

TV Show 138

Chapter 138: Major Prestige Boost

New Jersey.

A comic book store near the Hofstadter residence.

"Everyone, let me introduce you!"

As soon as Leonard walked in, he clapped his hands and announced, "This is Adam Duncan, the original author of *Lord of the Mysteries* and my best friend—Leonard Hofstadter!"

"So young?"

"Is this for real?"

The comic book store was filled with nerds who all turned to look. Seeing how young and good-looking Adam was, many of them found it hard to believe.

"Mr. Duncan, I'm a huge fan of *Lord of the Mysteries*! Could you sign this for me?"

The store owner was the first to rush over.

As someone in the New York metropolitan area's comic industry, he was aware of Adam, a rising star in the scene. After all, Adam had participated in several book signings and promotional events last year.

Of course, whether the store owner was a true fan was debatable, but he definitely saw an opportunity.

Not every comic store had an author visiting to boost business.

This kind of hype could make the store famous in the local comic community and attract more readers to buy manga and merchandise.

After all, a comic book is a comic book no matter where you buy it.

But here, you might just run into a *celebrity*!

"Of course, no problem."

Seeing Leonard standing tall and beaming with pride, Adam naturally wanted to help him maintain that feeling. He swiftly signed his name on a *Lord of the Mysteries* manga.

"Could we take a photo together?"

The store owner pushed his luck.

"Heh."

Adam chuckled but didn't answer right away. Instead, he glanced at Leonard.

The store owner was a businessman and a quick thinker. He immediately caught on and cozied up to Leonard, flattering him endlessly. Leonard was so delighted that he couldn't stop smiling.

In the end, the store owner even offered, "20% off everything in the store and free drinks for everyone!"

"Adam, how about a quick photo? I come to this store all the time."

Leonard asked, slightly embarrassed.

"If you like this place, then of course. But does he have a camera?"

Adam continued to boost Leonard's prestige, deliberately raising his voice.

Not that he needed to—everyone in the store was already staring at them and eavesdropping.

"Yes, yes, I do!"

The store owner was overjoyed. "I'll go get it right now!"

With that, he dashed out of the store and returned moments later with a borrowed camera, grinning from ear to ear as he asked Adam for a photo.

Adam, of course, refused to take a solo picture with him and insisted on including Leonard.

And so, outside the comic book store, Adam stood in the center, the store owner on his left, and Leonard on his right, while another nerd took the picture.

The store owner planned to turn this photo into a poster and use it for heavy promotion. It would also be permanently displayed in his store as proof of his credibility.

Seeing how serious the store owner was, the other nerds finally accepted that Adam was the real deal. They quickly gathered around, asking for autographs.

Since Adam rarely came to New Jersey, he decided to go all in and give Leonard an even bigger boost. He made sure to ask each person, "Are you Leonard's friend?"

After receiving a chorus of enthusiastic *"Yes!"*, he nodded and agreed to sign.

The store owner wasted no time setting up a table and chairs, distributing copies of the manga to everyone, and turning it into an impromptu signing event.

Everyone in the store lined up to participate.

Even those who weren't fans of *Lord of the Mysteries* wanted a signed copy. After all, a signed collector's edition could easily be resold for a profit.

Some even started calling their friends.

Leonard was among them, practically glowing with excitement.

"What?"

While signing autographs, Adam overheard Leonard whisper something in his ear. Surprised, he glanced at him.

"It's Becky," Leonard said, blushing. "She's kind of my girlfriend... but it's a secret relationship."

"A secret relationship? Man, you really know how to play the game."

Adam teased, then asked, "But are you *sure* she's your girlfriend?"

"Uh..."

Leonard wanted to say yes, but his rational side wouldn't let him lie to himself.

"Got it."

Adam smirked while signing another book. "Since you called her over, you must have something in mind, right? Spill it. I'll help you make it happen."

"N-No! I don't have any ulterior motives," Leonard stammered. "She likes your manga too. She's my... uh, my girlfriend, and you're my best friend. I thought you two should meet."

"You still have your *first kiss* intact, right?"

Adam suddenly asked.

Leonard awkwardly nodded.

"Do you know a girl named Geraldine Coco?"

Adam pressed further.

"Huh? You know Geraldine?"

Leonard was surprised. "She's my classmate."

"When I visited your school to find you, I heard her name mentioned. I heard you two get along?"

Adam said with a smile.

"Uh..."

Leonard thought about Geraldine, who had a tomboyish personality and appearance. He had no idea why Adam was bringing her up, but he nodded. "I guess we get along okay."

"Do you like her?"

Adam continued asking.

He remembered that Leonard's **first kiss** had stayed intact all through high school—until Geraldine unexpectedly took it. It was a significant moment for Leonard.

In the future, after Leonard had achieved some success, he was invited to give a graduation speech at his alma mater. He had emotionally and sincerely thanked Geraldine in his speech.

"No."

Leonard shook his head. "I like Becky."

That was right.

Despite acting like a lovesick puppy, Leonard was a hardcore member of the **Looks Matter Club**. He only simped for women he found attractive.

Of course, if hormones were in play, he wasn't **too** picky—but his attitude toward different women varied greatly.

For example, in the original timeline, after breaking up with Penny, a desperate Leonard activated his agreement with Howard, asking Bernadette to set him up with someone.

Bernadette reluctantly introduced him to a "warrior" she met at the gym—a woman who not only looked very masculine but also practiced multiple forms of self-defense, including dozens of ways to incapacitate a man.

During their date, Leonard—who was clearly not interested—mocked her for eating too much. She had ordered a \$200 lobster, after all.

This was highly unusual behavior for Leonard.

In the nerdy scientist friend group, Sheldon was essentially an asexual man-child. As for Howard and Rajesh, they were so desperate for female companionship that they had *zero* standards.

For example, Howard and Raj once had an "encounter" with a *300-pound Sailor Moon cosplayer* at Comic-Con.

Another time, Howard took a heartbroken Leonard to a senior citizens' dance and, with a straight face, said, "Older ladies are gentle. You'll like them."

And Raj? He was *next-level*. He even had a *weirdly intimate* relationship with his dog, to the point that their conversations were indistinguishable from those he had with his girlfriends.

People often played a game where they'd take something Raj said and try to guess if he was talking to his dog or his girlfriend.

Spoiler alert: You *couldn't tell the difference*.

So for Leonard to straight-up insult his date? That was *rare*.

Of course, in the end, when the gym warrior invited him to *ahem*, Leonard still went along with it...