seriously.

While Adam and Tatiana talked, Kate worked fast. Her call came back in no time.

"Mary Hall, 40. Husband died three years ago. Six months back, she applied to adopt from an orphanage in St. Petersburg. Last week, she finalized the paperwork and adopted four-year-old Tatiana Marivkaya."

"Tatiana Marivkaya?" Adam glanced at the girl.

Tatiana perked up, nodding like, That's me! That's me!

"It's her," Adam confirmed to Kate. "Mary Hall's phone and address?"

Kate rattled them off.

Adam hung up and dialed Mary straight away. "Mary Hall? This is Dr. Adam Duncan from the medical center. How'd I get your number? You adopted Tatiana legally—finding you wasn't hard. Come to the hospital. Running away won't fix this. Not coming? Fine—then tell me what's wrong with Tatiana."

Silence on the other end.

"Dr. Duncan," Carol interrupted, her face grim as she handed him the blood test results.

Adam skimmed it and sighed. "HIV, right?"

"You know?" Mary's voice broke over the phone, collapsing into sobs. "I didn't want this! My husband died three years ago—it was slow, agonizing, but I got through it, kept living. Until last week, I hadn't let myself feel that grief. Then Tatiana got a fever and cough. The hospital said it's HIV—passed from her birth mom, no symptoms 'til now. My life's just too cruel... They say she could live 1 to 5 years, maybe 9 or more. But I told myself I can't do it. I can't go through losing someone I love all over again. Please, don't call me—I can't..."

She hung up.

"New mom?" Tatiana asked softly, her eyes on Adam.

"Don't worry," Adam said, brushing her cheek. "You'll get a new mom—one you'll really like. I promise she'll stick with you always."

Chapter 603: Are You Kidding Me?

At the medical center.

Late at night.

In a VIP ward:

"How's she doing?"

Adam had just finished his tasks for the day. After popping by Alice Gray's place for a quick catch-up and swinging by Danny's, he finally made it to check on this adorable yet pitiful little girl.

"The fever's gone down, and her cough's much better. She just fell asleep," Nurse Carol said fondly, gazing at Tatiana, who was sleeping peacefully on her side.

Tatiana had a mother-to-child infection. She'd just passed the incubation period and started showing symptoms. Right now, there wasn't much in the way of treatment. But with proper care, it was still

possible to give her a decent quality of life within her limited time. Of course, that depended on having the right resources.

"Good to hear."

Adam gently touched Tatiana's forehead and nodded with a smile. 😊

"Dr. Duncan..." Nurse Carol hesitated, like she wanted to say something but wasn't sure how to start.

"What's up?" Adam looked at her curiously.

"I've been thinking..." Carol paused, then continued, "I want to adopt Tatiana. She's so cute and so pitiful. She needs a home, someone to look after her—and I think I'm the right person for that."

"True," Adam agreed. "Carol, you've got a big heart. But what does Dr. Tagg think about it?"

"...I'll talk to him," she replied after a beat.

She was already engaged to Dr. Tagg, and their wedding was coming up soon.

"If he's on board, you two would definitely be a great fit," Adam mused. "But I wouldn't recommend it. Adopting a kid means going through the child protection agency's review process. We all know you'd take amazing care of Tatiana, but they only care about records..."

Carol's eyes dimmed. She instinctively touched her wrist, where a faint red scar lingered. She'd once tried to take her own life over love. Even though she genuinely wanted to care for Tatiana now, that past would disqualify her from passing the agency's scrutiny.

"Ugh!" Carol glanced at the sleeping Tatiana, covered her mouth, and bolted out of the room.

"Carol!" Adam followed her, grabbing her arm gently. "Hey, it's okay. This might be for the best. You and Dr. Tagg will have your own kids someday. And don't worry about Tatiana—someone will look after her."

"No, they won't!" Carol wiped her tears and shook her head. "They'll just stick her in a foster center. If she's lucky, maybe a place like Sunshine House. But those places? She'd just be waiting to die. She needs a real home, somewhere she can feel loved for however long she has left."

Sunshine House was one of those U.S. charities that took in kids with AIDS, staffed with nurses and teachers. But places like that were a roll of the dice. A kind-hearted manager could make it a beacon of hope for unlucky kids. A bad one? It'd be a living hell for kids who were already suffering. Nobody really cared about them. Regular foster homes at least had families dropping by to adopt. Kids with AIDS? Almost zero chance. No one bothered to visit.

If you've seen how foster systems work in American TV dramas, you get the picture—yikes. 😞 Are there truly good-hearted people out there? Sure! Look at Carol. But they're rare. Most folks are either indifferent or downright cruel.

"Don't stress. I'll figure something out," Adam said with a reassuring grin. "You don't trust my skills by now?"

Carol glanced around the VIP ward—proof of Adam's influence with just a word. Seeing he was serious, she realized Tatiana's charm and plight hadn't just tugged at her heart alone. Her sadness flipped to a small smile. Everyone trusted Dr. Duncan's abilities!

"I'll stay with her the next few days," Carol said, wiping her face and stepping back into the ward. "I don't want her waking up scared with no one around."

"Sounds good," Adam nodded, smiling. "Carol, you're gonna be an awesome mom someday."

Because of Danny and Tatiana, Adam didn't bother heading back to his apartment. He crashed in his fancy office instead. During his usual nightly call with Juno, he brought it up.

"I'm thinking of having Caroline adopt her," Adam said, bouncing the idea off Juno. "What do you think?"

"Caroline again, huh?" Juno teased over the phone. "She's basically your go-to fixer at this point."

"Oh, come on, it's not like that," Adam laughed. "She loves doing this kind of thing anyway. I'm just helping her out. If anything, I'm her tool— in every sense of the word."

"Is this Tatiana really that adorable?" Juno asked, intrigued. "I mean, a sad backstory alone wouldn't get you this invested."

"She's super cute and sweet," Adam confirmed. "Think about it: Carol, our young nurse, isn't infertile or anything. She's about to marry her doctor fiancé. And even now, she's dying to adopt Tatiana. That's how much of a heart-melter this kid is!"

"Or maybe Carol's got some subconscious doubts about marrying her doctor guy and wants an excuse to stall the wedding," Juno said playfully.

"..." Adam was speechless for a sec before groaning. "Don't make everyone sound so shady! Even if that's true, Tatiana's still giving her a solid reason. Most people wouldn't step up like that."

"Heh," Juno chuckled. "Fair point. People say kids are the most fun between 2 and 6. Before 2, they're crying nonstop; after 6, they're little terrors. A 4-year-old angel with a face like a painting? Yeah, she'd melt most hearts—especially with that tragic backstory. No wonder she's got you wrapped around her finger."

"What else am I supposed to do?" Adam shrugged. "There are tons of pitiful people out there. She just happened to cross my path, and her mix of cute and sad got to me. So I'm lending a hand—call it my good deed of the day. I've been at the medical center for over half a year, seen all kinds of tragedies, and including her, I've only helped four people total. Trust me, I've heard worse stories at the hospital. If I tried to save everyone, I'd burn out fast."

"Are you the one helping?" Juno teased. "You just say a word, then dump it all on Caroline. She's the real hero here."

"Of course she is! I never said I was the hero," Adam laughed. "I've always admired her shining goodness. She's like the female Captain America."

"Coming from you, that sounds suspiciously cheeky," Juno quipped. "You've probably made her cosplay that with you, haven't you?"

"No way! I haven't! Stop making stuff up!" Adam protested, dead serious. "I genuinely respect her from the bottom of my heart."

"Sure, sure," Juno cut in. "Enough with the straight-faced nonsense. Like there's any woman you're close to who hasn't ended up in one of your cosplay schemes? Caroline's perfect for adopting Tatiana, no doubt. But what about Heather?"

"Heather?" Adam blinked, then smirked. "Wait, are you kidding me?"

Chapter 604: They're All a Bunch of Obsessives

Late at night.

The phone call drags on.

"Why not?"

Juno fires back, "You're not telling me you don't know how lonely Heather is, right?"

"Well..."

Adam hesitates.

"Caroline's great, no doubt," Juno says. "But she pours all her energy into helping tons of people who need it. Her focus is all over the place. And as she gets more successful, she'll have even less time to zero in on any one person.

Tatiana's lifespan? It's limited—at least until some fancy new treatment comes along.

So, in the time she's got, she needs to feel as much love as possible. She needs a family who's always there for her.

Caroline? She can't do that.

But Heather's different.

She's got all the time in the world to care for Tatiana. One's lonely, the other's starved for love—aren't they just the perfect mother-daughter match? 😊 You do know Heather's never planning to have kids of her own, right?"

"Yeah, I know," Adam mutters, the corner of his mouth twitching. Somewhere in his brain, an encrypted file unlocks with a click.

Last Thanksgiving dinner, Juno's words had hit him hard. He'd felt a little guilty and reached out to Heather afterward. She didn't mess around—flew over that same night.

That was when Adam realized she'd been dead serious all along. She really wasn't letting her genes carry on. She'd gone and gotten herself fixed—ring and all.

The shock? Unreal. Unforgettable. Still etched in his mind.

"But are you sure Heather wants to adopt someone like Tatiana?" Adam shakes his head, locking those millions of mental words back up. "There's a reason I suggested Caroline take her in," he adds. "She's a pro at charity stuff. Sure, she gives it her all, but because her love's spread so thin, if someone she cares for passes away, she can move on quick and keep helping others.

Now, if Heather takes Tatiana in, I bet she'd throw her whole heart into being an amazing mom. But if she pours everything into Tatiana, what happens if Tatiana's gone one day? Could Heather handle that?"

"You're not wrong to point that out. Shows Heather's feelings for you aren't wasted," Juno says with a grin. "I half-expected you to say Heather's lifestyle isn't right for Tatiana or something."

"That's part of it too," Adam admits, a little sheepish. "But since you're the one suggesting this, I figure you've already thought it through, right? I trust your judgment."

"Heh," Juno chuckles lightly. "You always dodge danger like it's a game of tag. But sometimes, facing it head-on solves everything way faster. Don't worry about it."

Think Heather's just been coasting these past few years? She hasn't grown at all hanging out with us? And you're not half-bad yourself—you've helped us all hit financial freedom.

Here in the States, money fixes everything. If Heather adopts Tatiana, there won't be a single hitch."

"That's 'cause you guys trust me," Adam says with a modest smile.

Back in college, he'd started investing his writing royalties. Over the years, the returns were insane. Juno, his best friend with her near-superpower of reading people, spotted the ace up Adam's sleeve and didn't hesitate. She and Karen threw most of their cash into his investments. Later, she even convinced her dad to mortgage their house—Karen followed suit, of course.

The U.S. stock market's been soaring, and pretty much anything they bought made money—especially since Adam was picking high-tech internet stocks. After a few massive gains, Juno didn't wait for Adam to say anything. She pulled out their initial investment plus some profit, paid off her dad's mortgage with a sweet chunk of interest (he was over the moon), and kept a few hundred grand for living expenses. The rest? Back into Adam's long-term investment plan.

Her calm, collected vibe—never too cocky, always knowing when to step back—left Adam floored.

Money messes with people's heads, you know? When Adam first got into stocks and saw those big spikes, he was hooked—checking them obsessively every day. Kinda like his old days as a struggling writer, refreshing his stats ten times a day to see how many likes or follows he'd snagged. But stocks? Way more of a rush. It wasn't until his net worth kept climbing and he got numb to it that he finally shook off that trap.

Juno, though? Cool as a cucumber from start to finish. Adam's got nothing but respect for that! 🙌

Then there's Heather.

During those tender years with her, Juno had nudged her too. With Juno's charm and killer persuasion skills, Heather—broke at the time—waited till she inherited the estate and farm. Then she mortgaged the farm, got some cash, and jumped into Adam's investment train. Four years later, the farm's paid off, and she's financially free. Same old Juno trick: keep a fat stack for daily life, let the rest ride the market's waves, and don't touch it unless Adam says so or cash runs low.

Caroline's more cautious. She's always spending, mostly relying on donations. Adam's her biggest donor—charity's a tax write-off, after all. Better to give it to Caroline to help people than let Uncle Sam fund overseas chaos, right? Even just a slice of Adam's income each year keeps the Ellis Charity Fund running and growing.

"But you still haven't said how Heather would deal with Tatiana passing someday," Adam circles back.

"First off, Heather's got enough cash to give Tatiana the best care money can buy," Juno says confidently over the phone. "Her lifespan's as secure as it gets.

Science and tech have been booming these years—medicine too. In a few more, there might be a cure for AIDS or some breakthrough therapy. Tatiana's odds of dying young are slim.

And even if the worst happens, yeah, Heather'd be crushed for a while. But you're not a corpse, dude! That's when you swoop in, cheer her up, and shake off her sadness. Trust me, with you around, she'll bounce back fast."

"...I'm that big a deal, huh?" Adam says with a wry laugh.

"No helping it," Juno teases. "You keep running into these obsessive women. Once they lock onto something, good luck changing their minds. The good ones are great, the bad ones are a nightmare. Lucky for you, Caroline and Heather are the great kind. You should be grinning ear to ear!" 😊

"Aren't you one of them too?" Adam can't help but laugh.

"Don't think I haven't noticed—the biggest obsessive here's probably you! You're the reason I'm surrounded by awesome crazies. I haven't seen a bad one in ages."

"Am I?" Juno asks, still laughing.

"Aren't you?" Adam's in a good mood, playing along.

Late at night, hundreds of miles apart, they mess around on the phone like kids with a repeat-after-me game—yep, tackling life's big questions...

Chapter 605: Here Comes the Wild Move

The next day.

At the medical center.

Emergency room.

"Caucasian male, gunshot wound to the left shoulder. Three dead on the scene, multiple injured. Five more victims are on their way."

An ambulance rolled up, and the paramedic rattled off the details fast.

"That's brutal—what happened?" a nurse couldn't help but ask.

"The shooter was a former employee of this restaurant. The casualties were all staff, plus an unlucky couple dining there who got caught in the crossfire," the paramedic explained.

"Did they catch the guy?" the nurse pressed.

"Nope."

The paramedic took off after that, and the news spread through the hospital like wildfire.

"Adam, I heard Princeton Teaching Hospital has a heart for Danny. Dr. Burke's heading out to get it?" Liz burst in, practically glowing with excitement.

"Yeah," Adam glanced at her and nodded. "He's pretty lucky."

"Pretty lucky? He's super lucky!" Liz beamed. "He's one of God's favorites!"

"Heh." Adam couldn't hold back a chuckle.

God's favorites? Even the Son of God had it rough sometimes—total nonsense.

"You don't agree?" Liz pouted, clearly annoyed.

"I'm laughing 'cause you've got nothing better to do, huh?" Adam dodged her question. "I heard the ER's packed. You're not pitching in?"

"Five patients came in—four are fine, but one died en route," Liz explained. "Meredith and the others can handle it."

"So four dead total?" Adam frowned.

"Yup," Liz nodded. "Word is the shooter was a fired employee. Got canned by the manager, came back for revenge, stormed in, and just started blasting. His real target—the manager—only took a shoulder hit. Guy was bragging earlier about how 'quick' and 'sharp' he was, dodging behind a cabinet the second he saw the shooter. Used to be an athlete or something."

"Neither of them are saints," Adam shook his head.

The manager, gloating while four were dead and four injured? You could guess what a jerk he was day-to-day—enough to spark this kind of tragedy over a firing. Adam could practically picture his smug little face. But compared to him, the shooter? Pure evil. Even if every coworker had it out for you, that random couple dining there didn't deserve it.

And sure, guns are everywhere in the U.S.—but it's relative. In rural backwoods, everyone's packing, some even with personal arsenals. In a big city like New York? Plenty of folks never touch a gun. Like Chandler and the gang—didn't even hold one 'til Phoebe dated a cop and they got curious. Someone who could grab a gun that easily and rack up a body count? Probably not a good guy to begin with.

"Mm-hmm," Liz nodded in agreement, then her eyes lit up. "Adam, Danny's surgery is coming up—he's getting a new heart! Can I tag along with you for his checkup?"

"Nope!" Adam shot her down without hesitation.

"Why not?" Liz's eyes widened in disbelief.

"Don't mess with Danny's zen," Adam said, giving her a look like a monk eyeing a temptress. "Until it's a done deal, how do you know this heart's a sure thing? Remember last time—how hyped he was, only to crash when it fell through?"

"This time it'll work!" Liz insisted, her gaze fierce.

"Stop!" Adam waved her off. "There's this thing called 'jinxing it' and another called 'setting yourself up to fail.' For Danny's sake, zip it."

"..." Liz glared at him, fuming, after he explained the terms.

"Actually, I've been wondering something," Adam said, seeing she wasn't budging. Time for the big guns. "Liz, what's really most important to you? Shouldn't it be your career? You've said it yourself—a girl from a trailer park, you clawed your way up. But the way you're acting? Doesn't match. Forget almost tanking your career over Danny—while Cristina and the others are grinding to improve their skills, what are you doing? And don't you dare say it's about love~"

Liz froze, stunned. Especially at that last line—Adam's tone and expression hit her like a truck, screaming: You ditched love back then, told others to do the same, didn't even care about family—do you even believe in it now?

"You jerk!" Liz trembled with rage, spat the words, covered her mouth, and stormed off.

In the ward:

"Ever since I started listening to you, Dr. Duncan, my luck's turned around," Danny said, grinning ear to ear.

"Don't get cocky," Adam warned. "We can't say for sure this'll pan out. Gotta be ready for the long haul—remember?"

"Who's got that kind of patience?" Danny gave a wry smile.

On the rooftop:

Dr. Burke grabbed the organ transport cooler and headed for the medical helicopter.

"Dr. Burke!" Liz chased after him. "Take me with you, please!"

Seeing him hesitate, she pleaded with puppy-dog eyes. "I'm begging you."

"Get in," Burke sighed, softer than Adam would've been.

At Princeton Teaching Hospital:

"Danny's luck is unreal—two hearts that match him at the same time!" Liz was buzzing with excitement.

Five minutes later:

"Patient's deceased. The heart's no good," Dr. Burke announced.

"No!" Liz let out a pained cry, then bolted for the next operating room, where another heart transplant was prepped.

"Stop!" she shouted at the female surgeon about to make the incision.

"What'd you say?" The doctor shot her a sideways glance.

"We need to talk this over," Burke said, catching up. "The transplant list isn't clear-cut—your patient might not outrank mine, so technically, that heart's not yours yet."

And then the verbal sparring began. Burke and the other doctor, Hahn, were old rivals from Johns Hopkins—first and second in their class, always at odds. Naturally, Burke, the top dog, had the upper hand over his eternal runner-up.

They ended up calling the transplant center to settle it.

"Dr. Hahn's patient ranks 17 seconds ahead of Dr. Burke's," came the verdict.

"No!" Liz blurted out. "It's not just about rank! Seventeen seconds is nothing—practically a tie. We should look at the patients' conditions too!"

"Pfft," Hahn smirked. "Your guy's got an LVAD—he can stroll around the hospital. Mine's still on dobutamine."

"Still on dobutamine? What, is he climbing Everest next?" Burke fired back.

The old classmates went at it again. Liz's heart raced—she knew Burke was holding his own, but Hahn's patient had the edge on paper. In a panic, her brain checked out, emotions took over, and she pulled a wild move.

She slipped her hand into her pocket, secretly dialed Burke's phone with hers.

Brring brring.

Mid-argument, Burke glanced at his ringing phone, slid it across the table to Liz without looking, and kept battling Hahn. For him, this wasn't just about the patient—it was about keeping his second-place rival in check, as always.

Liz's heart leapt. She grabbed the phone, slipped out of the room, hung up her call, and dialed Adam from Burke's phone.

"Dr. Burke?" Adam's voice came through. "Everything going smooth?"

"Adam, listen to me!" Liz growled. "This time, you have to help me..."

Chapter 606 - 604: Shut Up, You Idiot!

Medical Center.

Adam's brow furrows the second he hears this. His gut says no way, but since he's still clueless about the full story, he holds back. "Just spit it out—what's going on?"

"Two hearts..."

Liz quickly spills the beans, then pleads, "Dr. Burke's fighting for the last heart right now, but it's looking grim. We've gotta do something to get it for Danny. I need you to make Danny's condition tank—now..."

"Stop right there!"

Adam cuts her off with a shout. "Give the phone to Dr. Burke!"

"You won't even help me with this little thing?"

Liz freezes. "It's a piece of cake for you! I know you can do it. Danny's your patient too..."

"Shut up, you moron!"

Adam snaps, letting her have it. "Have your hormones fried your brain? You're seriously saying this crap out loud like it's no big deal—a 'little favor'?"

Do you even get what happens if you pull this off?

You're talking about faking records to scam a heart from the transplant center.

If they catch you, you're toast—fired on the spot..."

"I'm not scared of getting fired!"

Liz growls stubbornly. "I don't care!"

"I know! And I don't either!"

Adam laughs coldly. "But who pays for your little tantrum? Me, Dr. Burke, the whole hospital—and the patient you'd be stealing that heart from!"

Leave me and Burke out of it for a sec.

If this scandal blows up, the hospital gets blacklisted by the transplant center!

Know what that means?

No approval, no cooperation—heart and organ transplants here? Done. The best cardio-thoracic department in the medical center? Half-dead!

The hospital's ranking tanks, reputation and resources gone—poof!

How many people work here?

You'd be smashing everyone's rice bowl!

And that patient you'd be screwing over with your fake data?

Their life doesn't matter?

Don't give me that '17 seconds earlier doesn't count' garbage—it's theirs by right!

Now, hand the phone to Dr. Burke immediately!"

Beep beep beep.

Liz, chewed out by Adam, knows he's not helping her. She hangs up and switches off Dr. Burke's phone in one swift move.

Even after Adam laid out the brutal consequences, she's still dead-set on getting that heart for Danny.

Yup—she's not giving up.

"George, you're my best friend, right?"

She dials her BFF, George O'Malley. "You've got to help me this time..."

Back at the Medical Center.

Adam's face is dark after the hang-up. He storms toward Danny's room, redialing Dr. Burke's number.

Phone's off.

"You're not stopping till you hit rock bottom, huh?"

Adam starts plotting how to handle this mess.

First: Liz can't succeed.

Second: This can't go public.

It's a straight-up scandal. Even if she doesn't pull it off, leaking it risks the blacklist anyway.

For a good while, the hospital's interests are tied to his own—his whole "save lives, extend lifespan" plan's on the line.

This time, he's not just gonna mutter "Saint Liz" under his breath and let it slide with a laugh.

Outside Danny's room, he spots George O'Malley pacing nervously. Adam's expression goes ice-cold. He grabs George, drags him to a corner, and hisses, "Your brain turn to mush too? Do you even know what you're doing?"

"I don't want to, but Liz..."

George looks torn.

"Liz is done for," Adam sneers. "And now you're out too!"

"Adam..."

George tries to speak.

"Get lost—now!"

Adam points, raising his voice.

George has never seen Adam like this. Whatever he was gonna say gets swallowed up, and his legs move on autopilot in the direction Adam's pointing. A few steps in, he actually feels relieved.

Deep down, he knows better.

How could he even think about doing this?

If Liz hadn't guilt-tripped him hard, he wouldn't have even shown up.

"Chief, we've got a situation," Adam says, dialing Surgical Chief Richard Webber.

After he said no, Liz still roped George into faking data. She's lost it.

No guilt holding him back now—he spills everything to the chief.

Richard's stunned. An intern this reckless? Then the rage hits.

This is his hospital!

This is his surgical department!

Princeton Teaching Hospital.

Liz pulls herself together and steps into the meeting room.

"Dr. Burke, Mr. Duquette's condition is worsening."

"What?"

Dr. Burke jolts. "What's happening?"

"Dr. Duncan's resuscitating him," Liz says through gritted teeth. "It's not looking good. That qualifies him for priority transplant, right?"

"If that's true, then Danny Duquette's now a 1A candidate for the heart transplant. He'd jump ahead of Dr. Hahn's patient," Dr. Burke says, though something feels off.

"That's nonsense!"

Dr. Hahn snaps. "I'm out of here."

"Dr. Hahn!"

The transplant center rep's voice crackles through the always-on conference line. "If Dr. Burke requests an ultrasound and BNP heart failure test to confirm the patient's condition, we'll allow it."

"That'll take at least an hour!"

Dr. Hahn's pissed.

"Is the donor stable?" the rep asks.

"Yeah," Dr. Hahn admits reluctantly.

"Then Dr. Burke has one hour for those tests," the rep decides, finalizing it.

Call ends.

Dr. Burke and Liz step out of the meeting room.

"Liz, where's my phone?"

Dr. Burke holds out his hand. "I need to talk to Dr. Duncan myself and get the rundown."

"Preston," Liz says, handing it over, calling him by his first name. Her eyes are begging.

Dr. Burke pauses, thrown off, a bad feeling creeping in. "Liz, what did you do?"

When he finds out, his face turns to stone.

Adam thought of the fallout—how could he, the cardio-thoracic chief, not?

"Preston, Danny needs this heart..."

Liz pleads.

Dr. Burke glances around, sees no one, pulls Liz into an empty meeting room, shuts the door, restarts his phone, and calls Adam.

"Dr. Duncan."

"Dr. Burke, the chief wants to talk to you."

"Burke, what's going on over there?" Richard asks, frantic.

"Relax," Dr. Burke says, knowing what's got Richard spooked. "The transplant center gave us an hour for tests. They didn't say anything else. We're doing this by the book. If Danny's condition's really tanked, we get the heart. If not, we step back."

"No!" Liz cries out.

"Shut up, Liz Stevenson!" Richard barks. "You don't get a say here. Burke, you know how bad this could get. No leaks."

"I know," Dr. Burke says gravely.

"Liz, stop this nonsense!" Adam jumps in. "Keep this up, ruin the medical center's rep, and I swear—even if Danny gets a new heart, no decent surgeon will touch him. You hear me?"

She's a lunatic right now, and Adam's too far to stop her physically. Intimidation's his only shot.

"Me too!" Richard piles on.

"Don't believe I can make that stick? Think about the chief's pull in the medical world," Adam says icily. "Now sit there quietly, not a word, and come back with Dr. Burke in an hour!"

"You guys!"

Liz wants to cry.

"Think about what you're doing," Adam says, stone-cold. "You're trying to save Danny, not kill him. He's got two years—plenty of chances. You really gonna blow it all on this doomed shot and leave him with no top surgeons later?

And don't tell me any random doc can do a heart transplant with the same results."

"I messed up. I'm done. I'll do what you say—let's leave it to fate," Liz sobs.

"Preston, keep this under wraps," Richard stresses again before hanging up.

"I'm firing Liz Stevenson!" Richard yells. "She's gone!!!"

"Agreed," Adam nods.

Liz has zero medical ethics left.

If they don't sack her for this, it'd be some cheesy medical drama plot. 😏

Chapter 607: That's Karma for You!

At Princeton Teaching Hospital:

"Dr. Stevenson," Burke said, noticing Liz's shaky mood. Worried she'd tip off Dr. Hahn if she stuck around, he frowned. "Head back to the hospital. We don't need you here anymore."

"I..." Liz trailed off. After Adam and Chief of Surgery Richard had laid into her with threats, she'd finally cooled off a bit. But now, seeing Burke's dismissive vibe, she felt a pang of bitterness.

She knew what she'd done was messed up. She knew she shouldn't have. But somehow, like she was possessed, she'd gone and done it anyway—pushed herself to this crazy point. For Danny? Maybe not entirely.

Lost in her thoughts, she followed Burke's orders, left Princeton, and took a cab back to the medical center.

At the medical center. Emergency room.

The couple who'd been caught in the earlier shooting stood face-to-face, gazing into each other's eyes with sappy affection.

"Huh? You two made up?" Cristina walked in, totally thrown off by the scene.

Earlier, when the shots rang out, the guy had panicked hard—grabbed his girlfriend and used her as a human shield. A bullet ripped through her right arm and still hit him. Naturally, she'd been pissed, cussing him out nonstop after they got to the hospital.

But this dude? Total coward on the inside, yet his mouth wouldn't quit. "It was instinct, babe, out of my control! You know I love you. We both got hit—that bullet went through you into me. It's a sign we're meant to be together forever..."

Sweet talk actually worked. He'd smoothed it over.

"I'm giving him another chance," the girlfriend said with a smile.

"I told her she didn't have to," the guy said, dripping with fake humility. "Today changed me. This bullet's gonna remind me to always do right by my babe."

"That's it?" Cristina stared, dumbfounded.

"I chose forgiveness. It feels so much better than anger," the woman said, all self-righteous and teary-eyed.

Cristina just rolled her eyes and gave up talking.

Next room over:

"I'll give you a few days off," the sleazy manager said, his shoulder freshly bandaged. He noticed a young employee nearby, looking wrecked over losing a friend in the shooting, and decided to play the "compassionate" card.

"I'll talk to the boss, make sure you keep your job. Getting shot wasn't your fault—well, not mine either, right? I didn't pull the trigger, ha!" Seeing the kid's head drop, eyes burning with anger, the manager got nervous—last thing he needed was another shooting. "It was Pete who fired... Look, people love blaming management, but we did our best..."

He slinked off awkwardly. The reconciled couple trailed behind him.

Bang bang bang!

Bang bang bang!

As the manager stepped outside the hospital, gunfire erupted again.

The couple, lagging a few steps behind, didn't make it out. The guy bolted for a corner, instinctively yanking his girlfriend in front of him as a shield—again.

"We're done. Completely done," she said calmly, dodging to the corner too. Once safe, she stared at her trembling boyfriend. Sweet words couldn't save him this time.

"Gunshots!" Adam's face tightened.

"Dr. Duncan, stay here and keep watch," Chief Richard said, already moving to check it out.

"Chief, let me go," Adam cut in. "You stay and keep an eye on things—make sure Liz doesn't pull anything else. I've got this. I'm better suited for it."

"Alright," Richard nodded. He remembered Adam surviving shootings and even a bomb scare—his weird knack for sensing danger gave Richard some confidence. Plus, compared to gunfire, he was more worried about the fallout from a scandal.

Adam sprinted off.

When he got there, the staff were still cowering inside, too scared to step out.

And who could blame them? The morning's shooting left four dead, four injured, and the gunman got away. Now this? Everyone's first thought was the same: that psycho tracked them down to finish the job. No one doubted how ruthless he was—who'd risk sticking their neck out? The shots had been ringing for a while, and still, no one moved.

Adam didn't get any bad vibes, figuring the shooter was gone. Still, he scoped things out carefully. Outside the hospital, three bodies lay sprawled. One guy, gun in hand, had blown his own head off—brain matter everywhere. That had to be the shooter.

"Shooter's dead," Adam called out, stepping forward. He checked the pulse of the guy with the bandaged shoulder—yep, the sleazy manager. Dead as a doornail.

Then he looked at the third body, off by the roadside.

"Liz!" Adam froze when he saw her.

There she was, shot in the right shoulder, already in shock. Who else could it be?

"Get a stretcher, now!" Adam ripped open her shirt, pressing one hand to stop the bleeding while the other started CPR. Good thing he was strong—one hand was enough to get it done.

Liz's dazed eyes slowly refocused. Adam brought her back, hoisted her onto the stretcher, and rushed her to the ER.

After X-rays, neurosurgery chief Dr. Shepherd got called in. The bullet was lodged in her spine—super dangerous spot.

"Adam, how's Liz?" George intercepted him.

"The bullet's stuck in her spinal nerves. Even ignoring possible complications from the gunshot, surgery to remove it could easily damage those nerves," Adam explained. "Even Dr. Shepherd isn't 100% sure he can pull it off."

"She can't be a doctor anymore?" George stood there, stunned.

As a doctor himself, he knew what that meant.

"Could be a silver lining," Adam said coolly. "Better than getting fired. If her arm doesn't fully recover and she can't hold a scalpel, it's a solid excuse—no one can talk smack."

"She's in this state, and you're still ragging on her?" George's face flared with anger.

"Am I wrong?" Adam shot back, ice-cold. "What she did—was that human? Zero ethics! Dragging you and me down with her, no regard for friendship! We've worked our asses off to get here. You really wanna throw it all away 'cause she lost her mind out of nowhere?"

"But..." George flushed, knowing Adam was right but still feeling bad for Liz in her condition.

No helping it—he was that hopeless nice guy. No wonder women flocked to him.

"No buts," Adam cut him off. "You didn't tell anyone what she asked you to do, right? Keep it buried, or you'll be the medical center's biggest screw-up!"

Truth is, Adam didn't know the original timeline—how Liz's recklessness got Burke shot, nearly killed him, and almost cost him his prized surgeon hands. If he did, he'd have added:

"That's karma right there!"

Chapter 608: Feeling Like Death Is the Point!

Medical Center.

Emergency Treatment Room.

"Ahh!"

A pained groan escapes Liz's lips as she slowly opens her eyes.

"You're awake."

Adam's cold face comes into view.

"It hurts so bad!"

Liz doesn't have a second thought—pain's taken over her entire mind.

"You got shot," Adam says flatly. "Bullet went in through your right shoulder and lodged in the nerve cluster near your spine. Dr. Shepherd's prepping for surgery, but he can't guarantee full function in your right hand."

"My right hand..."

Liz's pain ramps up even more.

"Yup, the one you hold a scalpel with—or eat dinner with," Adam says, glancing at the empty doorway. "But don't freak out too much. Even without this mess, you're done holding a scalpel anyway. With Dr. Shepherd's skills, he can probably save most of your arm's function. You'll still be able to eat with it, at least."

"Danny..."

Liz looks at Adam, agony in her eyes.

"He's fine," Adam replies, ice in his voice. "As long as you don't send George to snip his power cord, he'll stay that way."

Oh, and that heart? It's with Dr. Hahn's patient now.

They're probably doing the transplant as we speak.

Word is, he's a good guy—two kids, four and five years old. Been waiting forever for this heart.

Soon, he'll be running around with them, laughing, with a healthy ticker. Happy ending, right?" 😊

"I didn't mean for this, Adam. Can't you understand? I love him..."

Liz isn't sure if she's crying from the pain or the shame of almost wrecking that happy ending Adam just painted.

"I believe that's what you think," Adam says, nodding without a flicker of emotion.

"Dr. Duncan, the OR's ready," a nurse pops in to say.

"Got it."

Adam wheels the gurney toward the operating room.

Inside the OR.

"Okay, tuck in a bit here."

"Alright, I'm moving the bullet out of the nerve cluster now."

Dr. Shepherd's leading the surgery, with Adam assisting, working on Liz.

Beep beep!

The monitor blares an alarm.

"Neutrophil count's dropping!"

"Arterial pressure's down 50%!"

The nurse calls out.

"Did we nick a nerve?"

"I don't see any severed ones."

"Okay, let's test her arm reflexes."

"No response."

"Damn it, try again."

"On it."

"Hell, if I'd cut a nerve, I'd know it."

"Dr. Shepherd, what about a wake-up test?" someone suggests. "Only Liz can tell us if the surgery's messed up her nerves."

"Hmm..."

Dr. Shepherd hesitates. "Waking her up now? I'm worried she won't handle the pain."

Her arm's sliced open—muscles and nerves exposed. Without anesthesia, those raw nerves would scream straight to her brain. She'd be in absolute hell.

"But Liz is a doctor," Adam says, all professional. "This is her whole life on the line. Let her decide."

With his sharp eyes, he's more certain than Shepherd that no nerves got hit.

But, hey! 😊

Medical science still knows squat about the human body sometimes. And he's just an intern—his view isn't the whole picture. What if some microscopic nerve got snipped, beyond even the magnifying glasses?

Real-world results are the only truth that matters.

Playing it safe's his style.

He's not about to take the blame for deciding Liz's fate.

That's on her.

Yup, that's the deal!

"Fair enough," Dr. Shepherd nods.

If it were him—or any top-tier surgeon in his shoes—they'd wake the patient without blinking. For their career's sake.

A renowned doc losing the hand that wields the knife? That's a lifetime of misery.

This wake-up pain? Peanuts in comparison.

But for a regular doc—especially a pretty ex-model like Liz—Shepherd's gut says she might not be up for it.

It's like when Sheldon whines about not being at his peak, and Penny shrugs it off. He shuts her down with, "You wouldn't get it—you've never been at the peak."

Top surgeons are Sheldons—near the pinnacle, terrified of the fall.

Regular docs? Pennys—never hit that height, don't feel the sting, maybe don't even notice.

Would Sheldon care if Penny couldn't act or lost her smarts? Nah, it wouldn't cross his mind.

Shepherd sees Liz the same way—not as extreme as Sheldon with Penny, but still. Subconsciously, he figures being a doctor doesn't mean as much to her as it does to them.

She's the chick who posed for sultry medical photoshoots, after all.

Kinda tarnishes the whole noble profession vibe.

Female docs save lives with skill, not by flashing skin for the masses.

Plenty of folks at the hospital despised Liz from day one for that. Even now, no one—especially the women—bonds with her. That's a big reason why.

Liz knows it too.

Back when Meredith and Shepherd were dating and Liz found out, she lost it—tearing into Meredith, saying she stole all the good surgeries through the back door, that Meredith shouldn't toss away the professional respect Liz craved but couldn't earn.

Liz, the heartthrob model turned med center doc—her first impression stuck like glue.

No one respects her professionally—why would they think the job matters to her?

"Does Liz have a partner or a best friend?" Dr. Shepherd asks. "When she wakes up, she'll need someone to keep her focused through the pain so we can test if her arm's paralyzed."

"She's got something going with Danny Duquette, but he's stuck in bed with a left ventricular assist device—can't come," Adam explains. "How about George O'Malley? He's her best bud."

"Alright, page Dr. O'Malley ASAP," Shepherd tells the nurse.

A few minutes later.

George scrubs in, looking nervous as hell once he hears what's up.

"O'Malley, when she wakes up, you'll call her back, talk to her, keep her focused on you to dull the pain. Then follow our cues to test her arm's nerve response. Got it?" Shepherd confirms.

"I-I'll try my best," George stammers, crouching by Liz's side.

Shepherd signals the anesthesiologist to cut the drugs and start waking her.

"She's coming to," the seasoned anesthesiologist says.

"George, get ready!" Adam warns.

"Liz, Liz, it's George—wake up, open your eyes, hey, hey..."

George's voice pulls her back. Liz's eyes flutter open, and then she's shaking like crazy.

The unbearable pain hits so hard, Adam wonders if she'll bounce off the table and hit the ceiling. He and the nurses have to pile on to hold her down.

"Ughhh, cough cough..."

With a tube in her mouth, Liz can't scream. Her wild thrashing gets pinned by Adam and the crew, and all she can manage are muffled whimpers and coughs.

Chapter 610: That's Brutal!

At the medical center.

Operating room.

"George, talk to her—keep her focused on you!" Dr. Shepherd barked.

"Y-Yes, yes," George stammered, shaken by Liz's grim state. He followed orders on autopilot, leaning close to her ear, locking eyes with her. "Liz, it's George. Look at me. Can you hear me? Calm down, calm down, calm down."

"There's a complication now, but we can fix it. We need you to move your right fingers. You can do it—focus, move your right hand. Come on, you've got this!" Dr. Shepherd directed from the side, while George echoed it softly in her ear.

"Pain... pain..."

Amid the double dose of encouragement, Liz's voice—inside and out—kept repeating that one word.

"She's passed out from the pain," the anesthesiologist noted.

"Should we keep doing the wake-up test?" Adam asked.

George whipped around, staring at Adam in disbelief, his voice cracking. "She's in this much pain, and you want to keep going?!"

"I get it," Adam said, cool as ever. "But this is her hand—her scalpel hand. Are you sure you can decide for her to risk a lifetime of pain and give up now?"

"I..." George choked, stuck.

How could he make that call for her?!

"She doesn't have the grit..." Dr. Shepherd shook his head, ready to call it quits.

"I think we should give her one more shot," Adam said, dead serious. "Wake her up, ask if she wants to push through. If she says no, we stop. Otherwise, none of us can take that responsibility. George, don't look at me like that. If you're willing to own it, say so—we'll follow your lead. If not, it's her choice. She's in agony, I know, but we're only losing a moment of pity. She could lose her whole future!"

"George?" Dr. Shepherd wavered, glancing at him.

In the U.S. medical system, doctors are drilled from med school to follow protocol and dodge liability. Especially with a colleague's entire career on the line, Shepherd wasn't about to shoulder that burden.

"I—I can't decide for Liz..." George mumbled. He was just her guy-bestie, no backbone for this. Even if he suspected Adam was messing with her, he couldn't muster a real fight. Adam's logic was airtight.

"Then it's settled," Dr. Shepherd said, slamming the gavel.

"George, if you really care about her, figure out your words. When she wakes up, get her answer fast—keep her suffering short," Adam added kindly.

"Right, right," George nodded, shooting Adam a puzzled look. Was he wrong to doubt him? Was Adam just being objective?

This was the OR—pain or not, they had plenty of ways to bring Liz back.

"AHHH!!!"

Her eyes snapped open, focusing again, followed by a gut-wrenching scream. George's chubby face hovered over her, explaining what was happening, urging her to decide.

"Liz, yes or no?"

"N... o..."

She understood and made her choice. Not everyone's got the guts to endure that kind of torment. All she wanted was to pass out and escape the pain.

"Dr. Johnson!" Dr. Shepherd caught her answer and turned to the anesthesiologist. "Put her back under, now!"

"On it."

The anesthesiologist jumped in, and soon Liz was out cold again. The OR went quiet.

"Man, what a shame," Adam sighed.

Everyone couldn't help but glance at him.

"If it were me, I'd keep testing—even if it hurt a million times worse," Adam said, totally serious.

"Same here," Dr. Shepherd nodded in agreement.

"Being a doctor isn't everything," George pushed back.

"Then you're not devoted enough," Adam replied, shaking his head. "When you truly love something, you wouldn't say that. But hey, it's good news too."

"Good news?" George frowned.

"Yeah, it means Liz isn't that devoted either," Adam explained. "If this surgery ends badly, it won't crush her as much. Being a doctor isn't her whole life—or yours."

In the original timeline, Burke—screwed over by Liz's recklessness—got woken up mid-surgery too. He endured insane pain, forcing his fingers to move, proving to Shepherd his nerves still worked. For a top-tier surgeon like Burke, no amount of pain would stop him—it was his everything.

Liz's selfishness nearly destroyed that.

This isn't some fantasy drama with magic or Kamar-Taj. A crippled Burke couldn't pull a Doctor Strange and fix himself with spells. Strange hit rock bottom—lost everything, even drove off his loyal girlfriend with his post-trauma temper. Cristina, obsessed with prestige, wasn't that kind of ride-or-die. If Burke hadn't toughed it out and worked with Shepherd, laying the groundwork for recovery, he'd have been toast.

Adam didn't know any of that. If he did, he wouldn't have told George to keep it short—he'd probably have straight-faced suggested waking Liz up again after she passed out...

Of course, that's just a thought. If he'd pushed that hard, even softie George would've begged Shepherd to skip the wake-up and just operate.

The surgery pressed on.

Unsure if Liz's arm was paralyzed, Shepherd played it safe, keeping things conservative.

"How's Stevenson?"

The second it wrapped, the Chief of Surgery summoned Adam. Burke was there too, back from Princeton, along with George—another insider to the mess.

"We don't know yet if the nerves are damaged..." Adam briefed them.

"Hm." Chief Richard's face was stone, giving nothing away. He scanned the room and dropped his voice. "Now, let's talk about how we handle Stevenson faking records to steal a heart..."

