

ShadowBound 204

Chapter 204: First Lesson

The silence shattered as students jerked in their seats, their breaths uneven, eyes darting wildly despite the suffocating darkness. A metallic clang rang out, followed by the unmistakable whisper of something sharp slicing through the air.

A yelp—a short, panicked cry—before being abruptly silenced.

Liam remained still, senses sharpening. 'Tch. A test, huh? Just great. Like I needed another reminder of the damn dark forest.'

Beside him, Charlotte let out a low chuckle, entirely unbothered. "Oh? They're really going for this on the first day? Fun."

Then—movement. Swift. Unpredictable. A rush of air to the left. Someone flinched violently, a sharp gasp swallowed by tension.

And then, a voice—smooth, teasing, laced with amusement. "Come on, kids. You're supposed to be learning Tactical Espionage, and you're already panicking? Tsk, tsk." Seraphina.

Kaine's voice followed, blunt and cold. "Better start reacting."

The next instant—something fast, too fast. Liam barely tilted his head in time as a blade sliced through the space where his throat had been a moment before. His body moved on instinct, muscles coiling, his hands twitching toward his dagger.

'Shit. That attack had no restraint. Pure killing intent. If I'd actually summoned my dagger just now, I'd have given myself away. That would've been trouble.'

Around him, the other students weren't faring as well. Shouts erupted, hurried movements scraping against the floor, chairs toppling as they scrambled to escape unseen assailants. Someone was knocked to the ground with a grunt. Another let out a strangled breath, the sound of air forced from their lungs.

'Tsk. No weapons, no dark magic—that's off-limits. Can't use my flames either, not with how reckless everyone's moving. Might hit the wrong target...'

Liam's fingers twitched. 'Should I enhance my eyes with Myst?'

Then, Seraphina's voice hummed through the black void. "Here's a hint... if you're waiting for your eyes to adjust, you're already dead."

Liam exhaled slowly, lowering his stance. No eyes needed. Just instincts.

The chaos around him faded as he shut out the distractions, molding the room into something familiar. The flickering torches, the shuffling students—none of it mattered anymore.

He wasn't in a classroom.

He was back in the Forest of Kyrell.

Breath steady. Mind sharp. His surroundings reconstructed in his mind's eye as if the darkness itself were whispering its secrets. Flickers of crimson danced at his knuckles as he exhaled, his body thrumming with controlled power.

A smirk tugged at the corner of his lips.

"Let's go then."

The moment Liam embraced the darkness as his battlefield, the world around him slowed—not in reality, but in his perception. The scraping of boots against the floor, the subtle shifts in air pressure, the faintest rustle of fabric—every sound painted a map in his mind.

Then—an attack. Fast, precise. A blade whistled toward his ribs from the right.

Liam twisted, slipping past the strike like a phantom. His foot slid silently across the ground as he countered, palm striking toward the attacker's wrist. But whoever it was had sharp reflexes. They retracted just in time, vanishing back into the void.

Another movement. This time, from his left. A blunt force aimed at his gut.

Liam barely sidestepped, feeling the rush of air against his skin. His muscles coiled. 'Not seeing the attacks is putting me in a disadvantage, but I doubt it would be any different if I could see.'

Across the room, students were still flailing, their frantic shouts and gasps betraying their lack of composure. Someone tripped and fell hard, their breath knocked out of them in a single, painful wheeze. Another cursed, barely dodging an unseen strike.

Charlotte was laughing softly. "Oh, this is great."

Seraphina's voice rang through the chaos, still dripping with amusement. "Sloppy. You're all hesitating. And hesitation gets you killed."

A sharp grunt of pain. Someone had been hit. Hard.

Kaine's voice followed. "Don't react—act. If you're waiting to understand the situation, you're already dead. You don't get second chances in this profession."

Liam could feel the tension in the room spike. The students were on the verge of breaking.

He inhaled, slow and steady, Crimson Breathing pulsing through his veins. The faint heat at his knuckles intensified as his body fully adjusted.

Another shift in the air—this one aimed at his legs. A sweeping attack. He jumped back, barely clearing the strike before something—someone—moved in front of him.

Too fast.

He tried to move, but the weight of a hand pressed against his shoulder. And then—a sharp jab to his gut.

Liam staggered, his body locking up for a split second. That was all it took. A second hit—his legs were kicked out from under him. He crashed onto his back with a harsh thud, the breath forced from his lungs.

Darkness pressed in. The air was still.

Then—Seraphina's voice, right above him. Low. Almost amused.

"Dead."

Liam gritted his teeth, forcing himself upright as he crouched low. He didn't react, didn't let frustration show. And then—

He moved.

A sweeping kick lashed out at Seraphina's legs. It was quick, controlled, and nearly caught her off guard. Nearly. She stepped back just in time, but Liam was already following through. No hesitation, no wasted movement. He lunged, aiming for three precise points—her wrist, her legs, her shoulder joint.

For a fraction of a second, it almost worked. Almost.

But then, Liam felt it—his momentum turning against him.

Before he could process what happened, Seraphina's body coiled, shifting like a phantom in the dark. One second he had her off balance, the next, her legs were wrapping around his arms, twisting his center of gravity.

Shit—

His back hit the ground, hard. A weight pressed against him, a hand locking his arm in place, fingers digging into his wrist.

Liam remained still. He knew struggling wouldn't get him anywhere.

Seraphina's breath was warm against his ear, her voice smooth and teasing. "Not bad. You almost got me there." Her tone dipped lower, silkier. "But you hesitated. Just a little."

She applied more pressure, not enough to break anything, but enough to remind him exactly where he was—pinned, controlled, caught.

"But don't worry," she murmured. "If you last in this course, that hesitation? I'll burn it out of you. By the time I'm done, taking the life of a human will feel as simple as breathing."

And just like that, she let go, rolling off him effortlessly and disappearing back into the shadows.

Liam exhaled slowly, pushing himself up. His body ached, his shoulder throbbed, but he ignored it. The lesson wasn't over.

Around him, chaos still reigned—shouts, rushed footsteps, the sharp thud of bodies hitting the ground. Someone let out a strangled breath before going silent.

Then—Seraphina's voice again, smooth, almost bored. "Most of you are already dead. And the rest?" A pause. "Well, you might actually be worth my time."

And just like that, the attacks stopped. No more movement. No more whispers in the dark.

The lights flickered back on.

The room was a disaster. Students lay sprawled across the floor, some groaning, others clutching bruises. Their faces were pale, their breaths heavy.

Seraphina sat on the teacher's desk, legs swinging lazily, completely unbothered. A hum left her lips as if she hadn't just torn through the class.

Kaine leaned against the wall, arms crossed, his gaze filled with barely concealed disdain. Explore more stories at

Seraphina sighed dramatically. "Well, that was disappointing." Her eyes flicked across the room before settling on Liam. A smirk curled at her lips. "Except for you, my new little crush. You made things fun."

Liam didn't react. He simply straightened, keeping his face unreadable.

Kaine pushed off the wall, rolling his shoulders. "Lesson's over. You got your first taste of what this class is." His gaze swept over the exhausted students. "Some of you are already thinking about leaving. If that's the case, do it when the bell rings and don't come back."

Seraphina stretched, arms arching over her head like a satisfied cat. "Well, have a nice evening. After all, the sun will be setting soon."