

ShadowBound 67

Chapter 67: Quick Progress

When dark magic users began mysteriously disappearing, rumors started to spread among the mage. Most claimed that blood demons were preying on dark magic users, hunting them down for sustenance.

But Galen had his doubts. To him, the idea of blood demons selectively targeting dark magic users seemed improbable.

He also doubted that blood demons could even sense dark magic, let alone track it or consume it.

Instead, Galen suspected something more deliberate was at play: someone—or something—had ordered the blood demons to eradicate the dark magic users.

And if that were true, the demons now entering the city weren't just scavengers. They were either pursuing some other purpose or had splintered from the main force, straying into the city in their desperate struggle to survive.

As Galen made his way back to the training ground, his mind whirled with questions. Blood Demons in the capital? The thought didn't sit right with him.

"It's doubtful they sensed the kid's dark magic. And if these really are Blood Demons, there should've been far more casualties."

Blood Demons weren't just any demons. Known for their brutality and cunning, even a pair of them could wipe out an entire squad of Guardian-ranked knights with ease.

An attack from such high-level, intelligent creatures would normally leave a trail of devastation, not just a few bodies.

"Something's off," he mused, unease gnawing at the back of his mind.

Reaching the training ground, he found Ariana and Dylan still lingering there. They seemed absorbed in something, their attention fixed beyond him.

"You two should get moving. I've got something to teach these—" Galen began, only to be cut off by an unexpected "Shh!" from Dylan.

His eyebrows shot up. "Hey, how dare you—"

"Sorry, Sir Galen," Dylan whispered, flashing a sheepish grin, "but you might want to keep it down. They're... in some kind of intense state." He gestured to Liam and Asher, still in their meditative stances.

Galen turned to see his two students, and a smirk tugged at his lips.

Both Liam and Asher sat surrounded by an ethereal glow—their own flames, red for Liam and blue for Asher, danced around them like living auras.

It was almost as if they were on fire, but neither seemed to feel any burn. Instead, they were lost in their focus, immersed in a trance that connected them deeply to their inner myst.

They're already syncing with Alignment? Galen thought, a spark of pride flickering within him.

"Well, well..." he murmured, his gaze intense as he observed them. "Looks like these two just don't know how to slow down when it comes to progress."

Galen watched them in silence, a sense of satisfaction mingling with his usual smirk. 'These two might be more interesting than I gave them credit for,' he mused.

Their flames pulsed in rhythm with their breathing, intensifying with each inhale, as if they were feeding off the energy around them. "Already mastering Alignment... they've come further than I expected."

As he observed, he felt Ariana's presence beside him, her gaze fixated on the boys.

She seemed captivated, her green eyes glowing softly as she watched the steady rise and fall of the flames. Dylan leaned in as well, his playful expression replaced with genuine curiosity.

"So... this is Alignment?" Ariana whispered, a hint of awe in her voice. "It's beautiful, like they're drawing power from the air itself."

"Not just from the air," Galen replied, keeping his voice low. "They're channeling the myst within, merging it with their heat and flames. The more in tune they are, the stronger the connection becomes—and the more devastating their strikes."

Dylan nodded thoughtfully. "But isn't that dangerous? I mean, if they lose control—"

"They will," Galen said with a smirk. "Everyone does at first. But that's part of the training." His gaze returned to Liam and Asher.

"If they can hold it long enough, they'll find their limits. It's about knowing how far to push... and when to pull back." He tilted his head slightly, his eyes sharpening. "Looks like they're about to hit that point."

Almost on cue, Liam's flames flared brighter, his face tightening as he pushed harder. A low hum filled the air, the heat radiating off of him growing intense enough that even Galen felt it from where he stood.

Asher's blue flames flickered, wavering as he struggled to maintain the connection, sweat dripping down his forehead.

"Hold it," Galen muttered to himself, watching them intently. Just a little more...

But the moment shattered as Liam's concentration wavered. His flames sputtered, then exploded out in a burst of heat, nearly toppling him. Asher faltered, his own flames dispersing as he slumped forward, panting heavily.

"Close," Galen said, stepping forward with a hint of approval. "Not bad for beginners."

Liam looked up, frustration flickering across his face as he caught his breath.

"You'll get there," Galen said, his tone as close to encouragement as he'd allow himself. "It's progress, not perfection."

Asher shot him a determined look, wiping the sweat from his brow. "Then I'll go again. I'm not done yet."

Galen's smirk widened. Maybe these two have the drive to keep up after all. "Good. But first," he said, a glint of mischief in his eye, "how about a little... sparring? Real-time practice might just be what you need to lock in those skills."

Ariana's eyes lit up with excitement, and Dylan grinned, practically bouncing on his feet. "Now this, I've got to see!"