

ShadowBound 219

Chapter 219: Getting Healed

The academy's bell rang, signaling the end of the day. Students poured out of their classrooms, training halls, and labs, weary from the week's relentless challenges.

But as the chime faded, a thunderous bang erupted from the holographic dome where Liam and Kaine had been sparring. No one dared to investigate—not when Instructor Kaine was involved.

Inside the now-fading dome, Liam lay sprawled on the ground, a web of cracks beneath him from the sheer force of impact. Groaning, he forced himself upright, muscles screaming in protest.

Kaine, standing over him, rolled his sleeves back down with a casual air. "Well, you survived another day. I'll give you that. You've got guts, and I'm starting to see what Seraphina finds so amusing about you."

He took a step closer, his cold, assessing gaze never leaving Liam. "Your ambidexterity makes you unpredictable with a sword, and your ability to switch hands mid-fight is impressive. But what really sets you apart is that insane knack for replicating techniques after seeing them once—or experiencing them firsthand."

A pause. Then, with a tone laced with open hostility, he added, "That doesn't mean I like you. If anything, it just gives me more reason to see you as a target, not a student."

Despite the bruises and aches pulsing through his body, Liam met Kaine's gaze with dull, unreadable eyes. "Isn't that one of your own lessons? 'Every opponent you face—human or demon—should be met with a simple goal: eliminate.'"

Kaine let out a short, humorless chuckle. "So you do listen, even while getting your ass handed to you. Good."

With a flick of his wrist, the holographic dome dissolved into nothingness.

"We continue next week. And make sure your body's in top condition for the final exams," Kaine warned as he strode toward the exit. "Because if it's not, you won't just be dropping this course—you'll be failing all of them."

With that, he was gone, leaving Liam standing alone in the empty training hall.

Liam exhaled softly, rolling his shoulders to ease the lingering tension before reaching down to retrieve his sword. His body ached more than usual, every movement sending a dull throb through his muscles. He knew right away—his Mend spell wouldn't be enough to deal with these bruises.

With that in mind, he decided to do something he rarely ever did—head to the academy's infirmary.

After slipping into his academy uniform, he grabbed his sheathed sword and made his way there.

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The infirmary was active but not chaotic, with healers moving between patients and a few knights stationed nearby. Liam walked straight to the counter, where a woman was rummaging beneath it.

"Good evening," he greeted evenly.

"One second—" The woman straightened up, then blinked in surprise as she got a proper look at him. "Whoa. You're pretty banged up for a student."

"I'd like to get healed," Liam said, his tone flat.

"Yeah, no kidding. I'll call for a healer immediately." The woman placed her hand on a glowing blue orb resting on the counter.

"Mmm... Malia, I need you at the front. Got a kid here with way too many bruises."

Setting the orb aside, she turned back to Liam. "A healer will be with you in a second."

"Thank you," he replied simply.

As he waited, his gaze lingered on the orb. 'A communication device? First time seeing one of these. More importantly, I never even thought about it. Either the universe is deliberately delaying my knowledge of common things, or I've just never paid attention.'

A few minutes later, a young woman arrived, dressed in a simple healer's robe adorned with green patterns. She had shoulder-length blonde hair and light blue eyes, her expression warm and professional.

"Sorry for the wait," she said with a pleasant smile.

"Finally, Malia," the receptionist huffed. "This one's got more than just the bruises on his face and neck, I'm sure."

Malia gave Liam a quick once-over before nodding. "Alright then, young sir, please follow me."

Liam said nothing, simply trailing behind her as they entered what appeared to be an examination room.

Malia gestured toward a small wooden rack near the examination bed. "You'll need to set your sword aside," she instructed, her tone gentle. "And remove your shirt so I can assess your injuries properly."

Liam complied without hesitation. He unbuckled his sheath and placed his sword carefully onto the rack before peeling off his shirt, revealing a body covered in dark bruises, deep welts, and faint scars from past battles. His toned physique bore the evidence of relentless training and countless encounters, yet his expression remained unreadable—stoic, detached, as if pain was just another passing sensation.

Malia inhaled sharply but said nothing. 'What kind of training does he go through?' she wondered, suppressing her unease.

"Step into the circle," she instructed, motioning toward a set of rune-etched markings on the floor.

Liam did as told, stepping barefoot onto the intricate design. As soon as he was positioned at the center, Malia began chanting under her breath. The runes pulsed with a soft green glow, their energy weaving around him like invisible threads, scanning, searching.

After a few moments, the glow dimmed, and Malia exhaled, her brows furrowing. "Step out and take a seat on the bed," she told him, her voice tinged with concern.

Liam obeyed, sitting down with his usual composed silence. Malia crossed her arms, considering how to break the news.

"You've got a few broken ribs," she started, "and your muscles are in terrible shape—overworked, strained, and borderline torn. There's also some internal bruising, likely from repeated impact. Honestly, I'm surprised you walked in here like nothing was wrong."

Liam said nothing, his red eyes meeting hers with quiet indifference.

Malia frowned. 'Does he even feel pain the same way as everyone else? Or has he just grown so used to it that it barely registers anymore?'

She sighed and stepped behind him. "Hold still," she murmured.

Placing both hands firmly on his bare back, she closed her eyes and began chanting again. Soft green light swirled around her fingertips, then spread across Liam's body like a warm wave. The healing magic seeped into his wounds, knitting torn muscle, mending cracked bones, and dissolving the bruises staining his skin.

Liam remained perfectly still, feeling the warmth but not reacting to it. Within moments, the light faded, leaving no trace of the injuries that had covered him just minutes before.

Malia stepped back, her expression unreadable. "There," she said, though her concern hadn't lessened.

She hesitated before adding, "I don't know what kind of training you're under, but if you at to come back looking like this, there's a limit to how much your body can take. Even with magic, there are things that don't heal as easily as bruises."

Liam finally spoke, his voice calm. "I'll take that into co."

Malia sighed again. Of course that's his response.

"Try not to end up back here like this again," she said, turning away. "Or at least make sure I'm on duty when you do."

"I'll keep that in mind."

— —

Liam stepped out of the infirmary, the cool night air brushing against his skin as he made his way toward the dormitories. His body felt lighter after the healing, but the exhaustion from the relentless training remained. As he walked something crept into his thoughts.

The recording crystal.

His steps slowed. "Damn it." He exhaled sharply, realizing he must have left it back in the changing room at the training hall.

With a resigned sigh, he turned on his heel and made his way back.

The training hall stood silent, its massive structure looming in the darkness. The lights had been turned off for the night, leaving the space draped in shadows. But for Liam, the lack of light was no obstacle. He moved forward, his steps soundless against the floor as he navigated toward the changing room.

Then—

A sound.

Quick, sharp movements in the dark.

Liam halted. His eyes darted through the shadows, searching—but he saw nothing. The movements continued, fast and erratic, too fluid to belong to any ordinary person. His grip on his sword tightened.

Another sound—closer this time.

With a swift motion, Liam released a controlled burst of flames from his body. The flickering fire briefly illuminated the hall, casting wild shadows against the walls. But as the flames flickered and died out—there was nothing.

Silence.

Liam's muscles remained taut, but he forced himself to refocus. The crystal. He turned back toward the changing room.

Then—his instincts flared.

Something was coming. Fast.

Liam's body reacted before his mind could process it. His sword flashed from its sheath in an instant, metal clashing against something unseen. Sparks erupted in the darkness, momentarily illuminating the space. The impact sent a tremor through his arm, the force behind the strike unnatural.

No time to hesitate.

Another burst of flames erupted from him, flooding the hall with light—and this time, he saw it.

A figure stood before him, crouched low, muscles tense.

Charlotte.

But not entirely.

Her body had shifted partially into her hybrid form—her eyes gleaming like a predator's, pupils slit, sharp claws extended, her stance primal, poised to strike. Her breathing was slow and measured, yet something about her presence felt... off.

Liam's grip tightened around his sword as he met her gaze.

"...Charlotte?"