

ShadowBound 212

Chapter 212: A Precious Advice

Liam's breath was still shaky as he forced himself to his feet, the sensation of suffocation lingering even in this new place. The void was gone, replaced by an open field stretching endlessly under a clear blue sky. The wind carried a familiar scent—earthy, warm, comforting. It felt real.

Too real.

Then, he heard the voice.

"Liam."

His body locked up. He turned slowly, almost afraid to believe it. And there he was.

His grandfather stood with his hands behind his back, wearing the same sturdy, confident posture Liam had seen a thousand times before. His hair was a little messier than Liam remembered, his ember-colored eyes steady and sharp. But they weren't just looking at him.

They were seeing him.

Liam's throat tightened. He felt like a child again, like that boy who used to follow this man's every step. But that boy was gone.

"You've grown," his grandfather said simply, his voice carrying that same deep steadiness Liam had always relied on. His gaze didn't waver, didn't hesitate as he took in the hardened lines of Liam's face, the sharpness in his eyes, the way his shoulders carried a weight he had never meant to bear.

And then, softer, almost to himself—"And you've changed."

Liam's jaw clenched. "Of course, I've changed. You died."

His grandfather didn't flinch. If anything, there was a hint of something in his expression—understanding, maybe even approval.

"And yet, you lived," he said.

Before Liam could react, the man stepped forward and pulled him into a firm embrace.

Liam stiffened. It had been so long since he'd felt something like this—warm, steady, safe. His hands twitched at his sides before gripping the back of his grandfather's coat, his body reacting before his mind could catch up.

It was too much.

"I've missed you, kid," his grandfather murmured. "But I see it now... That fire in your eyes—it's different."

Liam didn't respond.

His grandfather pulled back slightly, placing a hand on Liam's shoulder. "You used to have a light in you, boy. You smiled. You laughed. Now? That part of you is dead."

Liam swallowed hard. He knew that. He had accepted it. But hearing it said so plainly made something tighten in his chest.

"But... I'm not upset about it," his grandfather continued.

Liam blinked, caught off guard.

"You've become what you needed to be," the older man said firmly. "You're stronger now. Colder. That's good. The world isn't kind to people like we used to be."

Liam's stomach twisted.

"You hate demons? That's fine. It drives you forward." His grandfather's grip on his shoulder tightened slightly. "You trust your comrades? That's fine too. But don't let either of those things control you."

Liam's brows furrowed.

"The hatred? It's meant for demons. Not everything else. And trust? It's not something you should give blindly." His grandfather exhaled, his voice lower but firm. "Your comrades—Dylan, Asher, that girl Ariana, and all the others—they're good people now. But the world changes people, Liam. When the time comes, when the weight of survival presses down on them, you don't know what they'll choose."

Liam felt his pulse in his ears.

"I don't need you to believe me now," his grandfather said. "You will see it for yourself soon, Liam. The kindness of men, and the cruelty of men. But when the time comes... don't let the abyss claim you." The sky above them started to shift, dark tendrils creeping into the blue. The warmth began to fade.

His grandfather watched him, ember eyes steady even as the world around them fractured.

And the last thing Liam saw before everything was swallowed by darkness—was the knowing look on his grandfather's face.

Back in Seraphina's void domain, Liam's body was still frozen, his lungs locked in that suffocating grip even as his mind had wandered elsewhere—to him. To his grandfather.

Yet, in reality, that entire exchange had lasted only seconds.

Then, air rushed back into his lungs. His chest rose sharply as he sucked in his first deep breath, his senses snapping back into the present. His grip tightened around the hilt of his sword, and with steady resolve, he pushed himself to his feet.

Seraphina remained crouched before him, her smirk unwavering. There was a glint of amusement in her emerald eyes, as if she had already won.

"It seems you've finally accepted my point of view, sweetie. Now then—"

She was cut off.

"I should thank you, Lady Seraphina," Liam said, his voice steady, almost unnervingly calm. "You've helped me remember exactly where I need to stand."

Seraphina's smirk faltered—only for a fraction of a second. She had noticed something. A shift. Ever since they had entered her domain, Liam hadn't spoken a word. He had simply endured, resisted, let the darkness try to swallow him whole.

But now, he spoke with purpose. And the presence he carried, the weight in his voice—it wasn't the same boy from a moment ago.

Still, Seraphina remained unfazed. If anything, she was intrigued.

"Oh? Is that so?" she mused, tilting her head. "Then show me, little shadow. Let me see what exactly has been reawakened."

With those words, she vanished into the surrounding void.

Liam exhaled slowly, and then—ignition.

A brilliant fiery aura erupted from his body, flooding the darkness with its blinding glow. The flames coiled around him, burning with an intensity that devoured the void itself. His eyes, still cold and unreadable, were now set ablaze—his right eye, in particular, consumed by roaring fire.

His voice carried through the void, unwavering.

"Just so you know... if I have to kill humans to reach where I need to be, then so be it." His expression didn't change. "I don't need hatred for humans to kill one. As long as there's reason behind my actions, I'll do what is necessary."

The flames around him crackled, dark energy weaving through the inferno like tendrils of living shadow.

"Like you said," he continued, his gaze cutting through the empty darkness, "one does not need to be completely empty to have what it takes to kill his own kind."

A pause. Then, he lifted his chin slightly.

"So, once again, I thank you—for your words and for bringing me here." His voice remained calm, yet there was an undeniable weight behind it. "And since you know I'm a dark magic user, yet you haven't tried to execute me... that means there's a reason." His eyes narrowed slightly. "Perhaps you're here to help me."

His aura flared, the dark flames twisting higher. Experience more tales on

"But right now? I don't care." His fingers flexed around his blade as his stance shifted. "After all, I'll give you exactly what you want."