

ShadowBound 136

Chapter 136: Nyxie

As the training session ended, the students dispersed to their personal activities. The sun had long dipped below the horizon, casting the academy in the serene stillness of night. Most students had already gathered at the cafeteria for dinner and soon retired to their dorms to rest.

By the time the moon hung high in the sky, its light occasionally obscured by drifting clouds, the academy grounds were silent.

Back in his dorm room, Liam stood at his window, dressed in a simple all-black outfit. He gazed out at the moonlit landscape, his eyes glinting faintly as he muttered to himself, "Looks like it's time for some magic training."

Sliding the window open, Liam leaned against the frame, glancing down at the ground far below. The cool night air brushed against his face as he weighed his options.

"Passing through the hallway feels like too much trouble. The window it is," he murmured.

With practiced ease, Liam swung a leg over the edge of the windowsill. Keeping his hands casually in his pockets, he dropped from the ledge, landing gracefully without a sound.

He paused, his gaze falling to his feet, a faint smirk playing on his lips.

"Even with only partial mastery, this spell works perfectly," he thought.

The spell, Assassin's Veil, was one of the techniques he had learnt from the tome Mystica had provided him over the past month. Though he had chosen to prioritize mastering Shadow Solidification over fully developing this spell, he had still managed to unlock one of its foundational abilities—sound erasure.

While the full spell granted the ability to erase presence entirely and provided several other enhancements, Liam had focused solely on silencing his movements.

The results were promising. Not a single sound escaped as he adjusted his stance and began walking into the night.

"This should do for now," he mused.

After walking for about six minutes, Liam arrived at his destination—the East Colosseum, a long-forgotten training ground hidden in the shadows of the academy. He had chosen this place for a reason. Barely anyone ever passed by, and the knights on night patrol often neglected it, making it the perfect spot for Liam to practice his dark magic undisturbed. No one would notice him here, and that was exactly how he liked it.

As he entered the colosseum, the air felt cooler, the silence heavier. Liam scanned the surroundings, ensuring no one was in sight. Satisfied with the emptiness of the area, he whispered two words under his breath:

"Come out."

At his command, his shadow began to stretch and writhe on the cold stone ground. It expanded and shifted upward, taking on a life of its own. Slowly, it twisted and coalesced into a large, imposing figure—the shadow dragon.

Unlike other times when the dragon would roar with immense power upon being summoned, tonight it was eerily quiet. The dragon sat motionless, its wings neatly folded against its back, its blue eyes glowing softly in the dim light.

"You look quite good for someone who fought two Blood Demons," Liam remarked with a dry smile, approaching the dragon and patting it gently on the snout. "Can't blame you, though. You ate up my myst after all."

The dragon responded in kind, wiggling its tail like an excited dog, enjoying the attention.

Liam continued to stroke the dragon's snout, lost in his thoughts for a moment, when a voice suddenly broke the silence. It was laced with mischief and mockery, making his body tense instinctively.

"Who knew you had this side of you, Liam?"

Liam whirled around, his senses still slightly on edge, and his gaze landed on Mystica standing just a few feet away. She wore her usual playful smile, her eyes glinting with amusement.

"Ease up, sweetie," she teased, her voice light, as she walked closer. "No need to be so tense."

Liam took a moment to steady himself, his heart rate returning to normal. His mind raced—How long has she been standing there? Did she just appear out of nowhere? He couldn't sense her at all, and even his dragon, usually so attuned to his presence, hadn't noticed her. It wasn't entirely surprising, though. Ariana had managed the same feat in the past, and Mystica was just as skilled at hiding her presence.

"How long have you been standing there?" Liam asked, his voice calm, though his curiosity was evident.

"Long enough," Mystica replied with a knowing smirk.

"I see." Liam raised an eyebrow. "Anyway, what are you doing here at this hour? I don't think you get out much when it's night time."

Mystica's smile widened, her presence playful and teasing as she took another step closer to Liam. "I don't think you're in a position to be asking me about being here at this hour. After all, you're the student, and I'm the teacher," she said, her voice dripping with teasing authority, her eyes glinting with mischief.

Liam raised an eyebrow at her, unbothered. "Fair," he said simply.

"But you're right about one thing," Mystica continued, tilting her head slightly, "I was just catching some air when I saw you. You might be soundless, but not invisible."

Liam didn't respond, instead glancing at his dragon who, to his surprise, remained unperturbed by Mystica's presence.

Mystica's eyes flicked over to the shadow dragon, who sat quietly. "She looks quite smaller than before," Mystica remarked, a hint of curiosity in her voice.

Liam blinked in confusion. "She?"

Mystica's expression shifted to one of exaggerated shock. "Yeah. Don't tell me you didn't know the dragon was a female?"

Liam's deadpan expression didn't waver. "Well, it's just a dragon. Does it matter to me?"

At that, the dragon nudged him gently with its snout, and as Liam turned toward her, the dragon immediately turned her head away, as if embarrassed—an almost childlike gesture.

Mystica couldn't help but laugh softly. "It seems she didn't like you calling her 'it'."

Liam let out an exasperated sigh. "You've got to be joking," he muttered, his left eye twitching in annoyance.

"Why act all sassy anyway? For someone who tried to kill me during our first encounter, you deserve to be called 'it.'" He added, his tone animated as he glanced at the dragon with a matter-of-fact expression.

Mystica chuckled again, clearly amused. "But she did help you out in a few situations, right? So I'd say you're both even now."

The dragon let out a low, almost inaudible huff, as if in agreement with Mystica's words.

Liam nodded, though he wasn't entirely convinced. "You're right about that. She even hel—"

Before he could finish, the dragon nudged him again, more insistently this time, almost as if demanding attention.

Liam sighed heavily, rubbing his forehead. "I mean she. You happy now?"

Mystica's laughter echoed softly in the quiet night air, clearly enjoying this rare moment of vulnerability from the usually stoic Liam. "Why don't you just name her? That way, you won't forget she's a 'she' anymore."

Liam raised an eyebrow, considering the suggestion. "Name her? I dunno... 'Sassy' seems fitting, since she's acting all sassy right now." He glanced at the dragon, who gave him a half-annoyed, half-bored stare.

Mystica raised a brow and gestured toward the dragon, who now looked slightly perturbed at the mention of the name. "Not sure she likes it," she said, the playful tone never leaving her voice.

Liam smirked, unbothered. "She'll just have to deal with it."

Mystica, however, seemed undeterred. "I think you should reconsider. What about Nyx or Nyxie?"

Liam blinked at her, his confusion evident. "Where'd that come from?"

Mystica's smile softened as she stepped closer to the dragon, gently reaching out to pat her snout. "It's a fitting name. This type of dragon is called the Nyxarion—the offspring of death itself."

Liam's eyebrows shot up in surprise. "Nyxarion. So there's more of her kind?"

Mystica nodded, a trace of sadness in her eyes. "Well, she happens to be the last one. And funny enough, she wasn't even fully grown when she attacked during the enrollment trials."

Liam absorbed the information, his eyes narrowing slightly as he processed it. "I see. The offspring of death, huh?" He turned toward the dragon, who was now looking up at Mystica with what could only be described as an affectionate gaze. "Well, seems she likes your name suggestions more than mine."

Mystica grinned, clearly pleased with herself. "Well, since you're okay with it, Nyxie it is." She leaned in to give the dragon a playful pat on her snout, and the dragon responded with a soft rumbling sound that might have been a purr.

Liam shook his head, a rare smile tugging at the corner of his lips. "Nyxie it is, then." He stepped back slightly, watching the two interact, silently appreciating the bond that was beginning to form between them.

Nyxie let out a soft snort, as if giving her approval, before curling up slightly, content.

"Want me to tell you more about her? Trust me, you might enjoy it, even though some of this will be covered in the classroom eventually," Mystica teased, her tone light but with an underlying weight.

Liam narrowed his eyes, the corners of his mouth twitching in skepticism. "What's in it for you then? I know you won't do this without wanting something in return."

Mystica's expression shifted, her lips curling into an almost predatory grin. "Looks like you can be fooled twice, huh? Fine, you caught me," she said, her voice still light with teasing mischief. She took a step closer, her eyes gleaming with playful challenge. "What I want is simple. I just need information about how your fight went with the Blood Demons... and what happened in the Dark Forest."