

ShadowBound 181

Chapter 181: Mr. Blackwood, The Forgemaster

Within five minutes, Liam had finished his bath. Stepping out of the bathroom, he ran a towel through his damp hair before slipping into fresh clothes—a black, long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers. Simple, but presentable. As he fastened his belt, his gaze drifted to the demon stone resting on his table. Without a second thought, he picked it up and stored it in his Void Storage.

Turning toward the portal, which still shimmered faintly where Mystica had left it, Liam took a steady breath before stepping through. The familiar sensation of displacement washed over him, and in the blink of an eye, he was back in Mystica's chamber.

Magnus was still sprawled across the couch, though this time he was sitting up, lazily twirling darts between his fingers.

"Finally," Magnus drawled, stretching his arms. He gave Liam a once-over. "Huh. You actually clean up well. Almost thought you'd show up looking like a feral beast again."

Liam ignored the remark. "Can we go now?"

Yawning, Magnus flicked his wrist, sending two darts straight into the wooden target on the wall. "Yeah, yeah. Let's get this over with. Mystica, portal to my carriage, please."

Mystica, now lounging in a grand bathtub, didn't even glance in their direction. She merely flicked her wrist, making the old portal vanish and a new one shimmer into existence. "Enjoy your little trip, boys," she murmured before sinking deeper into the water.

"Thanks, Moony," Magnus said with a grin, grabbing his sheathed sword from beside the couch.

As he secured his belt, he gestured toward a nearby sheath. "By the way, you should probably bring out your sword and use that to carry it. Also, bring out the demon stone. We'll need both once we get there."

Liam frowned. "Why? We're not fighting anyone, are we? And how did you even know I stored the demon stone?"

Magnus smirked. "Damn, kids ask too many questions these days." He adjusted his belt and started toward the portal. "You'll get your answer when we arrive. And as for the demon stone, it's obvious. Your pockets aren't dimensional like the academy's storage pockets. Now shut it and let's gooo!" He marched through the portal dramatically. "Bye, Mystica! See you soon!"

Liam watched Magnus vanish into the portal before sighing. He picked up the sheath, summoned his sword, secured it at his waist, and stepped through the portal himself.

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As Liam stepped through the portal, the scene shifted instantly, and he found himself standing before an extravagant black carriage. The vehicle's sleek, reinforced frame gleamed under the afternoon sun, adorned with intricate silver engravings.

Magnus was already leaning against the side of the carriage, arms crossed, looking utterly relaxed. "Took you long enough," he said, knocking on the carriage door. "Alright, let's get moving."

The door swung open, revealing a lavish interior lined with plush black seats and several storage compartments. Without a word, Liam stepped inside and took a seat, Magnus following right after and shutting the door behind them.

Once seated, Magnus slid open the small window leading to the driver's seat. "To the Western District—Blackwood's workshop."

"Alright, sir," the driver responded before the carriage smoothly rolled forward, merging into the bustling streets of Grandeur City.

Magnus leaned back, crossing one leg over the other as he casually poured himself a glass of wine. As he took a sip, Liam broke the silence.

"So, who is Mr. Blackwood?"

Magnus groaned dramatically. "You know, for someone with the whole stoic and mysterious vibe, you sure ask a lot of questions."

"I'm curious."

"Yeah, yeah. Alright, listen up. Luken Blackwood—one of the best forgemasters on the continent. About eighty percent of the weapons and armor in the Eastern Region come from his workshop." Magnus swirled his wine before taking another sip.

"He's that good?" Liam asked.

Magnus stared at him, then blinked. "Are you deaf? He forges weapons for eighty percent of the Tempest Kingdom's military. You think they'd trust some amateur?"

Liam shrugged. "Just wanted to confirm."

"No, you're just dumb for even questioning it," Magnus said, shaking his head in mock disappointment. He tapped the white hilt of his sword, the emerald gem in its guard catching the light. "He even forged this masterpiece of mine."

Liam glanced at it. "Looks nice, I guess."

"Of course it does. Anyway, just enjoy the view and stop asking so many damn questions." Magnus leaned further back into his seat, shutting his eyes.

With nothing else to say, Liam turned his gaze to the window, watching as the vibrant streets of Grandeur City passed by.

As they rolled through the quieter streets, Magnus stirred awake as the carriage bumped over a rock. He let out a groggy groan, rubbing his eyes.

"Dammit, are we here already?" He yawned, stretching his arms. "Judging by how quiet it's gotten, I'd say we've reached the Western District."

Before Liam could ask, Magnus continued, "Yeah, yeah, let me save you the trouble. The Western District is dead silent during the day because the people here are basically nocturnal. They come alive at night and sleep through the day."

"Then... doesn't that mean we won't be able to meet Mr. Blackwood?" Liam asked.

Magnus scoffed. "Nah, that man is a machine. He works 24/7. You could throw a party in his workshop, and he wouldn't even notice. He lives for forging."

"I see... but does he sleep?"

Magnus blinked at Liam like he'd just grown a second head. "Damn, how the hell am I supposed to know that? Am I his wife?"

Before Liam could respond, the carriage came to a smooth halt.

"Looks like we're here." Magnus cracked his neck before swinging the door open and stepping out. Liam followed behind, taking in their surroundings.

Magnus glanced at the luxurious house in front of them, nodding in approval. "Huh... fancy place for a forge."

The driver cleared his throat. "Uh, sir... you're looking at the wrong side. The workshop is over there." He pointed to the opposite side, where a rugged stone-built workshop stood. Smoke curled from its chimney, and the scent of molten metal lingered in the air.

Magnus turned, stared for a second, then casually played it off. "Ah, of course! Just testing you, driver. Making sure you're on guard—good job, you passed." He patted the man's shoulder. "For a second, I thought you had kidnapped us."

The driver looked utterly done.

Magnus ignored him and gestured toward the workshop. "Alright, kid, let's go."

As they walked toward the wooden door, Magnus called back, "And wait here, driver. We'll be back soon!"

The driver muttered something under his breath, but Magnus was already pushing the door open with a flourish.

As they stepped inside, Liam took in the chaotic mess before him—piles of swords, scattered armor, and half-finished weapons cluttered the space. There wasn't a single soul in sight, except for the steady crackle of the fireplace in the corner.

'This is supposed to be a workshop? Looks more like a scrapyard,' Liam thought.

Magnus, already poking through the mess, chuckled. "Yeah, yeah, I know what you're thinking. Everyone does when they walk in here for the first time." He casually picked up a small sword from the floor and started examining the walls.

"Just wait, kid. You're about to be impressed," he said smugly, dragging the sword along the wall's surface as if searching for something.

Then, with a triumphant smirk, he pressed the blade against a particular section of the wall. The stone panel sank inward with a soft click.

The wall rumbled before swinging open like a hidden door.

"Alright, let's move, kid," Magnus said, stepping through without hesitation.

Liam followed, glancing back just in time to see the entrance seal shut behind them. An underground workshop? he mused as they walked down the dimly lit passage, wall lanterns casting flickering shadows along the stone walls.

After a minute or so, the narrow path opened into a massive underground chamber. Liam's eyes widened at the sight—this was the real Blackwood workshop. Rows of blacksmiths worked diligently at their stations, hammering metal, shaping weapons, and forging armor. The entire space buzzed with activity, the air thick with the scent of molten steel and burning coal.

"I know, right? Way better than that junkyard up top," Magnus said with a grin, striding forward. Liam followed, observing the focused expressions of the blacksmiths as they worked.

Then Magnus spotted someone and grinned. "Oi, Bunny! How's life treating you?"

Liam turned to see a massive man with a thick goatee and arms the size of tree trunks. He looked like he could bench-press a mountain.

The giant paused mid-swing, lowering his hammer to glance at Magnus. Then, in the softest, most childlike voice Liam had ever heard, he responded, "Oh, hey Magnus. What brings you here today?"

Liam nearly did a double-take. That voice did not match that body.

Magnus, unfazed, clapped him on the shoulder. "Brought my little apprentice here to meet Woody."

Bunny—yes, this mountain of muscle was apparently called Bunny—pointed toward a stone cabin at the back of the workshop. "Mr. Blackwood's in his cabin."

"Good man. Appreciate it, Bunny," Magnus said before dragging Liam along.

As they reached the stone cabin, Magnus barely got the door open before—

BOOM!

A loud explosion rattled the room, sending a thick cloud of smoke billowing out.

Magnus immediately started coughing like he'd been fatally wounded, waving at the air dramatically. "Damn it, Woody! You trying to assassinate us?"

Liam, covering his nose and trying not to inhale whatever that was, stepped inside cautiously.

A gruff voice answered from within. "How many times have I told you to stop calling me that, Magnus?"

Magnus shrugged, still fanning the air. "Meh, lost count."

As the smoke cleared, the owner of the voice came into view—a well-built man in his fifties with thick brown hair, a beard, a hammer in one hand, and a lit cigar in his mouth. He looked like someone who could forge a weapon and then beat you to death with it.

"Maybe it's time you start keeping track," Blackwood said dryly.