

ShadowBound 34

Chapter 34: Sweet Harmony

As the weekend passed, Liam spent his time resting and regaining his strength in preparation for the next phase of his training.

The looming challenge of mastering Crimson Overdrive weighed on his mind, but he knew he needed to be in peak condition for what lay ahead.

By the time Dr. Dain and Ms. Rose returned from Vio City, the household was lively again, with everyone back to their routines.

The new school week had begun, and after a long day of classes, Liam returned home, feeling the weight of his upcoming training pressing down on him.

After quickly changing and mentally preparing himself, Liam decided it was time. He left his room, walking through the familiar hallways of the Silverhart residence.

His footsteps echoed in the corridor, his mind focused on the challenge awaiting him in the training room. But as he turned a corner, he nearly bumped into Dr. Dain, who appeared to be heading toward the clinic.

"Ah, Liam," Dr. Dain greeted him with his usual calm smile. "Good to see you. How have you been?"

"Hello, Dr. Dain. I've been well," Liam replied, nodding politely.

"Good to hear." Dain's eyes shifted to the direction Liam was heading. "Looks like you're on your way to the training room?"

"Yes," Liam confirmed. "I need to work on something important."

Dr. Dain gave him an understanding nod, his eyes twinkling with curiosity but respect. "I see. Well, I have some patients waiting for me at the clinic, so I'll be busy for a while. I suppose I'll catch up with you at dinner, then?"

Liam hesitated for a moment before responding, "I'm not sure I'll be able to make it to dinner tonight. The training I'm doing might take a lot longer than usual."

Dr. Dain paused, thoughtfully considering Liam's words. "That's dedication. Well, in that case, I'll have Ane leave some food in your room for when you're done. We can't have you training on an empty stomach, can we?"

Liam nodded, grateful. "Thank you. That would help a lot."

"No need to thank me," Dr. Dain replied with a warm smile. "Take care of yourself, Liam. I'll see you when I see you, then."

With that, Dr. Dain continued toward the clinic, and Liam resumed his path toward the training room. His mind quickly refocused on the task ahead.

The Emberflower, the trials, Crimson Overdrive—it all waited for him beyond those doors. The thought of the immense power that could be within his grasp drove him forward, his heart pounding with anticipation.

Liam descended into the training room, his footsteps echoing faintly against the stone walls. The air down here was cooler, the faint hum of myst energy ever-present.

Once inside, he closed the door behind him, shutting out the world above. He moved to the center of the room, his gaze steady, determined. There was no space for hesitation now.

Reaching into his pocket, Liam carefully pulled out the Emberflower. Its crimson petals pulsed faintly with energy, a soft glow that illuminated his hand. He could feel the raw myst within it, waiting to be harnessed, waiting to push him beyond his limits.

Liam sat in a meditation pose, crossing his legs and placing the Emberflower in front of him. He closed his eyes, allowing his breathing to slow and sync with the quiet rhythm of the room.

He focused on the flower's energy, drawing it into his myst reserves, letting it blend with his own. The warmth from it began to fill him, spreading from his core outward.

The first phase came swiftly—Ignition Phase. His body responded instinctively, like a familiar flame being kindled. His heart rate quickened, yet his breath remained controlled, deliberate.

He felt his muscles tighten, his blood pumping faster, oxygen flooding his system. It was the starting flicker, the stage where stamina surged, and every fiber of his being was heightened, prepared.

It was always the easiest, the one that came like an old friend, and yet today, something about it felt stronger.

The warmth deepened, intensified, transitioning smoothly into the next phase—Furnace State. Here, the fire within him grew fiercer, hotter.

His chest swelled with each breath, and the myst that coursed through his veins now roared, circulating like molten lava. His senses sharpened, his awareness of the room heightened.

The training hall seemed to hum with the energy he exuded. Every cell in his body burned with purpose, pushing him toward endurance, but it didn't stop there.

Liam pushed further, using the Emberflower's myst to bridge the final leap. Flare Burst surged within him, an explosive heat that ignited his muscles and mind.

His pulse raced uncontrollably, his body vibrating with an intense power that teetered on the edge of destruction.

This phase was always the hardest, the one that strained him beyond reason. But now, it flowed seamlessly from the Furnace State, as though his body had learned to embrace the burn instead of resisting it.

The three phases, usually distinct, now began to blur into one. The line separating Ignition from Furnace, Furnace from Flare, started to dissolve.

Instead of feeling each phase as a step, Liam now experienced them as one continuous, rising tide of power. His breathing, once steady and deliberate, became a rhythm of its own, fueling the growing storm inside him.

The Emberflower's myst fused with his own, harmonizing his body's energy in a way he hadn't experienced before. His muscles, his mind, his very essence—everything was in sync.

The three stages didn't feel separate now; they felt like facets of the same entity, a singular force propelling him forward.

The power wasn't just something within him—it was him. The Emberflower had unlocked a deeper connection, something primal.

His body no longer felt burdened by the heat or the intensity. Instead, it welcomed it, craved it. Every cell in his body was alight, burning with myst energy in perfect harmony.

Time seemed to slow as the room's hum faded into the background, leaving only the rhythm of his breathing and the steady pulse of his heart.

Meanwhile, the dining room of the Silverhart household was warm and inviting, lit by the soft glow of the evening lanterns. Dr. Dain, Mrs. Rose, and Elsie sat at the large oak table, the scent of roasted vegetables and freshly baked bread filling the air. The silverware clinked faintly as the maids moved about, preparing to serve dinner.

Elsie, glancing at the empty seat beside her, couldn't help but notice Liam's absence. She leaned forward, her brows knitting slightly.

"Dad," she began, her tone casual but curious, "I didn't see Liam around earlier. Is he not joining us for dinner?"

Dain looked up from the folded napkin in his hands, his expression calm but with a hint of understanding. "Liam's busy tonight," he said, setting the napkin aside.

"He's deep into his training. It's something important to him, and he won't be able to make it to dinner."

Mrs. Rose, who had been quietly sipping her tea, raised an eyebrow in curiosity. "Training? That boy never seems to rest, does he?"

Dain nodded thoughtfully. "He's pushing himself, trying to reach the next level in whatever he is learning. He's... determined, more than I've seen anyone in a long time."

His gaze shifted between his wife and daughter. "I've arranged for food to be sent to his room later. He'll eat when he's done."

Elsie's eyes softened, her fingers lightly tracing the edge of her plate. "I guess it's just like him to always push forward," she said, her voice quiet. There was admiration in her tone, but also a tinge of concern.

"He's a strong young man," Dain said, his tone reassuring. "But he knows his limits. Well... most of the time," he added with a knowing smile.

Rose chuckled lightly. "Ah, youth. Always so eager to go beyond what's necessary." She looked over at Elsie. "You seem a bit disappointed. Were you hoping to see him tonight?"

Elsie blushed faintly, quickly shaking her head. "N-No, I mean, it's just... we usually talk during dinner, that's all."

Dain exchanged a glance with Rose, a hint of amusement playing on his lips. "Well, I'm sure he'll make it next time," Dain said, his voice kind. "He can't train forever, after all."

As the maids began placing plates of food in front of them, the conversation shifted, and soon the clatter of cutlery filled the room.

The rich flavors of the evening meal brought a sense of comfort and relaxation to the table, but Elsie couldn't quite shake her thoughts of Liam, wondering how his training was going.

After a few minutes of quiet eating, Elsie looked up at her mom, Rose, her curiosity shifting to something else. "How is Grandma doing, by the way? You mentioned you'd check in on her when you and dad went to Vio City."

Rose smiled warmly, her eyes brightening at the mention of her mother. "Oh, your grandmother is doing well, dear. She's as lively as ever, keeping the house in Vio City just as busy as she used to. She sends her love, of course."

Elsie leaned in, listening intently. "Really? That's great to hear. I was a little worried since she's been living there on her own for a while."

"Worried?" Rose chuckled softly, shaking her head. "Your grandmother would never allow herself to slow down. She's stubborn like that. In fact, she was organizing a small gathering with some of the old family friends when we arrived. Quite the social butterfly."

Dain smiled, nodding. "She even insisted on preparing lunch for us. Said she didn't trust anyone else to do it 'just right,' as she put it."

Elsie laughed, imagining her grandmother in her element, bustling around the kitchen. "That sounds like her. Did she make that herbal soup she always talks about?"

Rose's eyes twinkled with amusement. "Oh yes. She made it just the way you remember. It was as delicious as ever. And of course, she was full of advice. She gave me a list of remedies for everything under the sun. I swear, she could outdo any doctor."

"I wouldn't doubt it," Dain said, taking a sip of his drink. "Your mother is sharp. She's still got a keen sense for healing."

Elsie smiled fondly. "I miss her. Maybe I should visit her sometime soon."

"You should," Rose said warmly. "She'd love to see you. She's been asking about you and how you're doing in Nystra. I think she misses having you around to chat with."

"I miss our chats too," Elsie said, her voice softening. "I'll have to write her a letter first, and maybe I can visit her during the next school break."

Mrs. Rose nodded approvingly. "I'm sure she'd be thrilled."

As the conversation continued, the warmth in the room only grew. There was a sense of ease between them, a familial bond that stretched across miles.

The evening sun had long set by the time the meal was finished, but the laughter and shared memories kept the night feeling light.