

ShadowBound 183

Chapter 183: Reunion

Liam walked through the academy grounds, the afternoon sun casting long shadows across the stone paths.

'Should I head back to the dorm for some rest or stop by the cafeteria for food?' He mulled over the thought but quickly dismissed the latter. 'Not really hungry, but I do feel a little dizzy. Probably a side effect of regaining my magic.'

Deciding on rest, he made his way toward his dorm, his gaze briefly dropping to the sheathed sword at his waist. Ever since Draven had taught him Void Storage, he'd stopped using physical sheaths for his weapons. During the battlefield exam, he had made an exception for his daggers, but carrying a sword like this felt unfamiliar. It had been a while since he last wielded one in real combat.

Upon reaching Building A, Liam entered, offering a brief nod to the staff members at the entrance before heading up the stairs. As he approached his dorm, he spotted a familiar figure waiting at his door—Naya, his academy-assigned personal assistant. She stood with her arms folded, occasionally shifting her weight as if debating knocking again.

"Good afternoon, Naya," Liam greeted as he reached the door.

Naya turned sharply at the sound of his voice, quickly tucking a loose strand of auburn hair behind her ear. "Liam. Good afternoon. I thought you were inside."

"I had an errand to take care of. Sorry if I kept you waiting."

"No need to apologize," Naya replied, her gaze briefly dropping to the floor. "I should've realized you weren't here."

Liam tilted his head slightly. "Is there something you need?"

"Not really," she said, regaining her usual composed demeanor. "I just came to welcome you back from the battlefield exam. It's my duty to check on your well-being, after all."

"I see. I appreciate your concern, and thanks for the welcome." He reached for the door handle. "If that's all, I'll be heading in. I need some rest."

Naya stepped aside but hesitated before speaking again. "Are you alright? Or is there anything you need?" There was a faint trace of concern in her voice.

Liam paused, then shook his head. "Just a little exhausted from the exam, that's all. No need to worry." He pushed the door open.

"Understood. Have a good rest, Liam." Naya gave a small nod before turning away.

As he shut the door behind him, Naya exhaled a low, relieved sigh as she walked down the hall.

'Damn, that kid has some intense eyes. I can never look straight at him for long.' She shook her head. 'It kills me to act all proper for someone this young, but... well, money is money.'

Back in his room, Liam unfastened the belt holding the sheathed sword and placed it on the table. After that, he pulled off his shirt and draped it over the chair.

'I would like to store it in Void Storage, but... I should start getting used to the feeling of carrying a sword at my waist. If I ever need to look formal, it'll be less uncomfortable.'

Kicking off his shoes, he lay flat on his bed, staring at the ceiling. He waited for sleep to take over, but minutes passed with nothing but silence. With a quiet sigh, he muttered, "Come forth."

His shadow expanded slightly, and from it, Nyxie emerged. This time, instead of her usual large size, she appeared in the small form Liam had last summoned her in—about the size of a cat with wings.

Stretching her shadowy body, she took to the air, spiraling in playful loops before landing gracefully on Liam's chest.

She nuzzled against his chin, her shadowy tongue flicking across his skin. A faint smirk tugged at Liam's lips as he ran a hand along her back.

"It's been a while, huh?" he murmured. "Looks like you were bored."

Nyxie wiggled her tail in response.

"Guess that's a yes." He continued stroking her, feeling the subtle vibrations of her purring against his chest.

Even as a shadow, you can still do that? He mused, amused by the sensation.

The rhythmic purring, combined with Nyxie's warmth against him, made it easier for his body to relax. His eyelids grew heavy, and before he knew it, sleep took hold, the quiet hum of Nyxie's presence lulling him into unconsciousness.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, Liam stirred awake, the warm orange rays filtering through his window and casting soft light across his face. Blinking away the remnants of sleep, he glanced down at his chest, only to find that Nyxie had already dissolved back into his shadow while he slept.

With a quiet sigh, he sat up, rolling his shoulders to shake off the drowsiness before standing and heading to the bathroom. The cool water against his face helped clear his mind, washing away the lingering haze of sleep.

As he stepped out of the bathroom, a low growl from his stomach reminded him of a more pressing need—food. He hadn't felt hungry before, but now his body demanded sustenance.

He walked over to the window, glancing outside. The sky had deepened into shades of purple and blue, signaling the approach of night. Dinner time.

Without wasting time, he grabbed the shirt draped over the chair and slipped it on before stepping out of his room, shutting the door behind him as he made his way toward the cafeteria.

Discover stories with

As Liam entered the cafeteria, the space buzzed with students engaged in lively conversations. The scent of warm food filled the air, but before he could even reach the serving counter, a familiar voice called out to him.

"Well, well, look who finally decided to grace us with his presence after that big exam," came the sultry purr of Miss Layla, the most flirtatious—and arguably the most beautiful—server in the cafeteria.

She effortlessly ignored the growing line of students waiting for their meals, leaving the other serving ladies to handle them. Instead, she leaned forward on the counter, her eyes fixed solely on Liam.

"Good evening, Miss Layla," Liam greeted in his usual calm tone as he approached.

Layla hummed in amusement, resting her chin in her palm. "You know, when you call me Miss, it makes me feel old—technically I'm only in my late twenties, after all." She smirked before adding, "But when it's coming from you, it just sounds... right."

Liam remained unfazed as Layla's hazel brown eyes twinkled with mischief. "How are you doing, my sweetie? I swear, all these other students have been ruining my day. But seeing you? That makes it so much better."

Her blatant favoritism drew scowls from some of the passing boys, who muttered complaints under their breath.

—"First he aces the exam, now he's got her wrapped around his finger?"

—"Tch. What a damn showoff."

—"Lucky bastard."

Liam ignored them entirely, keeping his attention on Layla. "I'm doing well, thanks for asking. Could you serve me some food?"

"Of course, sweetie. I'm here for you, after all," Layla cooed, grabbing a tray. She generously piled it with rice, a hefty portion of chicken, rich sauce, and just the right amount of vegetables.

"Make sure to eat those veggies," she added with a playful wink. "I need my man strong and healthy."

Before Liam could respond, a sharp voice barked from the kitchen.

"Attend to the other students, Layla!"

Layla rolled her eyes, raising her voice in response. "What does it look like I'm doing, Miss Lane?" Then, turning back to Liam, she smiled. "Don't mind her, sweetie. Enjoy your meal—and if you want seconds, come right back to me."

"Thank you," Liam said simply before turning to leave.

Layla watched him go, a smirk playing on her lips. Such a cute young man... If I were only a few years younger...

Her thoughts were rudely interrupted by another student stepping up to the counter. A handsome boy, arguably even better-looking than Liam, smiled at her and asked in a soft voice, "Uh, Miss... Could I have seconds?"

Layla didn't even glance at him. "Move along, kid. I don't serve seconds."

Without another word, she turned on her heel and walked away, leaving the student standing there, utterly bewildered and slightly insulted.

As Liam walked away from the counter, tray in hand, someone bumped into him—though only slightly.

Turning his head to see who it was, he found the person slowly turning around as well. Liam wasn't the least bit surprised when he saw who.

Dylan.

His mouth was stuffed full of noodles, with one lone strand dangling from his sauced lips. But that wasn't the only absurd thing—he held an oversized tray, piled high with all sorts of meats, side dishes, and even an excessive number of desserts. Compared to everyone else's portions, his meal looked like a feast fit for a king.

Dylan blinked at Liam, his expression comically exaggerated. Then, with a quick slurp, he sucked in the last noodle and swallowed hard.

"Liam... hehe."