

TV Show 651

Chapter 651: Everyone Comes to Adam for Help

At the Medical Center

The test results came back just as Adam had diagnosed: Meredith wasn't pregnant—she had appendicitis.

While waiting for the next steps, Meredith couldn't handle the pain anymore and begged Cristina to give her some morphine.

And then... she turned into a giddy little fool. 😊

Not only did she blurt out to Finn and Dr. Shepherd—who'd come to check on her—that she, as a "mature woman," wanted both of them, but she also spilled the beans about her messy history with George. If George hadn't bolted so quickly back then, the even juicier (and way more awkward) details might've come out—enough to make everyone squirm!

The room got super awkward, fast. Like, cringe-level explosion. 💣

And there she was, the only one giggling like an idiot.

This girl, just to escape the pain for a bit, knowing full well what morphine does, still went for it—at work, no less!

After Adam performed the appendectomy and the drugs wore off, Meredith woke up clear-headed. Seeing both guys by her side, she flashed a blissful smile. 😊

It was straight out of her dreams!

But—plot twist—her dream didn't last more than a few seconds. Dr. Shepherd gave her and Finn his heartfelt blessing (practically breaking into song):

"The love you want, I can't learn to give. Breaking up is just another kind of clarity. My final act of love is letting go."

Translation: "Love whoever you want, but I'm out, bye!" 🙄☐

Meredith was dumbfounded.

She'd totally messed this up.

Talk about a complete disaster—egg cracked, chicken gone!

Dr. Shepherd walked off with a smirk, leaving her to stew.

After some serious soul-searching (and a dose of "honesty"), Meredith faced reality. She handed Finn—who'd stuck by her through it all—the good ol' "nice guy" card, broke up with him, and tearfully said goodbye.

Emmm... ☐

She'd finally caught on to Dr. Shepherd's smile. Wanting both of them? Yeah, that was a pipe dream.

A guy like him—Mr. Dreamy—could have women lining up wherever he went. Why would he let her call the shots?

"Dream on, girl!"

Later that Night at the Old Friends Bar

Adam, Matthew, Lily, Ted, and Ted's "perfect" girlfriend, Anna Taylor, were all hanging out, drinking and chatting.

The reason they were at Old Friends Bar? Barney's banned from the place.

For weeks now, Ted's been meeting Anna here almost every night. He's dead-set on keeping Barney from sabotaging their relationship.

Adam doesn't come by often—this was his first proper meeting with Anna in weeks.

"Emilia? Oh, I remember her! Such a pretty little girl!" Anna's eyes lit up as she spoke. "How's she doing lately?"

"Not great," Adam said, shaking his head. He explained how Emilia's mom had passed away not long ago.

Anna froze, speechless for a while.

"You okay, Anna?" Ted asked, worried.

"I'm fine," she forced a smile. "It's just... the second piece of bad news I've heard today."

"What was the first?" Lily asked, concerned.

Being a fellow junior-grade teacher and connected through Ted, she really liked Anna.

"My old piano teacher, Mr. Hutton, passed away today," Anna said quietly. "His funeral's in three days."

"Oh, I see," Ted nodded. "I thought... Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

Adam shot him a quick, thoughtful glance.

"It's not exactly something worth bringing up," Anna shrugged. "It's not happy news."

"But that's why you should talk about it," Lily chimed in. "Couples aren't just there for the good times—they're supposed to support each other through the tough stuff too."

"Exactly!" Ted grabbed Anna's hand. "You've got to tell me stuff like this from now on, okay? It'll feel better if you do."

"Okay," Anna nodded, but her expression said she wasn't quite there yet.

Adam and Lily exchanged a look—they both saw it.

Still, they didn't say anything.

Ted and Anna had only been together a few weeks, from meeting to falling hard. It's normal she'd hold back a little.

Stuff like this? It just takes time. When the connection's deep enough, it'll happen naturally—no need to force it.

A bit later, Anna got a call and had to leave early. Ted doesn't have a car, so he didn't offer to drive her.

Once she was gone, Ted's face just... dropped.

"Nooo~!" Lily gasped instinctively.

"What's wrong?" Matthew asked, confused.

"Ted, you can't keep doing this!" Lily glared at him, eyes wide.

"Doing what?" Ted blinked, totally lost.

"Don't play dumb with me!" Lily snapped. "One second you're all lovey-dovey with a girlfriend, and the next, you make that face and dump her! I'm not letting you do this again!"

God, Anna's an elementary school teacher—she's got kids to inspire! You can't hurt her like this. She's the 'perfect' girl you've been searching for! What's your problem now?!"

"..."

Ted's mouth twitched. He was speechless as Lily ranted passionately. Only when she finally calmed down did he mutter, "When did I say I was doing that? Those were just... one-offs."

"So that's not what you meant?"

Lily paused, seeing Ted's earnest look. Realizing she'd jumped the gun, she cringed.

"I swear, it's not," Ted said, exasperated.

"It's not Lily's fault," Adam stepped in with a grin. "For a split second, I thought the same thing. And let's be real—it's not exactly a 'one-off' with your track record. We can't help but wonder."

"Exactly!" Lily jumped back in. "You've got too much history for us not to overthink it! Wait—if that's not it, why'd you make that face and freak me out?"

She pouted, clearly annoyed.

"Well..." Ted hesitated.

"Something to do with Anna's mood?" Adam asked, smiling. "When she mentioned the two pieces of bad news, you seemed relieved. So what did you think was bothering her before that?"

Lily and Matthew turned to Ted, curious.

"Uh..." Ted squirmed, clearly uncomfortable.

"Come on! We're your best friends—what can't you tell us?" Lily prodded.

"Fine, but don't spread this around," Ted sighed. "I was actually gonna ask Adam about it. These past few days, Anna's been... off. Nothing like the lovey-dovey vibe we had the first few weeks. She's just... distant, all the time. You get what I mean?"

"Huh?"

Lily didn't catch on at first, but after glancing at the others and seeing their knowing smirks, it clicked. She burst out laughing. "Haha, oh, we get it! Go on—it's not that weird. Why'd you need to ask Adam?"

"It's weirder than you think," Ted said with a wry smile. "She's been like a soulless shell—spacing out all the time. I ask what's wrong, she says 'nothing.' I'm starting to wonder if she wants to break up with me."

"What?!" Lily's jaw dropped.

Who'd have thought that twist was coming? Suddenly, her earlier outburst felt a little awkward.

"So why ask me?" Adam raised an eyebrow, intrigued.

"Well..." Ted's face turned red.

"Oh, I get it," Adam chuckled. "You think it's your fault~"

He gave Ted a teasing once-over, like he was diagnosing him, making Ted avoid Lily and Matthew's gazes.

"You're sure you two were all lovey-dovey the first few weeks?" Adam asked seriously.

"Why do you ask?" Matthew leaned in.

"Just need a baseline," Adam said. "Maybe Anna's always been like this, and Ted was too caught up in the honeymoon phase to notice?"

Ted: "..."

Chapter 652: House: If We're Friends, We're Doing It Together

Medical Center.

Hospital Room.

"Wahhh!"

The young woman, cradling her baby, burst into tears after hearing her husband's words. She'd had no idea about any of this.

"Jude, you're so stupid..." she sobbed, tears streaming down her face.

"No," said Captain Jude, who'd been given morphine and was now basking in a sunny haze. He reached out to wipe her tears, smiling gently. "Being with you and the little one—it's all worth it. You're my home, my happiness."

Adam let out a sigh.

A normal, happy life had been within reach, only to be shattered by someone else's greed and cruelty, exacting such a heavy toll. The risk Captain Jude had taken was no joke. Infection wasn't something to mess around with. Even if they'd caught it in time, amputating his infected right foot to stop the spread, the pain would haunt him for life.

Adam glanced at the silent young lieutenant and turned to leave.

A 19-year-old kid, unable to adjust to civilian life, wanting to escape by amputating a leg to get back to the battlefield? That was just dumb and naive. An irreversible surgery like that—99% chance he'd regret it later. And there'd be no take-backs.

"I'm calling in a war vet," Adam said seriously, dialing Dr. House.

"You met that idiot?" House picked up on it immediately.

After all, someone pulling a stunt like that was hard to forget.

"His wound's infected again," Adam griped. "You're ruthless, man. You know he almost decked you, right?"

"Of course I know," House said, unbothered. "That moron pulls something this stupid without doing his homework and expects me to warn him? How am I supposed to do that? Lay it all out nice and clear? That's illegal, and I'm a law-abiding citizen!"

"You? Law-abiding?" Adam teased.

He said it jokingly, but deep down, he agreed with House. Big decisions like this were on the individual to figure out. Expecting a doctor to cheat the system for you was unrealistic. Only someone like House would even entertain it. Any other doc would've reported it ages ago, and Jude's leg amputation would've been for nothing.

"How's he doing?" House asked, his usual sarcasm in tow. "Chopped off his right foot—feeling all warm and fuzzy now?"

"He's holding up," Adam chuckled. "Wife and kid by his side, high on morphine, spouting heartfelt optimism. But when your name came up, his smile turned into a gritted-teeth grin."

"Idiots sure have a lot of fun," House quipped, rubbing his own bad leg with a venomous sigh.

"That's what you get for being a genius," Adam shot back.

If House weren't so damn smart, a little less perfectionist, a little less proud, he probably wouldn't be limping around solo right now.

"Aren't you a genius too?" House retorted. He didn't know the meme, but he caught the sarcastic vibe instantly.

"I'm good-looking and lucky," Adam said matter-of-factly. "So I've always felt pretty happy."

"Mostly shameless," House jabbed.

"Borrowing your favorite line—everybody lies," Adam laughed. "So when you call me shameless, I'll just take it as you being too proud to outright compliment me. Anyway, last question—I've been dying to know: did you actually fight in the war?"

"Of course I did," House said with a mocking edge. "Start to finish, I'm a bona fide war vet!"

"Start to finish is a stretch," Adam grinned. "But timeline-wise, it checks out. When Jude pegged you as a war vet just by your limp, I laughed—thought it was ridiculous. But then I did the math. You're 46 now. The war ended 25 years ago. If you joined late at 17, you'd have made it—not just barely, either. You could've fought for three or four years. I remember your dad—well, stepdad—was a military guy, pretty high-ranking. Strict as hell, loved a good 'physical persuasion' session. Did he ever 'convince' you to enlist and take up the family trade?"

"..."

House went quiet for a moment. "Oh, he tried his 'convincing,' alright. But I wasn't some hotheaded teen who'd shoot himself in the leg, let it fester, and lose it like that moron. I knew he wasn't my real dad by 12. You think at 17, in full rebel mode, I'd listen to his 'persuasion'?"

"Hard to say. No one knows what you were thinking back then," Adam teased. "Everyone's got their dumb moments. Maybe you weren't as jaded as you are now. But I'm curious—who's your real dad? Next time you see him, tell him thanks from me."

"For what?" House scoffed. "Because you hate soldiers like them, and my bio-dad cuckolded my stepdad to make me, so you want to give him a thumbs-up and say, 'Nice job'?"

"Nah," Adam said, not taking the bait, smiling instead. "I'm just grateful he brought you into existence. You're a legend in medicine. No matter how much of a jerk you are, the field's better with you in it."

"You're full of crap," House said, shaking his head.

"Takes one to know one," Adam laughed.

"Game's on tomorrow night—you, me, Wilson. You in?" House offered.

"I'll pass," Adam declined. "Wouldn't want to crash your date."

"I knew your 'happiness' talk was bullshit!" House griped.

"It's because I'm honest that I'm saying no," Adam chuckled. "Between hot women and medicine, you think I'd spend my night with two old single dudes? You'd say no too, wouldn't you?"

"..."

House had no comeback, then let out a dry laugh.

Fair enough—Wilson was one of a kind.

After a bit more banter, Adam hung up and turned to the approaching young lieutenant. "Still want that amputation?"

"I don't know," the lieutenant said, visibly torn.

"Then figure it out first," Adam said, brushing him off.

A 19-year-old so obsessed with the battlefield probably had plenty of innocent blood on his hands. As long as he didn't drag Adam into it, the kid could do whatever. If Adam were House, he'd have thrown last Halloween's case in the guy's face—the surgeon who wouldn't amputate, so the patient grabbed a chainsaw and did it himself. Actions over words. Too bad Adam wasn't House—he had zero interest in getting tangled up with this kid.

"What's going on?"

Adam walked down the hall and spotted Meredith looking worried, with Christina consoling her.

"It's Derek!" Dr. Montgomery stepped in to explain. "Ugh... the patient died. They saved the baby in her belly, but the husband can't handle it. To him, they could always have another kid, but his wife? She was one of a kind. He'd made it clear—her life came first, no matter what. Derek got too emotional this time, wasn't thinking straight, and made the wrong call. Now the husband's suing him."

Chapter 653: Dreamy Shepherd, Realist Nelson

Medical Center.

A few days later—

"Dr. Duncan..."

The surgical chief stood with hands on hips in front of the OR schedule board, staring at the jam-packed list, irritation bubbling over.

"Dr. Duncan hasn't left the operating room in three days," his secretary piped up, guessing what he was about to say. "He's been going nonstop."

"Ugh."

The chief faltered, then let out a long sigh. "And where's my neurosurgery director? Missing for three days! Even with Adam pulling all-nighters to help, it's been so busy lately—surgeries are piling up.

Damn craniotomies. Used to be mostly heart cases, but now everyone's got brain problems. Looks like we need to beef up neurosurgery."

"Put me on the schedule—I won't let you down," Mark Sloan said, striding over and jumping at the chance.

The chief shot him a look but said nothing.

His eyes did the talking: "You're a plastic surgeon wanting to do a craniotomy? Sure, maybe on me—'cause agreeing to that means my brain's the one with issues."

"I can do craniotomies, Chief," a timid voice chimed in.

The chief, Mark, and the secretary turned to see a middle-aged, balding guy in glasses and a white coat, raising his hand. Facing their stares, he forced a smile—one dripping with bitterness and resignation.

"Schedule Dr. Nelson for the craniotomies," the chief said after a few glances, turning away with a reluctant, helpless expression. As he passed the balding guy, he muttered without looking, "Thanks, John."

"Uh, I'm Jim," the man corrected weakly.

Too bad the chief was already gone—and couldn't care less about getting the name right. Last name was close enough.

"You're new, right?"

Mark stepped up, offering a handshake. "Welcome to New York Medical Center."

"I've been here over a decade," Dr. Jim Nelson said, forcing a smile that quickly faded. His face darkened as he dropped a bombshell: "Before Shepherd swooped in from Boston, I was the neurosurgery director here."

"..."

Mark froze, scrambling to smooth it over. "I'm Mark Sloan, plastics."

"I know," Nelson said with a smirk that didn't reach his eyes. "We've met... three times."

Then he bolted.

Being invisible stung too much.

Back in the day, he'd been a big deal at New York Medical Center. Neurosurgery director—not as flashy as Burke in cardiothoracic, but right behind him. The third-ranking star in surgery.

Then came Dr. Shepherd, Dr. Montgomery, Mark Sloan—all these hotshot docs—plus Adam, Meredith, and Christina, the rising-star residents.

He got shoved to the sidelines.

These people had skills, looks, and scandals. One of them in a hospital? Instant celebrity. But all of them at New York Medical Center? It was like filming a medical soap opera.

Yup, like those pretty-boy, glamorous-doctor shows.

Damn it!

This wasn't normal! Real hospitals, real top docs—they were supposed to be like him: balding, wild-haired, average Joes!

Mark Sloan and his ilk—those freakishly handsome surgeons—met him three times and still thought he was new. Fine, they're arrogant, big egos, whatever.

But what really gutted him? He'd been the neurosurgery director for over a decade, the surgical No. 3—heck, No. 2 before Burke showed up.

Shepherd rolls in, not even two years, and the chief's all about him—heart and soul. Now he can't even get Nelson's name right.

This...

Mark watched the ex-director shuffle off, feeling an odd pang of empathy. He could almost taste Nelson's quiet despair.

It hit too close to home—him, the guy who used to barely glance at people. Shame bubbled up, and he needed to vent.

"Callie, ever heard of Dr. Nelson in neurosurgery?"

He caught the ortho chief resident passing by and flagged her down.

Callie blinked, spaced out for a few seconds, then lit up. "Oh, yeah!"

"Full name?"

Mark tilted his head, eyeing her.

"..."

Callie clammed up.

"You're a chief resident and don't even know the former neurosurgery director's full name?"

Mark ribbed her.

"I know he's Dr. Nelson—that's enough," Callie said with a laugh. "He's decent, but he's just Shepherd's dark, crippled knockoff. You know, a stepping stone."

"Oh, I get it," Mark snapped, heating up. "So because he hasn't published groundbreaking papers, done some famous surgery, or rocked a cool hairstyle, he's not a person?"

"Pretty much," Callie said, thinking it over and nodding seriously.

"..."

Mark had no comeback.

"What's with you?" Callie asked, surprised. "You've been here over a year—never saw you care about him before. Wait, did you even know who he was?"

"Everyone deserves some dignity!" Mark said, face darkening. "Sure, compared to Derek, Nelson's not some standout.

No chiseled looks, perfect bod, killer hair, or smoldering eyes.

Not even close to Derek's skill level.

But we should respect him.

'Cause compared to Adam, we're all Nelson. Respecting him is respecting ourselves!"

"What's his deal?"

Callie watched Mark storm off, totally lost. She grabbed Dr. Bailey passing by. "What's up with him?"

"He's a plastic surgeon with no groundbreaking clinical research to his name," Bailey said dryly. "Mentally, physically—beat up every which way. He's finally feeling what Nelson's been through."

"Huh?"

Callie blinked, then burst out laughing. "Mark Sloan and—ha—Nelson having something in common? Weird stuff happens every year, but this year's wild!"

"Stop laughing," Bailey cut in, frowning. "You're chief resident. The hospital's a madhouse right now—you need to go drag Shepherd back."

"Me?"

Callie shook her head. "I heard he's holed up in that trailer in the woods again. It's filthy—bugs everywhere."

Bailey just stared at her, silent.

"What if Duncan goes instead?" Callie offered, desperate. "He's been in the OR three days straight—he could use a break. Plus, he'd have more pull with Shepherd..."

"You know how slammed the OR is right now, right?" Bailey interrupted. "And Adam's the wrong guy for this. He never screws up—how's he supposed to talk to Shepherd, who's drowning in his mistakes?"

He'd just remind Shepherd not everyone messes up.

You wanna make Shepherd feel worse?"

"Fine, fine," Callie said, no match for Bailey's logic. "I'll go."

Chapter 654: The Horrifying Truth

Long Island, New York.

Mr. Deacon was cruising down the road in a white pickup truck, his face calm as he scanned his surroundings.

Even though Adam was a pro and didn't tail him too closely, Mr. Deacon—practically a war god in his own right—spotted him fast.

So, he floored it, trying to shake Adam off.

A few twists through the streets later, he realized that was a pipe dream.

Switching gears, he bolted toward the outskirts, glancing at Adam in his rearview mirror every now and then.

"Kate, where you at?" Adam asked through his phone. "He's heading for the suburbs."

"Almost there!" Kate replied.

Right as she spoke, Adam's sharp ears picked up the faint whir of helicopter blades closing in fast.

Yup, you guessed it! Kate wasn't messing around—she'd called in a police chopper! 🚁

Mr. Deacon clocked the big trouble overhead and made a snap decision. He veered off the road and plunged straight into the woods.

He wasn't Adam, and that pickup wasn't a sports car. Racing a police helicopter on open roads? Total fantasy.

"Move it!" Adam warned. "He's ducking into the trees!"

His sports car's low chassis wasn't built for forest trails—super inconvenient. But Adam didn't care about dinging it up. With killer eyesight and god-tier driving skills, he was holding his own just fine.

"I see you guys!" Kate shouted.

Next thing Adam knew, the chopper zoomed over his roof, zeroing in on Mr. Deacon's white truck. Kate's voice blared through the police megaphone: "NYPD! Pull over for inspection!"

Mr. Deacon ignored her, weaving deeper into the woods to dodge the helicopter's threat.

"Officer Beckett, he's blowing off your warning. Want me to force him to stop?" Adam asked.

"You up for that?" Kate replied, a little worried.

"Helping the cops is just good citizen duty," Adam said with a grin. 😊

"Alright," Kate said, knowing Adam's skills and personality all too well. She got formal: "Dr. Duncan, suspect's ignoring police orders. You're cleared to try and stop him."

"Got it!"

Adam felt a weird rush of excitement.

Kate, up in the chopper, knew his voice too well. She caught that vibe instantly, cursed under her breath, and felt her face heat up.

"Don't show off! Backup's already closing in—he's not getting away."

"Roger that!" Adam said, spotting flashing police lights in his rearview.

"Here I go!"

He saw his shot. His genius brain ran a split-second simulation of the crash—every calculation locked in. Then he gunned it. The supercar's insane acceleration kicked in, closing the gap in a flash. He nudged the pickup's side—not too hard, not too soft.

The terrain was already tricky, tilting the truck. One wheel hit a rock just as Adam's perfect tap landed. The pickup couldn't hold it together—over it went, sliding sideways until it smashed into a tree and stopped.

"Done!" Adam called out right after the hit. "Get ready to nab him, but watch out—he's dangerous!"

"On it!" Kate replied. She ordered the pilot to hover, dropped a rope ladder, and climbed down like a pro.

Adam hopped out of his car, eyes locked on Mr. Deacon's moves inside the truck.

Kate—looking badass as ever—ran up, gun drawn, and yanked Adam behind her. "Get back! I've got this!"

"How many clips you got?" Adam couldn't help asking.

"Six. Why?" Kate answered, inching closer with her gun up.

"If it gets dicey, empty 'em fast," Adam warned. "I'm dead serious this time."

"I'm the cop here!" Kate shot back. She knew he meant well, but she caught that faint teasing undertone—she'd heard this line from him before.

In the U.S., emptying a clip when danger hits is Cop 101. Some go overboard—blasting through every clip they've got. Empty one, reload, empty another, repeat. It's all about firepower to keep casualties low.

Criminals here can grab guns and ammo like candy. One slip-up, and cops are toast. Plus, unless it's a clean headshot, who knows if a hit suspect can still shoot back?

This ain't a game.

Adam had heard Kate's stories—like that one time they faced a hardcore thug. Multiple cops unloaded clip after clip—over a hundred rounds, turning the guy into Swiss cheese. And guess what? He still didn't drop. In their stunned disbelief, he fired back and took out a cop.

That mess made waves. After that, their precinct brass drilled it into them: danger hits, empty your clip first, and don't stop till the target's down for good.

"NYPD! Hands where we can see 'em—nice and slow!"

Kate and her partner moved in, guns ready, forming a tight combat stance as they closed on the flipped truck.

Backup patrol cars rolled up. Local cops piled out, taking cover behind their doors, guns trained on the scene.

Safety first!

"Come out slow!"

Mr. Deacon didn't resist. Hands up, blood trickling from his forehead, he stepped out with a creepy smile.

Adam was almost disappointed.

For anyone who might threaten him, Adam loved the U.S. police's "empty the clip" philosophy.

Mr. Deacon didn't matter to him.

No Mr. Deacon? Now that mattered.

Guess this guy didn't have the guts of that 30-something fake lolita after all. Shame.

Kate and her partner cuffed him. The local cops confirmed it was safe, then moved in to sweep the truck for evidence.

"Holy shit!"

Adam's jaw dropped when the cops pulled out a satchel and opened it—inside was a fat stack of photos, tons of them dead folks with their eyes wide open. 😬

"What's up?" Kate asked, confused.

"Look!" Adam pointed at the pics. "These are probably his victims."

"No way..." Kate flipped through them—hundreds, way too many to count. Even for a seasoned detective like her, it gave her chills.

"Why?" Adam asked, glaring at the still-smiling Mr. Deacon.

"I'm just helping the world clean out the walking dead," Mr. Deacon said calmly. "They're a waste of air—clueless about life's meaning."

"Even Anna?" Adam snapped. "She was head over heels with my friend!"

"Oh, her?" Mr. Deacon chuckled. "You don't have my gift—you can't see it. Without you butting in, I'd have sent her off peacefully. Pity."

"Why the sedative? Why not just kill her outright?" Adam pressed.

"Everyone deserves a shot at redemption," Mr. Deacon said, cool as ever. "In that life-or-death moment, if she'd figured it out—grasped her own worth, stopped being a waste—she could've come back to the living."

"But if she didn't? Straight to hell.

"Trust me, these walking corpses are all the same. Give 'em a second chance, and not one can figure out what life's worth."

"You buried them alive?!" Adam shouted, piecing it together in horror.

"What?!"

Kate and the others froze, staring at the calm Mr. Deacon, then at the thick stack of photos. Even with all they'd seen, their bodies shook.

This was next-level terrifying. 😱

"Adam, you sure?" Kate asked, dreading the answer.

"Find the latest dead guy with open eyes, crack open his coffin—you'll know," Adam said, his face grim.

Death by live burial—one of the worst ways to go. Straight to hell, alright.

Chapter 655: Adam's Three Thousand Acts of Care

Adam's hunch left Kate chilled to the bone.

And Mr. Deacon's smile? That made her shiver even more.

The officers hauled Deacon away, and Adam drove Kate back, heading toward the medical center to see the one surviving victim.

"Lily, has Anna woken up yet?" Adam asked, handing the phone to Kate to dial while he kept his eyes on the road.

"Not yet," Lily replied, her voice bubbling with relief. "But the anesthesiologist checked her out—she's fine and should wake up soon! How about you? Did you catch him?"

"Don't worry, we got him," Adam said with a grin. "We'll be back soon."

After a quick chat, he hung up.

"Kate, call Chandler for me," Adam said.

"You've got a lot going on, huh?" Kate rolled her eyes.

"Heh," Adam chuckled. "I seem to recall someone liking how busy I keep things~"

"Gross!" Kate spat playfully, but she dialed the number anyway.

"Chandler, where you at? Is Monica with you?" Adam asked.

"I'm at work," Chandler laughed. "Monica's at home, resting up with the baby bump. She's not here. What's up?"

This pregnancy meant the world to Monica. She could've kept working if she wanted—no big deal—but unlike Rachel, who powered through almost to the delivery room (and nearly gave birth at the office), Monica took a different route. After finding out she was pregnant that Thanksgiving, she quit her cushy head chef gig at a fancy restaurant.

She didn't want her baby breathing in all that kitchen smoke and chaos.

Chandler was totally on board. Over the years, he'd made a name for himself in the ad industry he loved—no need to restart from scratch like in some alternate timeline, scraping by and borrowing cash from Joey. Now, his paycheck was solid enough to give Monica and the little one a comfy life, all on his own.

That said, once the baby was born, they both agreed: Monica shouldn't go full-time homemaker. She'd get back to work.

For one, being a chef was a respectable, well-paying job—perfect for giving their kid a good foundation. And two, they'd heard Adam go on about the downsides of stay-at-home life enough times. His stories about his parents' loving partnership really hit home.

"Here's the deal..." Adam's tone turned serious as he filled Chandler in on Mr. Deacon, then warned, "Don't tell Monica about this. She's pregnant—she can't handle the stress. Deacon was her teenage dream guy, and her grandma's funeral went through his place. Keep it under wraps, okay?"

"I knew it!" Chandler yelled. "Every old guy Monica's ever swooned over turns out to be a creep!"

"Enough!" Adam cut him off. "No time for jealousy—that's ancient history! You've got a kid on the way with her now. Your job is to protect them, got it?"

"Got it," Chandler said quickly. "But this is juicy stuff. Every TV station's gonna blast it everywhere—how am I supposed to hide it from her?"

"I've already got it covered," Adam smirked. "First, clue in Rachel and the gang. Especially Joey and Phoebe... Actually, scratch that—they're blabbermouths. You'll just make it worse trying to hush them up. I'll send someone to keep them busy elsewhere.

Monica's parents, relatives, friends—you've gotta drill it into them not to spill. Triple-check it.

TV? Easy fix. I'll have someone 'report' a signal outage for your building—no reception for Monica.

Nearby newsstands? I'll get the papers cleared out so she won't see a thing.

I'm also bringing in a pregnancy expert to hang out with her, keep her focused on baby prep so she doesn't wander around.

After that, I'll tip off some paparazzi to flood the news with spicy celebrity gossip—bury this story fast."

"Adam..." Chandler's voice cracked, touched.

"Don't say a word," Adam laughed. "You guys are my best buds, and that kid in Monica's belly? My godson or goddaughter. This is nothing—just a quick favor."

"This is way more than a 'quick favor,'" Chandler chuckled. "You've already said a mouthful. Thanks, Adam!"

"Just keep an eye on things—that's thanks enough," Adam grinned.

"I will!" Chandler nodded. "Oh, wait—Monica's grandma..."

"Don't worry," Adam reassured him. "It's not like that. His crimes happened outside hospitals. Monica's grandma passed away in the medical center—doctors and nurses triple-checked everything. No mistakes there. Not everyone he handled was a victim, or he'd have been caught ages ago."

"Phew, that's a relief," Chandler exhaled.

Sure, he didn't care about some teenage crush. What did scare him was the thought of Monica's grandma dying unnaturally—cruelly. Monica wouldn't be able to take it.

"You're a little sleazy sometimes, but damn, you're a solid friend," Kate said from the passenger seat after hanging up, genuinely impressed.

To shield a pregnant friend from stress, he'd pulled all these strings. Adam called it "a quick word," but every step was clearly thought out. That kind of care? Worth more than all the resources he'd thrown at it.

"You bet," Adam said smugly. "Chandler, Monica, and I go back eight years. If you and I had eight years of friendship, trust me, I'd do the same for you."

"..." Kate's mouth twitched. "How do you turn every sweet moment into something so crude?"

"There's this wise guy from the East, Zhou Shuren, who said, 'What you see depends on what's in your heart,'" Adam teased. "So, you know~"

Kate just ignored him. She never won these banter battles anyway. She was used to it.

"Kate."

"What?"

"Forget it—serious stuff!"

"..."

"Later, look into the paramedics who handled the call and the patrol doctor who signed off," Adam said, his tone darkening.

"You think they might be in on it?" Kate's face hardened too.

"Yeah," Adam nodded. "Paramedics can mess up—check a pulse, look at pupils, and call a fake death real. Happens all the time.

Patrol docs? They get a report, don't bother checking the scene, and sign the death certificate blind. That's common too.

But hundreds of cases with zero slip-ups? Not one doctor ever showing up to confirm? No one noticing victims drugged into fake deaths?

Something's off.

Funerals aren't cheap—thousands of dollars a pop, easy. Who's to say there's no money changing hands here?"

Kate took a deep breath. "I'll dig into it."

Chapter 656: Hell on Earth

Medical Center.

Anna slowly opened her big, mascara-framed eyes. No more icy morgue, no more cold, grim reaper staring her down.

"Ted, is that you guys?"

"It's us!"

"Really you?"

"Really us, for sure!" 😊

"I'm alive?"

Anna's face scrunched up, confused. "Didn't I... die?"

"What do you remember?" Adam asked.

"I remember waking up in the morgue," Anna said, piecing it together. "The mortician was stitching up a cut on my forehead, telling me I was dead. He even showed me my death certificate.

That's when it hit me—I did get into a car accident last night.

But I was clearly still alive!

He said my soul was just hanging on, and it'd fade soon once my brain cells fully shut down. He was there to 'send me off.'

I didn't buy it! But I couldn't move my body at all.

When I finally could twitch a little, I checked my pulse—nothing. Smacked my arm on the table—no pain.

Maybe I was dead?"

"That wasn't death," Adam explained. "It was a sedative. You got dosed with a hypnotic—put you in a fake death state. That's why you couldn't move and thought all that stuff."

"Oh, that makes sense!" Anna's big eyes widened even more. "He said he was injecting me with a muscle relaxant—to keep my body looking 'alive' for the funeral.

Oh, wait! Mr. Hutton!"

"Your piano teacher?" Adam asked, recalling her mentioning him.

"Yeah!" Anna shivered. "Yesterday at Mr. Hutton's funeral, I was late. When I went to pay my respects, I swear I saw his mouth move.

I thought it was just my imagination—when I focused, it was closed again.

But now... was Mr. Hutton still alive back then too?" 🤔

"What?!"

Ted, Lily, and Matthew's jaws dropped.

Lily straight-up shrank into Matthew's arms, trembling.

Adam and Kate locked eyes.

Kate's face went pale—she was basically sold on Adam's theory now.

"Looks like Mr. Hutton was the latest victim," Adam said, his voice heavy.

"This whole thing..." Kate's scalp tingled.

By now, she'd learned Mr. Deacon had run the town's biggest funeral home for over 20 years—one-stop shop for embalming, ceremonies, burials.

The cemetery was right behind it.

Most folks from the town and nearby got buried there.

If Adam was right...

Imagine this: someone gets sedated, tossed in a coffin, buried. When the drugs wear off, they wake up. The sheer panic, the terror—Kate, a seasoned detective, had seen case files like that. They'd claw for their lives.

Open one of those coffins, and you'd probably find bloody scratch marks all over the lid.

Then picture those 100+ photos of wide-eyed corpses. In her head, Kate could almost hear it—hundreds of desperate souls under that cemetery, clawing at their coffin lids, their screams echoing in agony.

If that's not hell, what is? 😬

"You said 'again'?" Adam noticed everyone's faces were ghost-white—freaked out big time. He quickly shifted gears, looking at Anna. "You've had hallucinations before?"

"I..." Anna hesitated.

"Was it tied to you feeling off lately?" Adam glanced at Ted.

"Anna, just tell him," Ted urged, catching on. "Adam's an awesome doctor and our friend. If something's wrong with you, you can trust him."

"Yeah!" Lily piped up, pulling herself together. "Adam's a miracle worker. He's the one who figured out you weren't dead and saved you. Otherwise, Ted would've lost it completely."

"Thanks," Anna said to Adam, then turned to Ted with a soft, loving look. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize you cared this much... I've always wanted love.

But my mom... she taught me from day one that loving someone means getting hurt.

So I decided I wouldn't love anyone—then I'd never get hurt again.

But when we met, it was so intense—I couldn't help falling into it.

A few weeks in, I snapped out of it. I remembered my mom, my old resolve, and I pulled back."

"So you distanced yourself," Ted said, his eyes full of sympathy. "Made me think you didn't love me, so I'd stop loving you—and you wouldn't get hurt. Right?"

"Yeah," Anna nodded.

"You're so silly," Ted said, his voice dripping with sincerity. "I'd never hurt you. You're my perfect match, my soulmate... Whoa! Adam, what the heck?!"

"Nothing, keep going," Adam said, casually plucking a hair from Ted's head with a grin.

He was definitely running a DNA test on these two later. Siblings separated at birth? This plot was way too familiar!

Anna (Wanqing) Taylor (Mu), raised by a probably-heartbroken, kinda-crazy mom who drilled into her that "love equals pain," meets romantic prince Ted (Yu) Mosby (Duan). She's instantly swept off her feet by his charm.

The prince swears he'd never hurt her.

His mom? Total romance queen—her true love was "next-door Uncle Ted." Every year on Uncle Ted's death anniversary, her heart literally stops to honor him.

And in the original timeline, Prince Ted's one true love was blue-horn-playing Robin (Yuyan) Sparkles (Wang), breaking tons of good girls' hearts along the way.

Happy endings are all alike, huh?

So are romantic sagas—just waves crashing over and over! 🌊

"Mhm," Anna said. After brushing death and taking a spin through hell's gates, her mindset had shifted.

Her mom's lessons and shadow? Shattered by Ted's smile.

This time, she wanted to love. ❤️☐

"Anything else?" Adam prompted.

"Huh?" Anna blinked.

"Besides the emotional stuff, was there something else going on?" Adam pressed. "Ted said you've been like a soulless shell lately—spacing out. That mortician claimed he had a 'gift' and pegged you as a 'walking corpse.' It's not just about feelings, is it?"

Emotions can mess you up, but the body doesn't lie.

Anna herself said she and Ted were crazy in love a few weeks back—so Ted's clearly got no issues in that department.

But these past few days, Ted sensed something off with her. Naturally, he wondered if he wasn't trying hard enough. Like Leonard-level effort—dance routines, mood music, the works. He went all out.

So here's the question: with Ted pulling out all the stops, how could Anna still feel like a zombie?

It's gotta be more than just emotional distance.

"I..." Anna faltered.

"Let's do a full checkup," Adam said, not pushing her too hard. "Just to rule out any weird aftereffects we don't know about."

"Lately, my nose keeps bleeding randomly, and I've been popping painkillers a lot..." Anna admitted, warmed by everyone's concern. She spilled a private detail: "Yesterday, before Mr. Hutton's funeral, I was leaving school and had this hallucination. Like, all the hallway lights went out with every step I took, and the doors wouldn't budge."

Chapter 657: That Damn Romantic

At the Medical Center

After Anna came clean, Adam started running her through a battery of tests.

"Adam, tell me this isn't real!"

Dr. Montgomery burst in, having just heard the news, while Anna was mid-MRI.

"Sorry, it's true," Adam said, pointing to Anna lying in the MRI room. He sighed, "See her? Deacon injected her with a sedative hydrate—nearly buried her alive. There might be over a hundred cases like this."

"No!" Dr. Montgomery clapped a hand over her mouth, tears streaming down her face, unable to process it.

"When they caught Deacon, he didn't even deny it," Adam shook his head. "He just laid out his 'philosophy'—said he wasn't wrong, just 'cleaning up walking corpses.' That's why he never got with anyone all these years. Crime needs secrecy, and loneliness is a perfect cover."

"No!" Dr. Montgomery cried out. "I felt his love for me—he wasn't lying!"

"Maybe," Adam said gently. "But it doesn't matter now. He's a full-on serial killer. The police are digging up coffins behind his funeral home as we speak. If they find over a hundred victims buried alive in there—and you're a doctor, you know what that's like—do you really think your feelings matter at this point? I'd suggest taking some time off..."

Dr. Montgomery covered her mouth and bolted out of the room.

Adam let out a long sigh.

Talk about rotten luck! Who'd have thought the square-jawed, justice-vibes Deacon was this kind of guy?

"Damn!" Adam muttered, turning back to the scan screen. His jaw dropped. "Page Dr. Shepherd!"

"Yes, Dr. Duncan," a nurse replied, rushing off. Soon, Dr. Shepherd arrived for a consult.

"Adam, how's it looking?" Ted asked anxiously from the hallway.

"Not great," Adam said, his face grim. "Anna's got primary brain cancer. That's why she's been having headaches, nosebleeds, and hallucinations."

"What?!" Ted, Lily, and Matthew yelped in unison, horrified.

Cancer's like a dark cloud—everything turns gray the second it's mentioned.

"Can it be cured?" Matthew asked, keeping his cool better than the others.

"We can remove the malignant tumor and follow up with chemo. She might have a few years," Adam said, shooting Ted a sympathetic look.

In this timeline, thanks to Adam's chaotic butterfly effect, Ted had met his "perfect soulmate"— someone he'd originally missed out on because of Robin. Adam had thought Ted dodged the whole yellow umbrella tragedy.

But nope. First, this soulmate nearly gets buried alive, scaring Ted half to death. Now, cancer? A few years left, tops.

They say staying by someone's side is the longest love letter you can write.

But in a case like this, watching your love fade away? That's the longest torture too.

"No!" Lily sobbed, covering her mouth.

"How many years, max?" Matthew asked, glancing at Ted, who'd gone still again.

"Usually 2 to 3," Adam explained. "Rarely more than 5."

"Ted, you okay?" Matthew asked, worried.

"I'm marrying her!" Ted suddenly shouted. "I'm proposing tonight! I want to give her all my love for the rest of her days!"

Matthew blinked, stunned. "You sure?"

"Dead sure!" Ted's eyes burned with resolve. "I hate that I didn't meet her sooner, didn't give her—the girl too scared to accept love—more of it. I don't want future me regretting every second I'm wasting now! I'm marrying her! I'll be there for her! I'll make her happy for life!"

"I'm with you, Ted!" Lily, ever the softie, jumped in first. "If you pull off the proposal tonight, maybe we could do a double wedding!"

"Yeah," Matthew added. He worried about Ted facing her eventual loss, but if Ted was serious, he wouldn't rain on his parade. If it were Lily, he'd do the same without a second thought. "But is it doable?" He looked at Adam.

"Probably not," Adam shook his head. "Surgery needs to happen ASAP. Recovery and treatment take time. Your wedding's less than two weeks away—it won't work."

"Then tonight it is!" Ted declared without hesitation. "If she says yes, I'm taking Anna to Vegas right away. We'll get married there—I want her to be the happiest bride ever!"

He turned to Adam, eyes pleading. "Adam, I need your help."

Brain surgery? Forget recovery time—her gorgeous hair would be gone, and the toll would age her visibly. If she wanted to shine at her wedding, pre-surgery was the best shot.

And pulling off a near-perfect wedding this fast? Ted couldn't do it alone. Even Barney, with his exec salary, was iffy. In their circle, only Adam had the pull.

"If you're serious, of course I'll help," Adam said, meeting Ted's gaze and the hopeful looks from Matthew and Lily. "No need to drag her to Vegas, though. We'll do it here in New York. Saves time—and time's what you're shortest on! A judge will be moved by your story and fast-track it. Assuming Anna says yes, of course."

"I'm serious!" Ted calmed down, but his resolve didn't waver. "I know she'll say yes."

"As long as you mean it," Adam said, giving him a deep, thoughtful look, his heart swelling with emotion.

This is Ted! This is that damn romantic streak!

"Let's break the bad news to Anna first. After that, I'll make a call. Ted, you, Matthew, and Lily figure out what you want to do—someone'll handle the details for you."

"Thanks, Adam!" Ted's eyes shimmered with gratitude.

Adam waved it off with a smile.

Ted wasn't as tight with him as Matthew and Lily, but he was solid enough. In this life, Barney hadn't dragged him into as much nonsense, and without Robin dangling over him, breaking good girls' hearts, this Ted was leaps better than the original timeline.

If he really pulled off this long-haul, true-love commitment, Adam would admit it: Ted had changed. No more the flaky jerk shouting "true love" one minute, then bailing when the spark fizzled.

Take that girl who played *La Vie en Rose* in the rain for her lost love. She spent seven, eight years alone, smiling off suitor after suitor. Years later, when she finally dated someone who couldn't be refused, he proposed—and her first move? Step outside, look at the stars, and ask her late love what to do.

A breeze blew by.

Wiping tears, she laughed, "Guess that's a yes. Time to let go. Goodbye, Max."

But when she went back in? She turned down the ring, grabbed her bags, and left the guy's apartment.

She'd said she'd move on, but how do you let go of a love that deep?

A girl like that—Adam wouldn't even dare approach her himself. No way he'd let this Ted chase her either.

Time's the only test of real love.

If Ted had truly grown—if he'd stopped with the impulsive "I love you" at first sight, stopped swapping "true loves" like trading cards, and learned to wait, to let time shape him into the best version of himself for his future partner—then maybe, years from now, Adam would hand him that number.

It all depended on Ted.

Wrong time, right person? That's a disaster.

Better they never meet at all!

Chapter 658: Son of the Sands, Nemesis of Evil

Medical Center.

When Anna got the awful news, she was totally thrown for a loop.

But under Romantic Prince Ted's full-on charm offensive, she quickly went from devastated to overjoyed and said yes to his proposal.

The catch? They pushed the date to tomorrow night.

No way around it—time was way too tight.

The next evening.

The big hotel next to the Medical Center.

Same spot where Rachel had her last-minute wedding.

Another emergency wedding Adam helped throw together.

After work, Adam cleaned up quick and headed over.

When he got there, he spotted Kate.

"Things looking bad?" Adam asked, reading her expression like a book.

"Worse than we thought," Kate said, her face pale. "You nailed it—those wide-eyed photos? All buried alive. We opened a coffin, and the lid was covered in bloody claw marks.

The dead were staring, full of despair and fear—eyes open, no peace.

Word's getting out.

The town's losing it.

People are fleeing overnight.

Families of the victims? They're pissed beyond belief—swearing to take out Elliot Deacon themselves.

They're grouping up, armed to the teeth, ready to storm the precinct.

The cops don't even wanna protect him. Some even left the door open for the mob.

If our team hadn't whisked him away in time, he'd be toast already.

Even then, people got hurt—angry relatives and some of ours.

The whole town's a mess—adults, kids, everyone's crying.

It's brutal." 😞

"Can't blame the townsfolk," Adam sighed. "Most people would react the same."

If it were him, he wouldn't just shoot Elliot Deacon. Nah—he'd grab him, dose him with the same sedative, and bury him alive.

Even if Deacon stayed cool, he's still human—survival instincts would kick in. No way he'd handle it better than his victims.

He'd feel what he put them through.

Adam would even stick around, listening in. The second Deacon was on the brink, he'd yank him out, save him—then do it all over again. Over and over.

Compared to that, the families just wanting to gun him down? Way too tame.

Kate stayed quiet.

She's a cop—believes in the law, that justice should follow the rules.

But the town's nightmare was so horrifying, even a seasoned detective like her couldn't sleep last night—kept waking up from nightmares.

If it were her, she wasn't sure she could stick to the law either.

"He didn't deny it?" Adam asked.

"Nope, he owned up to everything," Kate said, looking rattled. "Calm, straight-up—he laid out every single thing he's done over the years, clear as day. You won't believe who his first victim was."

"Family?" Adam sucked in a breath.

"Yeah!" Kate said, stunned. "His mom!"

"Why?" Adam pressed.

"Single-parent home. She ignored him growing up," Kate explained. "No one suspected him—nobody cared about them.

He joined the military later.

Learned a ton on the battlefield.

Came back, got married briefly—then lost his wife.

Grieving, he rediscovered his old 'hobby.'

Killing made him feel like some chosen one with a mission.

To step up his game, he opened the funeral home.

Kept at it for over 20 years.

Our profiler says he's got a serious mental disorder—no remorse, no empathy. He genuinely believes this crap!"

"Holy crap!"

This is a real war god's return—coming home a total psycho! 🤪

"Too bad this is New York," Adam said, shaking his head.

Kate glanced at him, getting it.

New York doesn't have the death penalty.

"Oh, and those paramedics and patrol docs you flagged?" Kate's face darkened. "We found something."

"Corruption?" Adam's eyes narrowed.

That'd be bad news.

"Not corruption," Kate said. "Worse—one of the paramedics was his disciple. Helped him the whole time!"

"Son of a bitch!" Adam blurted out.

Worst-case scenario.

He wasn't scared of money schemes—his cash could crush that easy.

But this? Now he had to worry.

"Kate, you've gotta dig into every detail of this guy's life—no stone unturned," Adam said, dead serious. "I'll help you analyze."

"Got it," Kate replied. She almost teased him but saw how intense he was—caught his concern loud and clear. "Don't stress. I won't let him get to you."

"I'm not worried about me," Adam groaned, rubbing his temples. "It's my family and friends I'm scared for. Good thing I dodged that interview yesterday. No—I need to push harder, wipe my name outta this mess as much as possible."

In the U.S., psycho criminals love targeting celebs tied to big cases—always itching to "play a game."

The celeb usually survives, but their loved ones? Dropped like flies, gruesome as hell.

No way Adam's letting that happen.

He called his assistant, Ada, right then—told her to pull strings, use his cash, whatever it takes to downplay his role in this and scrub his tracks.

"Let's get started," he said, hanging up. Ignoring the wedding about to kick off, he dragged Kate to a corner. "Tell me everything you know—every detail. We're analyzing now."

Kate was used to spilling confidential case stuff with Adam. His super-brain always caught what she missed.

Plus, with his crazy combat skills, she'd joke afterward that he should've been a cop—a super detective, evil's worst nightmare.

Too bad Adam had zero interest.

Kate was bummed about that.

Now, with him jumping in so eagerly, she didn't have to twist his arm—she was all in.

Adam listened to her rundown, then after the wedding, went straight to her apartment. Stayed up all night poring over case files, brain on overdrive, helping her break it down.

Kept it up for a whole week.

The silver lining in this nightmare? A crime this horrific demanded secrecy, which seriously cramped Elliot Deacon's disciple-recruiting style.

Being a loner, his social circle was tiny.

Over decades, he'd only stumbled into taking on that one paramedic with a similar backstory—raised him from a kid.

Adam pulled every favor he had, backed the police to dig through everything, making sure nothing slipped by.

Finally, he could breathe.

The unknown's what's scary.

Once it's under control, it's not such a big deal.

That paramedic disciple wasn't as lucky as Deacon. Word got out fast—furious families tracked him down. No escape. They gunned him down that same night.

Chapter 659 - Sheldon: The Horror...

Medical Center. Ward.

The newly minted Mrs. Mosby, Anna Mosby, lay in her hospital bed, her face glowing with happiness as she watched her new husband, Ted Mosby, sitting by her side. He held a book in one hand, reading aloud to her, while his other hand gently clasped hers. Every now and then, their eyes met, and they shared a sweet, blissful smile. Pure honeymoon vibes! ❤️

That's the scene Adam walked in on.

"Adam, you're here!" Anna greeted him with a warm smile.

"Adam," Ted added, turning slightly to acknowledge him.

"How're you feeling today, Anna?" Adam asked as he started his check-up.

"Great," she replied, glancing at Ted with a little sparkle in her eye. "Better than ever, honestly." 😊

"Good to hear," Adam said with a nod.

"Can Anna make it to Matthew and Lily's wedding the day after tomorrow?" Ted asked, his tone full of concern.

"She's recovering pretty well," Adam said after a moment's thought. "She should be fine to attend, but just to show her face at the key moments. After that, it's back to bed rest—no long hours at the reception."

"That's plenty," Ted said, grinning. "I just want her there with me for a bit. It's Matthew and Lily's big day, after all!"

"Fair enough," Adam agreed. "I'll be there too, keeping an eye on her."

"Thanks, Adam," Anna said sincerely.

Ring ring!

Adam's phone chimed. He pulled it out, waved it at Anna and Ted with a little smile, and stepped out of the room.

"Missy?" he answered.

"Adam, you're really not coming to Aunt Beatrice's funeral?" Missy's voice came through the line.

"Nah, it's too far," Adam said, shaking his head. "Things have been crazy lately, and I can't get away. Tell Emilia I'm sorry, okay?"

Yesterday, he'd gotten the news: Beatrice had hung on for an extra week, cheerful to the end, but no medical miracle swooped in to cancel out her cancer. She'd passed away.

"It's ridiculous!" Missy vented over the phone. "Can you believe there's a town that creepy out there?"

Yup! The news about Hell Town had reached Missy and the gang. It'd freaked Mary out so much she kept calling on God for protection, and it totally derailed their original plans.

Right now, the folks in Hell Town were dying to get out—well, except for the shameless mourners who didn't care about appearances. Who'd even think of holding a funeral there anymore? Beatrice's carefully laid plans for her send-off? Completely kaput.

After some back-and-forth, Mary and the others decided to take Beatrice back to her Texas hometown for a proper burial.

Beatrice and Adam weren't super close. If it'd been in New York, he'd have driven over to pay his respects, no big deal. But Texas? Too far from New York, and Adam wasn't a fan of flying—especially not with everything feeling so chaotic lately. No way was he hopping on a plane for Beatrice's funeral.

"It's not even that rare," Adam said, remembering Missy was still a college freshman in her prime. "Stuff like this pops up all over, especially in remote places. Seriously, don't let your friends talk you into some spontaneous trip. And definitely don't go off to Paris or anywhere with just a couple of girlfriends..."

"Chill," Missy cut in. "I'm spending my break helping Little George make money for us. I don't have time for that American nonsense!"

"Heh, it's our money," Adam teased. "Don't make it sound like I'm working you to death!" 😊

"Ugh, you're not coming, Sheldon's not coming..." Missy sighed on the other end.

"Wait, why isn't Sheldon going?" Adam interrupted.

"Why do you think?" Missy groaned. "The second he heard about Hell Town, he freaked out—especially since he almost ended up at that funeral home. He's terrified. Says he's never going to Aunt Beatrice's funeral, and he hasn't even left the apartment in days. Just shivering in there like a scared puppy!" 😞

"You guys told him?!" Adam's eyes widened. "You've known him forever—don't you know what you can and can't say? Or did you do it on purpose just to dunk on his 'I control my bladder' nonsense?"

Here's the thing: with anyone else, "scared the pants off" is just a figure of speech. With Sheldon? Literal. His famous line, "My bladder, my rules," has never once held up. The guy's a walking case of overcompensating!

"No way!" Missy protested, refusing to take the blame. "He figured it out himself. You know that annoying memory of his—once he hears something, it's stuck forever."

"Mary hasn't gone to comfort him?" Adam asked, curious.

A kid that scared—wouldn't Mary be all over that?

"She's busy looking after Emilia and sorting out Aunt Beatrice's funeral," Missy grumbled. "She doesn't have time to deal with Sheldon. And you know how he is—freaked out like this, even if Mom tried, it'd take days to calm him down. Guess where I am right now?"

"No, no, no... the horror..." came Sheldon's low, trembling mutter through the phone.

"Mary sent you to babysit Sheldon, huh?" Adam realized with a grin.

"I'm the younger one!" Missy shot back. She muttered a few soothing words to Sheldon, stepped out of the room, and closed the door before venting to Adam. "It's not fair!"

"Maybe you're the big sister after all," Adam teased. "Could be Mary and the gang got it mixed up."

Side note: In *The Big Bang Theory*, Missy's the older one—Big Missy once said Sheldon spent nine months under her, and since babies usually come out head-first, she was born first. Older sister! But in *Young Sheldon*, she's the little sis. English just calls them both "sister," though, so who can tell? Same deal with uncles, aunts, and cousins—total mess!

"I'm out of ideas," Missy sighed. "I've been here a whole day, and Sheldon's not calming down one bit. Looks like Emilia's just gonna be disappointed—her cousin's way too chicken!"

"Hahaha!" Adam burst out laughing. "She'll get used to it eventually. Call it an early lesson!"

"True," Missy said with a reluctant chuckle. "She's part of the Cooper clan now—she's gotta get used to the weirdness. She's got it better than I did, though. I was the invisible kid back in the day. Now she's got Mom doting on her, me looking out for her as the big sis, and Little George isn't such a jerk anymore. Plus, the biggest troublemaker, Sheldon, is hardly ever around. She's living the dream!" 😊

"Your bar for happiness is so low," Adam quipped. "But yeah, spend enough time with Sheldon, and your standards for joy drop through the floor. That's his superpower!"

Think about it: in the future, when Sheldon's buddies heard he was off to the Arctic for the summer, they lost it. Rajesh was pumped to hang out freely. Howard dreamed of sitting on the left side of the couch—or even sneaking into Sheldon's sacred spot. Leonard? Thrilled he could hit the bathroom at 8:20 without breaking a sweat. Normally, if his stomach acted up then, he'd either hold it or leave the apartment entirely. If he hadn't survived that middle school laxative prank where they blocked the bathroom, he'd never have made it through Sheldon's rules!

They were all giddy, celebrating their tiny wins, until the high faded. Then it hit them: since Sheldon came into their lives, their dreams had gotten so small.

Chapter 660: I'm Your Family's Little Angel

Adam hung up the call with Missy.

The thought of Sheldon over there, scared out of his wits and trembling, made Adam burst into a grin.

There's that saying: "Don't build your happiness on someone else's pain."

It's true.

But when it comes to Sheldon, no one can resist.

Pretty much everyone treats Sheldon's embarrassing moments like prime entertainment. It's practically a superpower of his—absolute chaos fuel. If this wasn't the same old Sheldon Adam knew, he'd seriously suspect the guy was some memory-wiped employee from a shady wish-granting company.

Maybe it's the side effects of overusing goofy skills for too long—even with his memory and abilities erased, he'd still subconsciously mimic those corporate tricks, accidentally mastering a whole set of half-baked talents. Stuff like ticking people off, melting their hearts, or cracking them up—super effective every time!

Thank goodness this "Lee" isn't that Li. Otherwise, Adam's forehead would've had a giant "DANGER" sign stamped on it! 😊

Two days later.

Medical Center.

Emergency Room.

"Carol!"

Adam waved at Nurse Carol.

"Is she here?"

Nurse Carol dashed over, practically buzzing with excitement.

"Yep, she just called. She should be here any sec. Wanna head out with me to check?" Adam said with a smile.

"Absolutely!"

Nurse Carol's eyes sparkled with anticipation.

The two of them strolled out of the ER and stepped outside the medical building. A totally ordinary black SUV rolled up and parked.

Out stepped Heather—looking stunning as ever—from the back seat, reaching down to hold the hand of a gorgeous little princess.

"Tatiana!"

Nurse Carol rushed over and crouched down, beaming.

"Auntie Carol!"

Tatiana threw her arms around her, full of joy. This time, she wasn't speaking Russian—she was using English!

"You're so beautiful!"

Nurse Carol gave her a quick hug, then pulled back to take a good look, showering her with praise.

Hmm... Living her best life, a smile straight from the heart, all dolled up, and with her natural beauty? Yep, total princess vibes! 👑

"You're beautiful too!" Tatiana giggled.

Even with her new mom Heather doting on her, Tatiana would never forget Nurse Carol—the one who'd shown her the most kindness back in the day.

The two started catching up right there. Mostly, it was Carol asking about Tatiana's life. Sure, she trusted Adam, and Tatiana's genuine smile and obvious happiness spoke volumes. But Carol had seen too much of the world's dark side. This little angel she'd once thought about adopting? She couldn't help but worry a tiny bit, wanting every detail to make sure this once-abandoned girl was truly doing okay.

Over on the other side...

Adam and Heather shared a quick hug and a kiss before he turned to greet Juno and Keno, who'd hopped out of the driver and passenger seats.

This time, Heather and Tatiana had flown into Boston first, then driven over with Juno and Karen.

"Never thought Lily would ask you to be a bridesmaid!" Adam teased Juno with a grin. "Since when are you and Lily so tight?"

"What, I can't be?" Juno laughed. "I've always been pretty close with them—Lily, Monica, we chat on the phone all the time. Even if Robin wasn't abroad, or Ted's bride Anna hadn't just had surgery, I'd still show up!"

"Of course you can!"

Adam gave her a look.

A little over a week ago, when the Hell Town incident blew up, Adam had been a nervous wreck, digging into every scrap of info about Elliot Deacon. He wanted to know everything to stay one step ahead. Juno got wind of it and drove over with Karen overnight.

At the time, Adam was at Kate's apartment, poring over details with her. When Juno and Karen knocked on the door at the crack of dawn, Kate's face was... well, let's just say awkward. 😬 She wasn't exactly comfy.

But Juno, Karen, and Adam? Totally chill. They didn't even notice her vibe and jumped straight into work mode.

Kate was floored. She'd thought Adam was already giving off major "super detective, crime-buster" energy. But Juno? Next level. After skimming the info Adam and Kate had painstakingly sorted, she casually pointed out a bunch of overlooked details—stuff that seemed minor but was huge once you thought about it.

"Juno's a Harvard Med School star, aiming for neurosurgery. She's a pro at psychology and psychiatry too," Adam quickly explained, sensing Kate might overthink it.

No way he could spill the real tea: Juno's got a knack for seeing through people, a hobby of diving into criminal minds, and a solid track record of fighting fire with fire.

Kate glanced at Adam—the weirdo—and relaxed. Genius weirdos hang with genius weirdos. Makes sense.

The next week, Juno took time off and stuck around. She tagged along with Kate, playing assistant and carrying bags while they met Elliot Deacon and everyone he'd crossed paths with.

Nights were for group case breakdowns. After Kate left, Juno and Adam kept digging. That's when she'd loosen up a bit, tossing out ideas she couldn't say in front of Kate—like how to really stay ahead of the game and some practical (but subtle) plans.

Karen, meanwhile, kept the coffee and snacks coming, totally unfazed.

That's why, after a hectic week, Adam could finally breathe easy. The old him—shaking in his boots under the shadow of two Little Red Riding Hoods, scrambling to churn out words—was long gone.

Now? He smirked to himself. Back then, I was way too green.

A pot of wine among the flowers, drinking alone with no one near.

I raise my cup to the moon so bright, with my shadow, we make three tonight.

This vibe? Pure bliss. No more trembling! 🥰

"Uncle Adam!"

Tatiana finally finished chatting with Nurse Carol and launched herself at him.

"Who's this little angel belong to?" Adam scooped her up, teasing her with a grin.

"Your family's!"

Tatiana shot a cheeky glance at Heather.

"Nice, nice!"

Adam glanced at Heather, mumbling under Juno's sly smile and Karen's side-eye. "Looks like Tatiana's been hitting the English lessons hard—she's getting so good! What reward does Uncle Adam owe you?"

"Tonight's the wedding!" Tatiana chirped. "Look how Mommy dressed me up—don't I look like a little bride?"

"Totally, you nailed it!"

Adam nodded, eyeing her white tulle dress.

"Then after you dance with Mommy, I want you to dance with me too!" Tatiana laid out her request.

"Oh, I'm dancing with you first," Adam said, catching Heather's warm smile. "Once you're tired out, I'll dance with Mommy. Deal?"

"Deal!"

Tatiana clapped her hands.

"Let's roll—time's ticking!" Juno glanced at her watch. "Except for Tatiana, we've all gotta change, and we should check if Lily needs a hand."

"Yep, let's go!"

Adam nodded, carrying Tatiana to the back seat with Heather.

"Bye, Auntie Carol!"

Tatiana waved at Nurse Carol.

"Bye-bye!"

Nurse Carol waved back, her smile wide.

As the car pulled away, Carol's tears finally spilled over. Happy tears for Tatiana's joyful life, mixed with a touch of sadness for not being able to adopt this angel herself back then.

But the happiness? Way bigger than the sadness. 😊💕