

ShadowBound 103

Chapter 103: Unexpected Visit

A week and a few days had passed, and life at the academy had settled into a new rhythm. For some, things seemed to be progressing smoothly; for others, the cracks in their façade were starting to show. Both Liam and Sheila had managed to expand their myst cores significantly, marking a crucial step in their growth.

Sheila's core had grown to five times its original size, a remarkable feat that displayed her strength and dedication. Liam, ever the ambitious and power-hungry individual, had outpaced her, pushing his core to eight times its size, largely thanks to his mastery of Crimson Breathing. The relentless technique had proved invaluable in harnessing and channeling his myst with unparalleled efficiency.

With their cores expanded, Mystica began guiding them through foundational spells and techniques, helping them refine their abilities further. While progress was evident on the surface, it was clear that something had fundamentally shifted, particularly in Sheila.

The once fiery and sharp-tongued princess of ice had become uncharacteristically quiet. Her biting remarks toward Liam had all but disappeared, replaced by an eerie silence and a blank, expressionless demeanor. It was as though the loss from their fight had carved something out of her.

Sheila hadn't just failed to execute Liam or lost to him that day—her pride, her confidence, and perhaps even the identity she had built for herself, had taken a deep hit.

She seemed more like a shadow of the unshakable figure she had once projected. Maybe this was her true self when she was inwardly shaken—raw and vulnerable, stripped of her icy armor.

Mystica had noticed the change. She always noticed. But instead of offering advice or probing questions, she simply smirked in her usual mischievous way, silently acknowledging the tension without interfering.

She knew exactly what had happened, but she also understood that this was something Sheila needed to navigate on her own.

Liam, on the other hand, seemed entirely unaffected by the events of their fight.

To him, it was nothing more than an "inconvenience," a momentary distraction on his relentless pursuit of power. His focus remained razor-sharp, his thoughts consumed with greater challenges and the steps he needed to take to become even stronger.

"You all did well today," Mystica said, clapping her hands with a bright smile. The sun filtered through the thick canopy above, casting ethereal light around her as if she were bathed in her own mystical glow.

"We'll end here. You all deserve a good rest." Her gaze swept across Sheila, Liam, Dylan, and Ariana, pausing briefly on each of them. Discover stories at empire

"Yeah, we do need rest, my queen. Your humble servant is utterly exhausted," Dylan groaned dramatically, collapsing onto the green grass with an exaggerated sigh, his arms splayed wide as if he'd just survived a war.

"You didn't even do anything difficult, yet here you are, acting like you ran a marathon," Ariana retorted, her voice flat, her unimpressed expression practically rolling its eyes at him.

"Hey, hey, don't go judging me," Dylan shot back, pointing a finger at her with mock indignation. "Excellence takes effort, even if you can't see it."

Mystica chuckled softly as she watched the exchange. "That's enough, you two. You're wasting energy bickering when you could be recovering."

Ariana rolled her eyes but said nothing more, while Dylan simply grinned, clearly unbothered.

Shifting her attention, Mystica's expression softened. "Now, you two," she said, her gaze settling on Liam and Sheila, "you've made impressive progress in just eleven days. Your growth is commendable."

Liam remained silent, his stoic expression betraying no hint of pride, and Sheila also stood silent, her face devoid of any reaction.

"Still," Mystica continued, her tone turning playful, "it seems like you two are far from being on the same page. But I must say, the silence is refreshing, especially from you, princess." Her lips curled into a mocking smirk.

Sheila didn't flinch, her gaze fixed on some distant point beyond Mystica. It was as if the taunt hadn't even reached her. The ice princess seemed utterly detached, her expression blank and unreadable.

"Well, I see we're not in the mood for banter," Mystica remarked with a light shrug, her smirk lingering. "No matter. I have something for you."

With a graceful flick of her wrist, a white book materialized in midair, glowing faintly as it floated just above her palm.

"This," she began, gesturing toward the book, "is an ancient text compiled by the greatest light mages and knights of the past. It contains spells, techniques, and wisdom that I believe will be invaluable to you."

Mystica guided the floating book toward Sheila, and as it reached her, Sheila wordlessly extended her hands to take it. The book landed gently in her grasp, its glow dimming as it made contact.

"I'm giving you this because I'll be busy with other matters soon, which may disrupt our lessons," Mystica explained. "Dylan and Ariana already have what they need from me for now, so it's time for you and Liam to take the next step."

"The month isn't over yet, and there's still much for you two to learn," Mystica continued, her tone carrying a sense of urgency beneath its usual playfulness. "This book will help guide you. Study it well."

She turned toward Liam, her purple eyes twinkling with mischief. "And don't worry, shadowy boy. I haven't forgotten about you." With a sly smile, she added, "I've got a book for you too. But you'll have to wait a little longer to get it. Patience, after all, is a virtue."

Liam utter no words, unbothered by her teasing. 'I'm really going to make good use of that book, so don't play with me,' he thought to himself.

Mystica clapped her hands together. "Excellent! That settles everything. Now, off you go. Rest up, recover, and... who knows? Enjoy yourselves."

As the group began to walk toward the cave, Dylan lingered for a moment, glancing at the book in Sheila's hands. "So, Icy Heart," he teased, "do I get to borrow that once you're done?"

Sheila didn't even glance at him as she walked past. "Touch it, and you'll lose that hand," she said, her voice calm but cutting.

Dylan raised his hands in mock surrender, grinning at Ariana. "See? She likes me."

Ariana groaned. "You're impossible."

As the sun began to dip below the horizon, painting the sky in hues of orange and purple, the group made their way back to their individual rooms.

Sheila walked ahead, her posture rigid, the white book clutched tightly in her arms. The setting sun cast long shadows across her face, highlighting her stoic expression. Behind her, Dylan and Ariana followed, their bickering subdued but still present in the form of light teasing.

"You know, I think I deserve a reward for my efforts today," Dylan said, hands behind his head, a grin plastered on his face.

"What efforts? All you did was dodge around and make sarcastic comments," Ariana retorted, her tone sharp but lacking malice.

"It's called strategy," Dylan replied smugly. "You wouldn't understand."

Ariana rolled her eyes but didn't reply, her attention shifting briefly to Liam, who walked silently a few paces behind. His hands were tucked into his pockets, his expression unreadable as his gaze stayed fixed on the ground.

The group reached the building just as the sun disappeared entirely, leaving behind a dim, golden glow on the horizon. Sheila stopped at the entrance, turning her head slightly toward the others.

"Goodnight," she said curtly, her voice devoid of any warmth, before disappearing inside without waiting for a response.

"Still icy," Dylan muttered, shaking his head. "She still needs some ass whooping."

"You know that can't happen right?," Ariana said with a smirk.

Dylan shot her a playful glare before stretching his arms over his head. "Well, I'm off to dream of my glorious victories. Later!" With a casual wave, he strolled toward his room.

Ariana lingered for a moment, glancing at Liam. "You okay?" she asked softly, her sharp tone replaced with concern.

Liam looked up, surprised by the question. "Yeah," he replied, his voice steady. "Just tired. I'll see you tomorrow."

Ariana nodded, watching him for a second longer before heading to her own room.

Liam also walked toward his room. The hallway, quite which was surprising but he could care less. Reaching his door, he pulled out his key, unlocking it with a faint click.

As the door swung open and he stepped through, an odd sensation washed over him—a ripple in the air, a sudden shift in the atmosphere. Instead of the familiar sight of his room, he found himself in an entirely different space.

The chamber was vast, its walls adorned with shimmering black and violet tapestries that seemed to move as though alive. A massive crystal chandelier hung above, casting a soft, magical glow across the room. The floor beneath him was polished obsidian, reflecting his bewildered expression.

"Good evening, Liam," came a sultry, teasing voice.

He turned sharply to find Mystica seated in an ornate chair, her long dark hair cascading over her shoulders, her eyes gleaming with amusement. She rested her chin on her hand, her smile equal parts playful and enigmatic.

"I hope you don't mind the sudden visit," she said, her tone laced with mischief. "But we have something... important to discuss. Well it depends how you classify it"

Liam was still calm, almost as if he had been expecting this. "Anything not concerning the book you planned to give is classified as 'unimportant'." he said, his voice calm

Mystica adjusted herself in the chair, her eyes filled with mischief as she looked at him. "I see," she replied with a chuckle. "Let's just say it's something that seemed to have happened because of you."