

ShadowBound 137

Chapter 137: Magical Beast Power Level

"If that's the case, then you can keep your info about Nyxie. I don't think I need it anyway." Liam shrugged, his expression as stoic as ever.

"Huh? Huuuuhh?" Mystica's jaw dropped, her expression morphing into an exaggerated look of shock. She blinked a few times, as if trying to process his indifference. "Are you sure you don't want to know anything about Nyxie? It could be useful to you, one way or another."

"Nah, I'm good," Liam said bluntly, his hands still in his pockets as if dismissing the entire conversation.

Mystica's stunned look lingered for a moment before a mischievous smirk spread across her lips. "I see," she said, leaning in slightly, her voice dropping into a sly tone. "You don't want to tell me about the Dark Forest. But I know you wouldn't have any problem telling me about your fight with the Blood Demons."

Liam's face didn't so much as twitch.

"And that means," Mystica continued, placing a hand on her chest in mock hurt, "you have something to hide, Liam. That really stings, you know. Not trusting someone who saved you... it breaks my poor heart." She let out a theatrical sigh, pretending to wipe a tear from her eye.

Liam still remained silent.

"Fine, fine!" Mystica huffed, throwing her hands up in mock defeat. "Here's the deal, then. I'll tell you a few things about Nyxie—free of charge, let's say. In return, all I want is a little information about your fight with the Blood Demons." Her teasing smile was back, playful and full of mischief.

Liam's eyes narrowed ever so slightly. "I thought nothing came for free?"

Mystica laughed softly. "Oh, sweetie, it doesn't. This is just me being generous because I like you," she said, the sarcasm thick in her voice.

Liam sighed internally, already knowing this conversation wasn't going to end without him giving something. "Fine," he said, crossing his arms. "Talk about Nyxie first."

Mystica's grin widened as she clapped her hands together. "Good choice. Now, let me enlighten you about your dear Nyxie."

Mystica stepped closer to Nyxie, her fingers lightly grazing the dragon's snout. Nyxie huffed softly, her glowing eyes half-lidded, seemingly enjoying the attention.

"First off," Mystica began, her voice slipping into a more serious tone, "Nyxie isn't your typical magical beast. You already know she's a Nyxarion, the last of her kind. What you might not know is that her kind wasn't just feared for their destructive capabilities. They were revered as guardians of death itself."

"Guardians of death? I thought you said she was the offspring of death itself," Liam said, raising a brow, his tone edged with skepticism.

"Yeah, yeah, same thing, genius." Mystica waved her hand dismissively, her playful smirk returning.

"Anyway," she continued, "Nyxarions were believed to guide lost souls to the afterlife, their presence marking the boundary between life and death. Their powers are deeply tied to the balance of myst in the world. That's why you were able to extract her shadow so easily. If it were a different species, it wouldn't have been as simple. She's drawn to your dark magic—it resonates with her essence."

Nyxie nudged Mystica gently with her snout, as if to affirm her words.

"Now, here's the fun part," Mystica said, her smirk widening. "As her bond with you grows, she'll evolve. The stronger you get, the stronger she becomes. Not just in size but in her abilities. Even though you've tamed her with your dark magic and she exists as an ageless shadow, she'll still grow. Right now, she's like an adolescent, testing her limits. But once she fully matures..." Mystica's eyes sparkled with mischief. "Well, let's just say you'll have a walking apocalypse at your command."

Liam remained neutral, his eyes narrowing slightly. "What do you think her power level is right now?"

"Hmm, let's see," Mystica said, tapping her chin theatrically. "During the enrollment trials, she was at the lowest tier of Emperor level. But after you extracted her shadow—and considering your power at the time was nowhere near hers when she was alive—she dropped to mid-tier King level."

"I see," Liam replied, his voice calm. "Even so, she's still the strongest shadow beast I've got."

"That must mean the rest of your beasts are at Knight level or lower," Mystica mused, a sly smile creeping onto her lips. "Can you summon them all so I can check? If you don't mind, of course."

Liam shrugged, his hands still tucked in his pockets. "No problem."

With a single command, his voice low and commanding, he said, "Come out."

The effect was immediate. His shadow expanded across the ground like a consuming void, spreading wider than when he had summoned Nyxie. The darkness thickened, curling like smoke as it rose. Within seconds, shapes began to emerge—hundreds of shadow beasts materialized, their forms sleek, menacing, and diverse.

They stood in perfect formation behind Liam, a silent, disciplined army awaiting his orders. Their glowing blue eyes pierced the dim light of the colosseum, creating an eerie contrast against the darkness. Liam, standing at the forefront with his hands still casually tucked in his pockets, didn't so much as glance back at them. His posture radiated a calm, cold authority, as if commanding an army of monsters was no more notable than a routine chore.

Mystica let out a low whistle, her playful demeanor replaced by genuine intrigue. "Well, well, Commander Liam. I'm impressed," she said, her voice laced with admiration. "You've got quite the lineup here."

Liam's crimson gaze remained fixed forward, his tone icy and composed. "I didn't summon them for your entertainment. Just tell me what you see."

Mystica chuckled softly, her grin returning. "Oh, don't worry, sweetie. I'll give you a thorough assessment. But I have to admit... this is quite the spectacle."

"First, the magical beasts are in the mid-tier and low-tier Knight Level," Mystica said, gesturing casually toward the shadowy creatures Liam had extracted during the enrollment trials. Her tone was clinical, but there was a mischievous gleam in her eyes.

"And as for... whatever those are," she added with a sly smile, turning her attention to the grotesque, twisted forms of beasts Liam had summoned from the Dark Forest.

Liam's mind raced. 'Crap. I summoned the beasts from the Dark Forest without even realizing it.' His crimson eyes narrowed slightly as he processed the situation. 'Did she plan this? Did she bait me into summoning my entire army just to confirm I was in the Dark Forest?'

He glanced at Mystica, whose expression was now one of playful satisfaction. 'Looks like she's determined to figure out what really happened there, no matter what.'

"Most of these... abominations are Warrior and Soldier Level," Mystica continued, her voice dripping with mock disdain as she gestured toward the grotesque creatures. "But a few of them are mid-tier Knight Level. Not bad, I suppose."

"I see. Thanks for the assessment." Liam's tone was calm, but his jaw tightened ever so slightly. With a flick of his wrist, he dismissed the shadows back into his Void, their forms dissolving into inky blackness. Only Nyxie remained, her glowing eyes watching the exchange intently.

"Guess I'll need to find more powerful beasts, then," Liam added, his voice cold and detached, though his mind was still calculating Mystica's intentions.

"Seems like it," Mystica replied with a smirk. She leaned forward slightly, her playful demeanor returning. "Anyway, now that we've had our little show-and-tell... it's time for you to tell me about your fight with the Blood Demons."

Her tone was sweet, but her eyes betrayed a sharp curiosity.

"During that fight, after ensuring the city guard sent Elena back to the Avanciare estate, I decided to rely on my flames first," Liam began. "It was to buy time for the civilians in the area to escape before I could

use my magic." He paused, then added with deliberate indifference, "Of course, the other reason was to gauge the strength of the Blood Demons."

Mystica raised an eyebrow, clearly catching on to his half-truth. Liam didn't flinch.

"Yeah, I know," he said quickly before she could comment. "It was a bad idea. I realized it after just a few hits from them."

Mystica crossed her arms, intrigued.

"Once I realized they were too strong for just my flames, I switched tactics. I summoned Nyxie to aid me after the 'civilians' were gone," he continued smoothly.

"Nyxie helped you in her current form? That's bold," Mystica said, her tone teasing. "People must have seen her."

"No," Liam countered, shaking his head. "I didn't let that happen. I used Shadow Solidification to alter her form into something more... discreet."

Mystica's eyes widened slightly in surprise. "You mean you were able to morph Nyxie into a hybrid form?"

"Precisely," Liam confirmed.

"It made her more useful and less of an easy target."

Mystica leaned back, her lips curling into a sly smile. 'This kid's already mastering techniques most can't even attempt. A workaholic through and through.'

"This is good," she said, motioning for him to continue.

"The fight started as a two-on-two, but barely. Those demons were powerful, brutal even. They realized Nyxie's regeneration took a toll on my myst reserves, and they exploited it. Their strategy was relentless."

Liam's expression didn't waver, but his words carried weight. "When I tried to take one of them down quickly, they used my aggression against me. They baited me into getting close, only to unleash a barrage of blood spikes. I reacted by transforming Nyxie into a shield using Shadow Solidification. It worked... partially. But I still lost my right arm in the process."

"After that, I used Shadow Solidification on myself to create armor, stopping the bleeding from my wounds. It gave me a moment to regroup, and I managed to hold them off long enough to think I had weakened them with Shadow Rend. But they had their own tricks."

"They merged into one entity," Liam said flatly, his tone betraying no emotion. "Stronger, faster, and far more brutal. They broke through my Shadow Solidification armor and beat me senseless. That's all I remember before I blacked out."

For a moment, there was silence. Mystica studied him, her playful smirk returning. "It's surprising how you managed to endure all of that until I got there."

Liam remained silent.

"Alright then," Mystica continued, brushing off the tension with a wave of her hand. "Thanks for the story. Who knows, it might come in handy for me later. Anyway, have a good night, Liam." Her tone softened as she leaned down, giving Nyxie's snout a gentle pat. "And you, Nyxie, don't let him call you sassy, okay?"

Nyxie let out a soft rumble, her glowing eyes narrowing playfully.

Mystica chuckled and began walking past Liam.

"Mystica," Liam said, his voice cutting through the quiet like a blade.

She paused mid-step, standing just a few inches away, both of them facing forward, neither turning to look at the other.

"Yeah, sweetie?" she replied, her tone light, but there was a flicker of curiosity in her voice.

Liam's gaze remained fixed ahead. "About the Dark Forest... It's not that I don't want to tell you what happened. It's that I don't fully understand it myself. I don't want to give you half-truths or speculation. So don't get the wrong idea."

"I do trust you."

Mystica was silent for a moment, then a soft chuckle escaped her lips. "I see. Well, sweetie, you better figure it out quickly because it's only a matter of time before the Supreme Court catches wind that you have something to do with the Dark Forest."

Liam's jaw tightened, but he didn't respond.

"Right now, I've managed to keep the truth buried—the fact that you were found just where the forest used to be. The Silverhart family is covering for you as well, but even their influence has limits. You've got some time, but not much."

She turned her head slightly, her smirk softening into a knowing smile. "It's good to know you trust those who are trying to help you."

With that, Mystica continued walking, her form beginning to shimmer as she dissolved into a swirling mist. The faint sound of her voice lingered in the air as she disappeared. "Goodnight, Liam... and you too, Nyxie."