

Chapter 5 His Name is Ashton the Great!

The Griffins were wealthy, but their influence paled in comparison to the important figures bowing to Ashton. What kind of powerful background commanded such respect?

Ashton frowned. "No need for ceremonies. I'm here for personal business, not official. You can all leave now. If there's nothing urgent, don't bother me."

With that, he departed, leaving the group standing there without daring to complain. He bought some fruit from a nearby store and went inside the area with help from his memories, knocking seriously once he arrived at the stoop.

Soon, the door opened to reveal a middle-aged, slightly chubby man with salt-and-pepper hair—Ashton's adoptive father, Harold.

"Hey, Dad," Ashton greeted with a smile.

"Ashton!" exclaimed Harold, first startled and then delighted. "You're finally back! Come on in."

Harold quickly dragged Ashton inside and straight to the living room. Around a large round table sat a group of Rechberg relatives, including Ashton's stepmother Frieda Reuss and Heidi with Klaus sitting beside her. Everyone was treating Klaus with great reverence and eagerness.

Frieda frequently plied Klaus with food. "Heidi doesn't know any better. We'll need you to take care of her."

Before Klaus could respond, Heidi's aunt chimed in, "Obviously! The Griffins have assets worth billions. If Heidi marries into it, she'll be a rich wife. Fortunately, she didn't marry Ashton. Look at Klaus, already so wealthy at his young age. Ashton is just a poor soldier. There's no comparison."

Heidi's uncle concurred, "Exactly. Thanks to Klaus' interest in Heidi, she's been showered with good fortune. Klaus, a toast to you!"

The group continued to praise Klaus one after another.

He wore a prideful expression but remained humble. "You exaggerate too much. Our family possesses some wealth, but it's nothing compared to those truly influential families."

Harold felt embarrassed by the scene and wondered how Ashton would react, but Ashton wasn't bothered and called out, "Mom, Heidi, I'm home."

It was only then that everyone saw Ashton nearby.

"Ashton!" exclaimed Frieda in surprise.

Heidi looked uneasy, while Klaus' expression suddenly changed at the sight of Ashton.

Heidi's relatives began murmuring, "It's Ashton. What's he up to here?"

"Exactly. Why now, when Heidi is about to be engaged? Does he have any interest in her?"

"Hmph! So what if he does? He's just a poor soldier. How can he measure Klaus?"

They all considered Ashton with condescension.

Klaus was taken aback and wished he could silence them. Didn't they realize they were putting him in danger? He was nothing compared to Ashton!

Klaus got to his feet while feeling extremely awkward and addressed Ashton reverently, "Mr. Schwerin, you're back!"

"What?" The room fell quiet as everyone looked at Klaus and then at Ashton in shocked disbelief. Klaus was the eldest son of the Griffins, with assets worth billions, while Ashton was just a poor soldier. How could Klaus address him as "Mr. Schwerin"? Even Harold and Frieda found it hard to believe, while Heidi looked astonished.

Ashton glanced at Klaus. Although he didn't like Klaus, Ashton would let it slide on account of him being Heidi's boyfriend.

He nodded slightly. "Mom, Dad, I'll excuse myself and return to visit some other day since you have guests."

Harold quickly tried to persuade him, "You're rarely home. Why don't you stay for several days?"

Ashton gave a small smile. "Dad, it's okay. I'm not leaving this time. I'll have plenty of chances to see you."

He then looked at Heidi. "With Heidi's engagement, I'll naturally attend her engagement party as her older brother."

Heidi looked down at once after catching his eyes.

Harold concurred. "Let me see you off then."

They headed downstairs together, making Heidi's aunt and the rest finally sigh in relief and immediately ask Klaus, "Klaus, who is this Ashton? Why did you..."

They couldn't comprehend why Klaus would be so polite to a soldier like Ashton despite his status. How could Ashton intimidate Klaus like this?

"I don't know either." Klaus shook his head, though he knew he could never afford to offend Ashton.

Heidi's relatives were confused by his response and courtesy toward Ashton but figured Klaus had to be naturally humble and respectful as he knew Ashton was Heidi's older brother.

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"Ashton the Great, your residence has been arranged in The Universum. The environment there is excellent and should be to your liking," reported Ivanna as they got back into the car.

Ashton gave a tiny nod. "Let's go."

The Universum was the most high-end villa area in Lindonbury, with prices starting at 30 million and going up to hundreds of millions, far too expensive for an ordinary person.

Soon, they arrived at The Universum, which had tight security measures. Ivanna verified their identities at the gate while Ashton got ready to smoke a cigarette. However, he replaced it as soon as he took it out. He was a dad now, and the smell of smoke was harmful to children. It was better to quit.

"You're... Ashton Schwerin?" a surprised voice called out.

A young man walked out of The Universum and sneered at the sight of Ashton. "So it's really you. I heard you dropped out of school six years ago and joined the army. How did you wind up here?"

Ashton recognized him after a brief glance. It was Hans Schmitt, a high school classmate. Hans hailed from a wealthy family and was known as a "rich kid," but he and Ashton didn't get along.

Ashton had perfect grades and was popular in school. Hans had pursued the school beauty, Sabine Opel, but she fancied Ashton instead. As a result, Hans begrudged and constantly opposed Ashton, even playing a role in his dropping out of school. Ashton had long forgotten those old stories, though.

He gave a brief nod. "I stay here."

"You?" Hans exploded in a fit of laughs, his expression full of condescension. "Do you know where this is?"

Living in The Universum, a luxury villa area, was something even his family couldn't manage without selling their company. Ashton, a mere poor soldier, dreaming of living there? That was pure fantasy!

Ivanna finished verifying their identities. Ashton didn't bother explaining and simply walked into The Universum with Ivanna, ignoring Hans.

"Ha, pretending to be someone you're not," Hans sneered.

Then, his eyes brightened as he walked toward the security room, handed a pack of cigarettes to a guard, and asked, "Captain Wedel, who owns the villa those two just went into?"