

ShadowBound 213

Chapter 213: Impressed

The void trembled.

Liam's flames surged, casting flickering shadows across the abyss. His stance remained firm, his grip steady. He was done hesitating.

From the darkness, Seraphina's laughter echoed, soft and sinister. Then, without warning, she emerged—a blur of motion, her dagger slicing through the air toward Liam's throat.

Clang!

Liam's sword intercepted hers in a shower of sparks. The force sent vibrations through his arm, but he held firm. Seraphina's smirk widened.

"Oh? So there's actually some fire in you," she purred, her emerald eyes gleaming. "Good. Let's see how much."

She twisted mid-motion. A second dagger materialized in her free hand, striking toward his ribs. Liam shifted, parrying with the edge of his sword while releasing a burst of flames to force her back.

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Seraphina vanished into the darkness.

Liam's eyes darted around. His flames illuminated nothing but the endless void. Then—whispers.

"You think flames will help you here?" Her voice came from every direction. "This is my domain, sweetie. Light means nothing in the abyss."

A chill swept over him. The void itself twisted, the space around him warping like liquid. Then—pain. A sharp sting sliced across his shoulder. Blood trickled down his arm.

Liam exhaled, unfazed. "So you're just going to play games?"

A low chuckle. "Not a game. A lesson."

Another cut—this time on his leg. Then another across his ribs.

Liam remained still, his flames flickering. He could feel her presence shifting, moving just beyond his reach.

Then he closed his eyes.

The flames around him didn't fade—they condensed, tightening around his body like armor. The heat intensified, scorching the air itself. The darkness swirled, but this time, Liam didn't rely on sight. He listened.

A breath. A shift in the void.

He moved.

His sword lashed out in a blur.

A sharp gasp echoed as the tip of his blade met flesh.

Seraphina materialized, his sword pressed against her throat, a thin trickle of blood running down her skin.

Silence.

Then, she laughed.

A deep, rich laugh that almost sent shivers down his spine.

"Oh, sweetheart," she whispered, eyes gleaming with wicked delight. "Now this is interesting."

She didn't move. Didn't flinch. She simply smiled, her lips curling like a cat that had caught its prey.

Liam didn't ease his grip. "Is this what you wanted?"

Seraphina's smirk softened, just slightly. "Not wanted, darling. Needed."

Then, the darkness collapsed inward. The abyss wasn't fading—it was being absorbed into Seraphina herself. Tendrils of void energy swirled into her body, vanishing into her very being.

The suffocating emptiness lifted, replaced by the dim glow of reality. The translucent holographic dome around them flickered into view, its arcane structure humming softly.

Liam lowered his sword, flames still flickering around him. His breath was steady, his expression unreadable.

Seraphina tilted her head, her piercing green eyes studying him with satisfaction. "Well now," she purred, dusting off her shirt as if they hadn't just been locked in a battle of minds and steel. "I do so love a fast learner."

"And you know what? That display of dominance just now—mmh, it did something to me," Seraphina purred, her smirk turning wicked. "I like it. You should do it again sometime... but next time, with your hands instead~." Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes gleaming with mischief.

Liam remained silent, his flames slowly flickering out. "I'll pass on that," he said flatly. "But I do have a question for you, Lady Seraphina."

She pouted dramatically, clasping her hands behind her back. "You won't even indulge me, won't even choke me the way I want, and yet you still call me Lady Seraphina? And now you want answers from me? How cruel."

She twirled on her heel, humming as she skipped around him like a child playing in a field. "But fine, go ahead. After what you just did, I can't exactly ignore you, now can I?"

"Thank you, but I'd prefer we talk in private," Liam said.

Seraphina rolled her eyes, still twirling lazily. "Privacy? Sweetheart, lessons are long over. Everyone's gone. It's just you and me now. And if you're still paranoid, I already placed a silence spell—no one's listening in."

"Silence spell?" Liam murmured.

"Mhm~. No one can eavesdrop on us, so go on, ask away."

Liam inhaled deeply before speaking. "First, how did you know I'm a dark magic user, and why didn't you do anything about it? Second, are you also a dark magic user?"

Seraphina stopped mid-step, her playful energy shifting ever so slightly. She turned to face him, tilting her head, a knowing glint in her eyes.

"For someone as sharp as you, Liam, you really do ask the most obvious questions sometimes."

She giggled.

"First off, no, I'm not a dark magic user like you," Seraphina finally responded. "There aren't any left. Only Primordials can wield dark magic now, but even that's banned by the higher-ups—something about paranoia and control. What I used just now was Spatial Magic, specifically a technique called Void Domain. It lets me create a void that traps me and my target inside."

"Spatial Magic... I never thought it had an ability like that," Liam murmured.

Seraphina waved a dismissive hand. "No surprise there, sweetheart. You're still magically ignorant about quite a few things—don't worry, it's cute."

"And as for your first question..." She smirked. "It was the very first day in class. You almost summoned something using dark magic. Even though it was faint, I sensed your dark myst right then and there."

Liam remained expressionless. "I figured."

"Pfft, please, darling." She flicked her fingers at him playfully. "I sense your dark myst every time I see you, no matter how much you try to suppress it with that pitifully outdated technique of yours." She chuckled, stepping closer.

Liam's eyes narrowed. "What?"

Seraphina leaned in slightly. "Whoever taught you that suppression technique must've been from way back—probably one of those old relics from the years following the Demon War. But you? You, finding and learning something from that era? That's what surprises me."

She tapped his chest lightly. "That being said, you do use it well. So, credit where it's due. But—" she grinned, dragging out the word, "it's outdated, badly~."

She twirled away before adding, "But hey, don't feel too bad. I just happen to have an exceptional sense for myst. Not your fault you got caught~."

Liam didn't react immediately, his gaze fixed on Seraphina as she twirled playfully.

"If that's the case," he said after a moment, "then what exactly do you intend to do with that information?"

Seraphina halted mid-spin, tilting her head with a sly smirk. "Oh? Now you're asking the right questions." She tapped a finger against her lips, feigning deep thought. "Let's see... I could report you. Dark magic is so forbidden, after all. It'd be quite the scandal, don't you think?"

Liam didn't blink. "And yet, you haven't."

"Mm, exactly," she purred. "I haven't. And do you know why, my dear shadow?"

Liam remained silent, waiting.

Seraphina sighed dramatically, stepping closer, lowering her voice just enough to be teasing. "Because, darling, you intrigue me." Her emerald eyes gleamed with something unreadable. "A dark magic user who survived mankind's purge—that alone makes you a rarity. But more than that..." Her smirk deepened. "I'm doing this because a dear friend of mine asked me to take you under my wing."

Liam's expression remained unreadable. "A friend?"

Seraphina let out a breathy chuckle, circling him now. "Yeah, sweetie, a friend. Our lovely Mystica."

Liam's mind immediately went into thought. So Mystica is the reason she's here? For some reason, I feel like I'm in debt to someone again.

Seraphina suddenly stopped behind him, leaning in close, her breath ghosting over his ear. "What are you thinking about~?"

Liam didn't move. "Nothing in particular. But I have a question—and a request."

"Oho~, another question and a request? You really owe me now, sweetie. Go on, shoot." She stepped back with an amused glint in her eyes.

"Thank you." Liam exhaled. "You mentioned my myst suppression technique is outdated. So, is there a modern version? Because ever since the first day of class—until now—I've never sensed a shred of myst or aura from you or Instructor Kaine. Except when you trapped me in your domain."

Seraphina raised a brow. "Hmm~, so you are sensitive to myst, just not good enough yet." She waved her hand lazily. "But yes, there is a modern technique. If you're using Veil of Flux, then you should know—it's ancient. My method, on the other hand, is near-total suppression, bringing myst levels to almost zero. It's something people of my profession learn early in life. Unlike Veil of Flux, which lets you alter your presence—appearing weaker or stronger—this simply erases it. Hope that clears things up."

"It does." Liam gave a slight nod. "And for my request—"

"No need to ask, darling~," Seraphina cut in with a grin. "I will teach you. As long as you're serious about taking the path of an assassin-type knight." She shrugged. "But honestly? It doesn't matter. I'd still teach you—since it's something Mystica asked. So no need for formalities, sweetie~."

Liam exhaled lightly. "I see. I'm grateful for your help." He gave a slight bow.

"Don't mention it." Her lips curled into something mischievous. "But—you do know how to repay me, right~?" She purred, dragging a hand around her own throat, looking way too eager.

Liam's expression remained deadpan. "I'll pass. But I'll find another way to repay you." He turned. "For now, I have to go. It's getting dark outside."

"Huh?! You can't just leave like that!" Seraphina whined.

"But I can."