

ShadowBound 59

Chapter 59: A Scene At The Canteen

As Liam stepped out of the shower, water droplets still tracing down his toned form, he wrapped a towel around his neck.

He slipped on his pants, running his hands through his damp hair as he heard an unexpected knock at the door. With a calm, indifferent expression, he made his way to the door.

Opening it, he found Dylan grinning on the other side. "Heyyy, Liam. Fresh out of the shower, huh?" Dylan greeted him, waggling his eyebrows like he'd caught Liam mid-scandal.

Liam gave a deadpan nod. "Yeah, just finished."

Dylan crossed his arms, unfazed by Liam's blank response. "Great, because I was wondering if you'd ever join us commoners at the canteen. Since we got here, I don't think you've even set foot in the place."

Liam blinked, momentarily thrown off. 'Right... the canteen. Naya's been bringing my dinner, so I've never actually gone,' he thought, almost surprised by the realization.

"Now that you mention it, I'll go," he said, his expression as blank as ever.

"Awesome!" Dylan didn't miss a beat, strolling right past Liam into his room without an invitation.

Liam raised an eyebrow, caught off guard by Dylan's boldness, but he didn't stop him.

Dylan scanned the room with a look of exaggerated curiosity. "You're not going shirtless to dinner, are you?" he asked, leaning against the wall with a grin. "Hurry up, though—I'm starving."

As Liam moved to his wardrobe to grab a shirt, Dylan gave a dramatic, sweeping look around the room. "Your room feels huge, man. Mine's stuffed with training gear and junk; meanwhile, yours is so... empty."

Liam gave a slight shrug, pulling a shirt over his head. "It's not big. I just don't bring unnecessary things."

Dylan smirked, raising a brow. "Right. You and your Zen monk aesthetic."

Liam finally turned back, now fully dressed. "Let's go."

Dylan stretched, reaching for the door handle. "Alright, off we go—wait, maybe I should grab a scarf in case I faint from starvation," he joked.

But the moment he opened the door, they both froze. Standing there was Naya, Liam's assigned staff member, balancing a tray of food. She offered a warm smile, bowing slightly. "Good evening, Liam. I've brought your dinner."

Liam nodded politely. "Thanks, Naya, but I won't be eating here tonight. I'm heading to the canteen."

Naya's expression didn't falter, and she nodded with understanding. "No problem, Liam. I'll just take this back. Enjoy your evening." She flashed a kind smile and turned to leave.

Dylan, however, was too busy gawking. His jaw nearly hit the floor as he took in Naya's presence.

Her curves, her breast which were bulging out of the perfectly-fitted staff uniform, her graceful movements... she was stunning. As she walked away, he was positively hypnotized.

The moment Naya disappeared down the hall, Dylan spun around to Liam, eyes wide and voice low, as if they were co-conspirators. "Dude... That's your assigned staff?" he whispered, as if unable to believe his luck.

"Yeah," Liam replied nonchalantly, giving Dylan a mildly warning look. "If you want to talk to her, feel free, just don't drag me into whatever 'unrighteous acts' you're planning."

Dylan put a hand to his heart, as if wounded. "Unrighteous? C'mon, man! She's just... she's practically a goddess—second to Mystica that is. I was just admiring her from afar." He tried to sound dignified, but his face quickly broke into a mischievous grin.

"I mean, the way she walks, the way she smiled at you... didn't that give you any ideas?"

Liam sighed. "I don't share your... enthusiasm."

Dylan smirked and nudged him, whispering, "You're sounding like Firecracker now, all serious and honorable."

As if on cue, Asher emerged from his room down the hall, his ever-fierce expression ready to meet the world.

He spotted them and strode over, already looking suspicious. "What are you two idiots staring at?" he asked in his usual loud voice, his hands in his pockets.

Dylan plastered on an innocent smile, waving his hands in the air. "Nothing, my good sir. We were just about to head to the canteen, that's all!"

Asher squinted, clearly not buying it. "The canteen, huh? Don't tell me you're stalking me," he challenged, his tone always a bit too loud, as if the whole academy needed to hear him.

Liam hid his hands in his pockets, smirking just a little. "Quiet down, slumber Jack. You're making enough noise for three people." He didn't usually joke, but his dry humor was aimed right at Asher.

Asher's mouth dropped, a look of betrayal on his face. "Oh, so you're back to giving me nicknames now? Typical," he muttered, bristling.

"Sure, sure," Liam replied, half-amused. "It's just proof that you're back to your loud, annoying self."

With that, Asher pushed past them both, grumbling as he stormed ahead. "Get out of my way, Wannebe, or I'll make you regret it."

Dylan shot a look at Liam and smirked. "We better follow our noble leader," he whispered dramatically.

The three of them headed down the hall, heading to the canteen.

The canteen was buzzing with chatter, laughter, and the clatter of trays. The scent of freshly cooked food filled the air, drawing in students from all years, most of them first-years excitedly mingling around. As soon as they entered, Dylan's eyes lit up.

"Come on, let's go grab some food. I'm starving," he said, practically dragging Liam and Asher toward the serving counter.

The three of them lined up, and as they approached the counter, Dylan gave the serving ladies his signature grin.

"Ladies, it's an honor to be graced by your culinary talents tonight," he said, with an exaggerated bow.

The ladies chuckled, humored by Dylan's energy. "Well, aren't you the charmer?" one of them replied, smirking as she handed him a plate of food.

But as they laughed at Dylan's antics, another lady noticed Liam standing quietly beside him.

Her eyes widened as she looked him over, and a mischievous grin spread across her face. She leaned over the counter, trying to catch Liam's attention.

"And who's this tall, brooding heartbreaker?" she teased, clearly unashamed of her interest. "How is someone this handsome so quiet? Don't you talk, handsome?" She leaned in, unbothered by Liam's stoic expression, her voice a purr.

Liam gave her a brief nod, his face impassive. "Thank you," he replied curtly, hoping to deflect her attention.

"Oh, shy, huh?" she pressed, not giving up. "That's cute. If you need an extra portion, just let me know." She winked, causing Dylan to smirk and elbow Liam lightly.

"He'll be fine with what he's got, but thanks for the offer!" Dylan said, winking back as he grabbed his tray and dragged Liam along. Asher rolled his eyes, muttering under his breath about "unnecessary flirtations."

With trays in hand, the three turned to look for an empty table. But just as they took a step, someone bumped straight into Asher, knocking his tray out of his hands. His food splattered across the floor.

"Hey, watch it!" Asher snapped, turning to confront the person.

But before he could say more, the culprit beat him to it. "Watch it yourself," the boy said, sneering. It was Chris, the Prince of the Tempest Kingdom, flanked by two others—Logan Hepten and Lucian Kellor, ranked number four and five in the first-year class.

Asher clenched his fists, his jaw tight. "You bumped into me, genius."

Chris's sneer grew wider. "Oh, look who it is—the hothead from Beacon Hall." He turned to his friends, snickering. "Didn't you learn your lesson the last time, 'peasant?' Or do you need another demonstration?"

Asher was practically shaking with anger, his eyes narrowing as he took a step forward. But just as he did, Lucian intercepted him, placing a heavy hand on his chest.

Asher could feel the strength radiating from Lucian's grip, as if he were trying to push against solid rock.

Lucian's eyes were calm yet fierce, a silent warning. "Back down," he said, his voice low and steady.

Chris laughed from behind Lucian, taunting. "What's wrong, trial peasant? Too weak to shove him off?"

Asher gritted his teeth and tried pushing Lucian's hand away, but it was like trying to move a mountain. "Get out of my way," he growled.

Meanwhile, one of the serving ladies noticed the commotion and stepped forward. "Hey, boys! Enough of that! This is a dining hall, not a fighting ring," she called out, trying to defuse the tension.

Chris turned to her with a scornful look, smirking. "Stay out of it, old hag. You would know your place in this academy."

The lady looked taken aback, but before she could respond, Dylan stepped up, loudly slurping the last bite of his food and wiping his mouth with exaggerated flair.

"Chris, my friend, must suck to be you, huh?" he drawled, raising his eyebrows as he fixed Chris with an innocent smile.

Chris glared at him. "What's that supposed to mean, clown?"

Dylan sighed, shaking his head with mock pity. "I mean, calling a beautiful lady names like 'old hag'? That's just tragic, really. What happened, Chris? Mommy didn't give you enough attention?"

Logan and Lucian stifled snickers, but Chris's face turned red. He shot Dylan a murderous glare. "Looks like you don't know your place either."

"Oh, I think I do," Dylan replied breezily, turning his attention to Logan and Lucian. "And you two, standing around like loyal little bodyguards. What's the matter? No original thoughts of your own? Or are you just here to laugh at jokes you don't understand?"

Lucian narrowed his eyes, stepping forward with a hint of menace, but Dylan didn't flinch. Instead, he grinned, eyes glinting with a mixture of humor and challenge.

"See, you all walk around with your fancy ranks, acting like royalty, but deep down... you're all just insecure little boys throwing tantrums." He gave a mock bow, throwing them a sarcastic salute.

Chris's face contorted in fury, and Logan and Lucian both bristled, ready to retaliate. Asher's fists clenched as he watched, ready to explode himself.

Now, the six boys—Asher, Liam, Dylan, Chris, Logan, and Lucian—stood facing each other, the tension thick in the air. The quiet hum of the canteen had hushed as nearby students started watching, waiting to see what would happen next.

Liam stood back, still with this tray of food in hand, his eyes calm but watchful. He knew things were seconds away from getting out of control.