

The Crack of the Other Side

4: The Plot

"Kesheshesheshesh..!"

D-Roy was in a good mood. He bobbed his head to the beats pumping (too) loudly in the earbuds sticking out from under his oversized mask fragment and sauntered down the hall towards the Soldados' Mess much as he imagined the tougher members of Sexta Fracción did. They did saunter, right? D-Roy was guessing. He liked the weight of the zanpakuto at his side despite the fact that he wouldn't need it in such a safe setting. The scrawny guy winked at a passel of female civilians, who all stared at him for a moment before returning to their business with suppressed eye-rolling.

They just can't stop themselves from looking, yeah! D-Roy kept on going, feigning casual indifference. That was what girls liked, right? Macho? Mystery men? Both?

P-probably... right?

The Mess was like many of the other cafeteria spaces within the Espadas' palaces. It was cathedral-like, almost to an inappropriate level for a dining area. There was absolutely no need at all for such high ceilings in this setting. But there it was, the ridiculous ceiling, hanging some two dozen D-Roy's above his head.

And the heads of about a dozen other Arrancar, mixed classes. There were about ten serving class (a few eating, others collecting plates and suchlike), three actual Soldados. D-Roy recognized them immediately and strutted over.

My arms ain't swinging too much, are they? D-Roy's mind raced, *I don't wanna look stupid...*

"Morning, guysh!" He exposed his mutated teeth, "What'sh up?"

Nakim looked up, looking bored out of his mind, but stayed habitually silent. Edorad was the first to speak:

"Not ush..." He grinned wide enough for D-Roy to see a piece of his reflection in his sparkling teeth as he mocked the much smaller Arrancar's distorted speech. D-Roy nearly stomped the ground but stopped himself. Not cool...right?

"Heeey!" D-Roy scowled, "That'sh not very nische. I wash being friendly!"

"Cool it, skinny," Edorad chuckled, punching D-Roy's arm lightly. D-Roy staggered. "I was just jokin'."

D-Roy took the earbuds out of his ears and sniffed them. Pulling a face, he crammed them into his pocket and sat down beside Nakim. Nakim turned his head away and abruptly set down his fork after seeing the display.

"Okay, okay, geesh." D-Roy snatched a piece of toast from a serving tray across from Edorad, reaching over Nakim's plate and nearly upsetting his drinking glass as he did so. Nakim caught the listing glass in one hand and glared at him, but still said nothing, "I wash jokin' too. What we eatin' today?"

"Breakfast."

"I know that, man. I meant the food. What all ish there?" D-Roy frowned at Edorad and picked up something he didn't recognize, "Like, what'sh thish crusty thingie?"

"Danish." Nakim put his forehead on his palm.

D-Roy stared at the object for a long time, his eyes contorting into an epic expression of "what the f—?". He set it down gingerly back where he'd grabbed it from. Nakim was silently holding in giggles at the spectacle.

"Like... like the people..? I ain't eatin' that..!"

"No, stupid!" Edorad looked to the infinite ceiling, as if questioning some god about the location of his comrade's sense, "Not Danish *people*, a Danish. It's a damn pastry. Now shuddup and eat it!"

Wisely, D-Roy obeyed, leaning back away from the outburst and nibbling on the breakfasty pastry. It was actually pretty good, not a thing like eating human flesh. He scarfed the rest in one oversized mouthful.

"I forgot what I was sayin'," Edorad said. "Thanks D-Roy... Rrrgg, what was it?"

"Ghost hunting shows," Nakim reminded him. D-Roy got a strange look on his face.

"But... *We're* ghoshtsh...Ow!" He lifted up his foot from where Edorad had stomped it under the table.

"I know!" Edorad's grinned like an eager demon, "I was getting an idea one how to cheer up lover-boy over here..."

For the first time that morning D-Roy noticed the third occupant of the table. Ilfort was done eating, his plate shoved to the side with only a few things touched, his head down on crossed arms. D-Roy thought he looked bored, staring off into space with his mouth slightly agape.

"Yo, what'sh wrong with you?"

The blond man sat up and cleared his head with a shake, returning to a bright-eyed existence as if nothing was bothering him.

"Nothing serious," he claimed. "It's just the girl thing again. It's not going away so easily."

"That's why you need some of my *medicine*..." Edorad's brutal features were lit up with glee. Ilfort eyed him dubiously.

"What does that have to do with ghost hunter shows?"

Nakim chuckled wickedly. He seemed to have a good idea what the muscle-bound man meant, and thought it was hilarious.

"Everything!" Edorad rubbed his hands together, "The show *is* the medicine. Trust me, after tonight you'll feel like a new man. We'll have a little fun as a group now. Just don't squeal to any higher-ups. This kind of thing right now might ruffle a few feathers."

"Wait." Ilfort's eyes shot open, "You don't mean that we'd—Edorad! We can't just pop in and out of the World of the Living whenever we feel like it! We need permissions, and then there's the Soul Reapers..." He slumped back down after the words "Soul Reapers", downcast and dejected.

D-Roy had suddenly caught the gist of what Edorad was suggesting. He radiated childish delight from his snaggle-toothed grin.

"Ahhhh..! We gonna crash a Ghost Hunter show..!" Edorad grinned with him and clapped Ilfort on the back, knocking him slightly off-balance.

"C'mon, man," he teased. "You used to love a little harmless prank on plain vanilla humans. Where's the fire, huh?"

"Damn Soul Reaper put it out, sorry." Ilfort steadied himself in his chair, watching for any more of the rough but friendly gestures.

"Well, this'll light it again. "Edorad's grin broadened, "Whaddya say?"

Ilfort peered around at the three. All looked so enthused, like children about to go out and trick-or-treat for the first time alone. Or teenagers about to go out and TP a house for the first time alone. Even Nakim showed a trace of a smirk. Sighing, Ilfort forced his own smile.

"Alright, I'm game."

"Yesh! Unh! We gonna messh them up! Kahahahahah!"