

ShadowBound 71

Chapter 71: I Understand It Now

Galen chuckled, watching the tension between the two with clear amusement, his arms still resting casually in his pockets.

"Well, well," he taunted, a smirk tugging at his lips. "Looks like there's some fire between you two after all. But if you're serious about winning, you better step it up."

He tilted his head, eyes gleaming with challenge. "Because right now, neither of you has come close to touching me."

Liam clenched his jaw, assessing Galen's stance, but his thoughts kept getting interrupted by the resentment radiating off Asher.

He knew they could only outmaneuver Galen together, but he also knew there was no point arguing now. If Asher was too stubborn to listen, he'd just have to keep up.

"Fine," Liam muttered, exhaling slowly to control his breathing, letting his myst flow in preparation. "If you're so desperate to lead, then lead. Just don't slow me down."

Asher didn't respond, instead sprinting forward, his blue flames surging around him as he moved.

His speed was fierce, a blur of blue, and he struck out at Galen with an overhead slash. But Galen sidestepped effortlessly, leaving Asher's blade to slice empty air.

Not missing a beat, Asher launched a rapid series of attacks, each strike swift and precise, each flame-laden swing close to clipping Galen.

But Galen dodged every attempt with ease, his movements graceful and mocking, each sidestep calculated just enough to keep Asher off balance.

Growing frustrated, Asher roared, unleashing a burst of flames in a wide arc around him. "Stay still, damn it!"

But Galen merely smirked, slipping out of range just as the ground scorched with Asher's flames. "If you keep wasting energy like that," he teased, "this'll be over before you even make me try."

Liam took the opening. He darted forward from the other side, striking with his daggers in a coordinated attempt to catch Galen off guard.

His movements were sharp and precise, each slash calculated to close the gaps in Asher's assault. Galen looked between the two as they tried to flank him, his grin widening.

But as Liam closed in, Galen shifted—without removing his hands from his pockets, he spun on his heel, delivering a kick that swept the ground beneath Liam's feet. Liam stumbled but recovered, striking with one dagger while Galen was mid-spin.

In an instant, Galen vanished, reappearing a few feet away. "Not bad," he called out, voice laced with mocking approval. "But still not nearly good enough."

Asher shot a glare at Liam, clearly irked by his presence. "I told you to get out of my way... didn't I?"

Liam met Asher's gaze with an unflinching calm. "Maybe if you stopped leaving wide-open gaps in your strikes, I'd gladly sit back and watch," he replied, his tone cuttingly indifferent.

"Why you—" Asher clenched his fists, but before he could retort, a shadow appeared between them. Galen stood, his gaze piercing and cold, exuding an air of intense authority.

"You guys are such disappointments," Galen's voice carried a weight that silenced both boys instantly.

"Let me make something very clear," he said, his tone edged with menace. "Soon enough, you'll both be training under Magnus, but consider this your first lesson."

He looked between them, his expression darkening. "Never turn your back on your opponent. And don't waste my time with petty bickering in the middle of a battle."

In a single, swift movement, Galen's legs shot out, striking both boys simultaneously.

The force was brutal, sending Liam and Asher hurtling backward, smashing into opposite sides of the colosseum's wall with a thunderous impact.

Ariana winced, eyes wide with disbelief as she watched them struggle to rise. "What is Asher even doing?" she murmured. "Isn't he supposed to work with Liam? But he keeps blocking him off just to land his own attacks."

Dylan chuckled, an amused grin spreading across his face. "You're right, Asher's acting like a stubborn mule. But," he added, his expression turning thoughtful, "Asher's always been competitive. It's like he can't stand the thought of Liam doing better than him—even when they're on the same side."

Ariana shook her head, worry flickering in her eyes. "Liam's gonna have a hard time if Asher keeps this up."

Dylan's smirk only widened. "I wouldn't count Liam out just yet. Sure, Asher's hot-headed, but Liam?" He glanced at her with a glint of confidence.

"He's always thinking. Back during the trials, he was calm under pressure, always came up with the best strategy. He's probably already figured out how to deal with this."

Ariana looked back at the field, her interest piqued. "You think so?"

"Trust me," Dylan replied, his voice low with certainty. "Liam's not the type to be thrown off by Asher's antics. I've got a feeling we're about to see something interesting."

Liam gritted his teeth as he struggled to rise, his body still aching from the impact.

'That kick,' he thought, 'he's not even bulky, but the sheer force feels like getting hit by a boulder.' Shaking off the daze, he steadied himself, eyes locked on Galen.

Asher, already back to his feet, launched forward with his sword ignited in blue flames. His strikes were fierce, each swing accompanied with brilliant flare, but Galen merely sidestepped every attack, hands still casually in his pockets, dodging with ease.

'He's not even breaking a sweat,' Liam observed, narrowing his gaze.

Taking advantage of the moment, Liam rushed forward aiming to land a strike of his own.

But just as he closed in, Asher attempted to shove him aside, clearly not willing to share the assault. This time however, Liam smoothly maneuvered around Asher's interference, slipping past him to strike at Galen, catching both of them off-guard.

For the first time, Galen had to tilt his head, narrowly dodging the blow by a hair's breadth.

With a little glint of annoyance flashing in his eyes, Galen countered with swift, lazy kick aimed at both of them. Asher barely managed to block the kick with his sword, grunting from the force as he held his ground.

Liam, skidding back, took a moment to catch his breath. As he tried analyzing what had happened, he realized there was something different but the way Galen moved this time around.

'So this might work after. Didn't expect he to be caught off guard by something like that, but I understand it now.' Liam straightened, his mind racing through the possibilities.

'There's no coordinating with Asher, at least not in a normal way; if he's not will to fight together, then I'll just have to move with his rhythm'

"Hey, I won't warn you again," Asher growled, snapping at him with barely contained irritation. "Get out of my way or—"

Liam cut him off with a cold steely gaze. "Yeah, I hear you, buzz cut. Just keep fighting the way you are," he said, his tone almost daring, as if were challenging Asher.