

ShadowBound 38

Chapter 38: Arrival At Grandeur City.

The journey from Nystra City to Grandeur City stretched on for nearly a day, the train rumbling steadily over the tracks as it cut through vast landscapes.

Liam sat by the window, watching the world blur past — fields of golden wheat, dense forests, and the occasional village nestled between hills. The scenery was beautiful, but it offered little distraction for his restless mind.

With nothing else to occupy his time, Liam found himself lost in thought. He would occasionally glance out at the changing landscape, but his thoughts kept returning to the Dark Knight Academy and the challenges awaiting him there.

He had slept sporadically, lulled into brief naps by the rhythmic motion of the train, and the meals brought to passengers broke the monotony of the journey.

Hours later, as the train began to slow, Liam could feel the shift in atmosphere. The once peaceful surroundings of the countryside gave way to the towering buildings and bustling energy of the city. Grandeur City was finally in sight.

The train hissed to a halt at the station, and passengers began to gather their belongings and step off. Liam grabbed his things, slinging his bag over his shoulder as he exited the train.

As soon as he stepped onto the platform, he was hit by the sheer scale of Grandeur City. The towering buildings seemed to reach for the clouds, their gleaming exteriors a stark contrast to the modest architecture of Nystra.

The streets beyond the station were alive with activity — vendors shouting, carriages weaving through the crowds, and groups of people moving with purpose. The city truly lived up to its name.

Liam paused for a moment, taking it all in. "Nystra feels like a village compared to this place," he murmured to himself, eyes wide as he observed the grand buildings that lined the streets.

The city stretched far beyond what he could see, sprawling and vibrant, pulsing with energy. It was easily four times the size of Nystra City, if not more.

Every corner seemed alive with something new to discover, from the bustling marketplaces to the finely dressed nobles making their way through the crowded streets.

For the first time in a long while, Liam felt a sense of awe. The size and grandeur of the city made him realize just how small his world had been up until now. But it also filled him with a sense of purpose — this was where his journey truly began.

Taking a deep breath, Liam adjusted his bag and stepped forward, ready to find his way to the Dark Knight Academy.

Luckily for Liam, the Dark Knight Academy wasn't far from the train station. In fact, its imposing structure could be seen from a distance, looming over the city like a fortress of old.

Even though it was within sight, Liam still asked for directions along the way, not wanting to risk getting lost in a city this large.

After a short walk through the bustling streets of Grandeur City, he finally arrived at the academy gates.

The towering iron gates were engraved with intricate designs, depicting legendary knights in battle, their swords raised high. Standing guard by the entrance was a knight in full armor, his sword resting in its scabbard, polished to a gleam.

As Liam approached, the guard's voice rang out in a formal tone, "Are you here for the enrollment?"

"Yes, I am," Liam responded calmly, his usual stoic expression unchanging.

The knight nodded, gesturing toward the gate. "Go through there," he said, his voice steady but commanding.

Liam followed the direction given, pushing the heavy gate open. As he stepped through, he found himself in a vast courtyard filled with other prospective students.

They looked to be around his age, each one likely hoping to carve their name into legend as a knight. The crowd was far larger than he expected — easily around two hundred people, all waiting anxiously.

The moment Liam entered, the weight of their stares fell upon him. Eyes scanned him up and down, sizing him up. Some were curious, others competitive, but none of it bothered him.

He remained unfazed, carrying himself with the same quiet confidence he always had. Setting his bags down at his feet, Liam took a moment to assess his surroundings.

The academy's grounds were expansive. Even from this entrance, he could see training fields stretching far into the distance, lined with armor racks, dummies, and other equipment.

Massive stone buildings loomed ahead, their architecture grand and imposing, with banners bearing the crest of the academy fluttering in the warm breeze.

The sun hung high in the sky, casting its heat down on the gathered students, but the vastness of the academy left an impression even greater than the heat. The scale of it was daunting, a reminder of the rigorous journey ahead.

As Liam stood there, taking in the atmosphere of the academy, someone suddenly bumped into him from the side. The impact wasn't rough, but it was noticeable enough to catch his attention.

When he turned, he saw a figure about an inch taller than him with wild blonde hair that caught the sunlight. The guy quickly turned to face Liam, his green eyes wide with an almost innocent energy.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" the stranger blurted, his tone genuinely apologetic as he ruffled his hair awkwardly.

Liam, as usual, didn't react much. His expression remained calm and indifferent. "It's alright, no need to apologize," he said coolly, brushing it off as if it were nothing.

"Thanks, man!" The guy let out a relieved laugh, then extended his hand with a broad grin. "By the way, I'm Wellington—Dylan Wellington."

Liam glanced down at the extended hand before taking it. "Liam Hunter," he replied simply.

"Pleasure to meet you, Liam!" Dylan said cheerfully, shaking Liam's hand enthusiastically. "So... uh, any idea why we're all just standing here?" he asked with a playful grin, as if trying to make light of the situation.

"No," Liam responded, his tone still neutral, offering nothing more.

Dylan, clearly not the type to stay quiet, didn't seem bothered by Liam's brief responses. His eyes wandered over to Liam's belongings, and then something caught his attention. "Whoa, hold up—where's your weapon?" Dylan asked, looking genuinely surprised.

"I mean, this is a knight academy, right? Shouldn't you be carrying, like, a sword or something? Or are you one of those bare-knuckle guys?" he added with a laugh, clearly amused by his own joke.

Liam glanced around, noticing that most of the other prospective students had weapons strapped to their backs or belts.

He hadn't paid much attention to it before. "I do have mine with me," Liam replied, his voice still calm, "but I don't like carrying it around."

Dylan raised an eyebrow, intrigued but not pressing further. "Ah, a man of mystery, huh? I respect that!" he said, nodding with exaggerated approval. Then, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm, he gestured to the bow slung over his shoulder.

"Well, since we're on the topic, this is my weapon," he said proudly, pulling the bow from his back. "I'm an archer."

Liam's gaze shifted to the bow. It wasn't like the typical wooden bows he'd seen. This one gleamed with a metallic sheen, sleek and expertly crafted.

Liam's eyes narrowed slightly, recognizing that the bow was made of steel, yet it seemed as flexible as any normal bow.

"It's made of steel," Dylan said, seeing Liam's curious expression. "Looks cool, right? My dad made it. His best work!" He puffed out his chest slightly, clearly proud.

Liam studied the bow for a moment longer before nodding. "It's unique," he said, his words minimal, but Dylan's excitement only grew.

"You wanna check it out?" Dylan asked, almost bouncing on the balls of his feet as he held the bow out for Liam to inspect. Liam took it, feeling the weight and balance.

Despite being made of steel, it was surprisingly light. Even the string was made of some kind of metal, but it flexed easily, just like a normal bowstring.

"This is impressive," Liam commented, handing it back.

"I know, right?" Dylan said, grinning ear to ear. "I tell you, if I wasn't using this, I'd be carrying around a tree branch!" He chuckled at his own joke, though Liam remained as stoic as ever.

Dylan seemed unfazed by Liam's lack of reaction and continued with his cheerful chatter.

"You know, when I was younger, I actually tried to fight using a spoon once. Let me tell you, it didn't go well. Turns out, spoons aren't the most aerodynamic weapons," he said with a wink. Liam didn't even blink.

As Dylan was about to launch into another story, a sudden shimmer caught their attention.

A large platform appeared out of thin air in front of the gathered students, causing the murmur of conversations to quickly die down. Everyone turned toward it, curiosity and anticipation filling the air.

From the back of the platform, a man emerged. He was dressed in the formal attire of a knight, his white hair styled neatly, and his face looking smooth with handsomeness.

Despite the intimidating scar, his presence was calm but authoritative, the kind that commanded silence without the need for words.

The man stepped onto the platform, his boots thudding against the wood. He looked over the gathered students, his sharp eyes scanning them as if assessing their worth.

When he finally spoke, his voice was deep and resonant, carrying across the courtyard with ease.

"I greet you all," he began, his tone both formal and commanding. "My name is Galen Magna, and I am the head of training here at the Dark Knight Academy."

There was a shift in the crowd as the students straightened up, their attention now fully focused on the man.

Even Dylan, who had been bouncing with energy moments ago, was quiet, his playful expression replaced by one of respect.

Liam, however, remained as calm as ever, his gaze unwavering as he listened to Galen's introduction.

Dylan leaned over slightly, whispering with a grin, "Bet this guy doesn't have a sense of humor."