

ShadowBound 229

Chapter 229: I'll Own Them

"Not in the mood for your bullshit. And last I checked, Building A isn't where your dorm is," Liam said, his tone flat.

Chris chuckled, unfazed. "Aw, come on, man. Don't tell me you're still holding a grudge." He took slow, deliberate steps toward Liam, his smirk never faltering.

"You know, I've been watching you for a while now," Chris continued, his voice smooth. "And I have to say—you're different from the rest of those idiots. You don't follow blindly, you don't waste your time playing hero. You do what's best for you. And that, Liam, is exactly what I need."

Liam remained still, his expression unreadable.

Chris's smirk deepened as he positioned himself directly between Liam and the building entrance. "That's why I came alone. No lackeys, no distractions. Just me, making you an offer that actually matters." He tilted his head, his eyes gleaming under the moonlight. "You don't owe Sheila or the others anything. They're holding you back—tying you down with pointless friendships and useless loyalty. But you? You're better than that. We both know that if it weren't for them, you'd be more than just rank four. You should be at the top. You know it. I know it."

Chris stepped even closer, his voice dropping lower. "Join me, Liam. Stand at my side, and we could own this academy. No rules. No limits. Just raw, undeniable power. You'd never have to answer to anyone again—never waste your time on the weak. Together, we could shape things exactly how we want."

Silence stretched between them, the weight of Chris's words lingering in the cool night air.

Then, Liam exhaled softly. A quiet scoff left his lips, and for the first time, the ghost of a smirk played at the corner of his mouth.

"I always knew you were willing to do anything for power," he murmured. "But this? This just proves how much of a fool you really are."

Chris's smirk twitched slightly, the first crack in his confidence.

"You and I," Liam continued, his voice calm but ice-cold, "are nothing alike. And we never will be."

Chris scoffed, masking his irritation. "Come on, Liam—"

"You think I don't see through you?" Liam cut in, his tone sharper now, laced with quiet menace. "You talk about power like it's some grand truth, but all you really crave is control. That's what this is about, isn't it?" He took a slow step forward, the air between them shifting. "You need people beneath you to feel like you matter. And that? That's your weakness."

Chris's jaw tightened.

Liam's gaze didn't waver. "I don't need validation. I don't need to prove myself. And I damn sure don't need to stand beside someone who can't stand on their own without stepping on others."

For the first time, Chris's smirk faltered entirely.

Liam didn't spare him another glance as he walked past, heading toward the entrance. "Don't waste your time with me again. You already know my answer."

But before Liam could fully pass, Chris's hand shot out, gripping his shoulder in a firm hold.

Liam stilled.

Chris side-glanced at him, green eyes burning with barely restrained fury. "Think carefully about your words, Liam. Because this is a one-time offer. I could make you more than what you are now—as the prince of the Tempest Kingdom. Or..." His grip tightened. "I could destroy you."

Liam was silent for a moment, then slowly looked down at the hand on his shoulder.

"Touch me again," he said, voice deathly quiet, "and you won't have a hand left to threaten with."

Chris's fingers twitched involuntarily.

Liam shrugged off his grip with ease and stepped forward, leaving Chris standing in the moonlight, jaw clenched, fists curling at his sides.

Chris stood frozen, his jaw clenched so tightly it ached. His fists trembled at his sides, knuckles white under the moonlight.

Liam didn't even glance back as he disappeared into the dorm building, his rejection cutting deeper than Chris had expected.

'That arrogant bastard.'

Chris inhaled sharply through his nose, forcing himself to stay still, to suppress the burning rage threatening to claw its way out. His entire body screamed at him to lash out—to make Liam regret turning him down, to put him in his place. But he knew better. He knew Liam wasn't someone he could intimidate with empty words or idle threats.

No, if Liam was going to reject him, humiliate him, undermine him like that... then Chris would just have to show him exactly what kind of mistake he'd made.

'You think you're untouchable, you fcking bastard?' His green eyes darkened, his smirk twisting into something colder, more malicious. 'Fine. But everyone has a weakness. And I'll find yours.'

With a final glance at the building entrance, Chris turned on his heel, heading back to his own dorm with fury still in his eyes.

Chris stormed through the entrance of his dorm, slamming the door behind him. Unlike the standard dormitories, his room was practically a miniature palace—polished floors, a massive four-poster bed, velvet drapes, and furniture that belonged in a noble's estate rather than a student's living quarters. A crystal chandelier hung overhead, casting a dim golden glow, making the entire place feel suffocatingly lavish.

Waiting inside were Logan and Lucian.

Logan, always the eager servant, sprang to his feet the moment Chris entered. "So? How'd it go, boss? Did he say yes?"

Chris snapped. "Do I look like he said yes, you idiot?!" His voice echoed through the room like a whip crack.

Logan flinched, taking an instinctive step back. "I-I was just asking—"

Chris didn't give him the chance to finish. "Shut up. Just shut the hell up, Logan." His teeth clenched, fury simmering just beneath the surface. He could still hear Liam's cold, dismissive words echoing in his head.

Meanwhile, Lucian remained seated on the plush couch in the corner of the room, arms casually draped over the backrest. Unlike Logan, he didn't bother standing or reacting. He simply watched, his dark eyes unreadable.

Chris didn't need to see his expression to know what he was thinking. He's judging me. Just like Liam. Just like everyone else. The thought only fueled his rage.

With a sudden burst of anger, Chris grabbed the nearest object—a decorative vase—and hurled it across the room. It shattered against the wall, shards scattering across the floor. Then he swiped an entire stack of books off his desk, sending them crashing to the ground.

Logan winced. "Boss—"

Another crash. A chair overturned. Chris's breathing was heavy, his shoulders rising and falling as he tried to get himself under control.

And then his eyes landed on the glass of wine sitting atop the ornate desk.

He didn't hesitate. He strode over, grabbed the glass, and downed a deep sip, the rich, forbidden liquid burning down his throat. He wasn't even supposed to have this—not at his age, not in this academy—but rules had never meant much to him anyway.

Logan hesitated before speaking again, watching as Chris took another long sip. "Look, boss, I know you wanted Liam on our side. I get it. But does it really matter? He's just one guy. You don't need him."

Chris scoffed into his glass. "You don't get it, do you, Logan?"

Logan blinked. "I mean, I—"

"He turned me down. Me. Like I was some nobody." His grip tightened around the glass. "Liam's strong, and worse, people know he's strong. If he's not with me, then he's against me. And if he's against me, that means other people will start thinking they can stand against me too."

Logan swallowed. "So... what are we gonna do?"

Chris exhaled, taking another sip, allowing the burn of the alcohol to dull his frustration.

Lucian finally spoke, his tone calm but indifferent. "Maybe you should stop obsessing over Liam and focus on something else."

Chris shot him a glare. "Shut up, Lucian."

Lucian simply shrugged, unfazed. "Just saying."

Logan, eager to shift the conversation, spoke up again. "Well... there's still the upcoming exam. That's a chance to prove yourself, right? Show everyone who the real leader is."

Chris paused mid-sip.

Then slowly, he lowered the glass, a smirk creeping onto his face as an idea took shape in his mind.

The exam, the perfect stage, how could he have forgotten about the main goal.

Liam didn't care about leading and moreover he wasn't the leader in the first place. Sheila, on the other hand, was the main reason for all this. And if Chris could manipulate things just right, if he could sway the majority to follow him instead of her—he wouldn't just win.

He would own them.

And Liam? He'd be standing on the outside, watching as Chris took everything from under his nose.

Chris set the glass down, licking the last traces of wine from his lips. "You know what, Logan?" he mused, his voice dangerously smooth.

Logan perked up. "Yeah, boss?"

Chris turned, his smirk now sharp as a blade. "I think it's time I reminded this academy who really deserves to lead."