

ShadowBound 110

Chapter 110: Just An Opening

"You arrogant—!" Lucian snarled, slamming his palms onto the ground. The earth beneath Liam's feet quaked violently, shifting like liquid as it tried to swallow him whole.

But Liam was already on the move. With a sharp leap, he landed on one of the still-standing pillars, balancing effortlessly on its narrow edge. He crouched slightly, his sharp gaze locking onto Lucian below.

"You know," Liam began, his voice cutting through the tension like a blade, "I get it now. You're not angry because of the library incident. No, this is something deeper."

Lucian hesitated, his myst flaring unpredictably as Liam's words struck a nerve.

"You're mad because no matter how much power you throw around, no one really respects you, do they?" Liam continued, his tone calculated and razor-sharp. "Even Chris treats you like a tool. All that strength, and yet you're still just his lackey."

"Shut up!" Lucian roared, his myst surging as he thrust his hands forward. A massive wall of earth erupted, surging toward Liam like an unstoppable wave.

Liam smirked faintly. 'Good. Keep losing control. Makes it easier for me.'

As the wall approached, Liam tapped into his myst, summoning a sharp, flame aura around him. With a burst of speed, he dashed straight at the wall, weaving through cracks and openings.

Before Lucian could react, Liam was in front of him, standing within arm's reach.

"Your problem," Liam said, his voice cold and even, "is that you think strength is all that matters. But strength without control?"

In one swift motion, Liam raised his hand and flicked Lucian's forehead with just enough myst-infused force to stagger him backward.

"...is meaningless."

Liam stepped back slightly, maintaining his calm composure as Lucian recovered from the flick. His lack of reaction only added fuel to the fire burning within the earth manipulator.

"You're really getting on my nerves, you know that?" Lucian growled, clenching his fists as his myst began to swirl more erratically. The earth around him trembled, cracks spidering out across the ground.

"That's the idea," Liam replied flatly, adjusting his sleeves as if Lucian's rage were no more than a mild inconvenience.

Chris leaned lazily against a nearby pillar, a bemused smirk on his face as he observed. "Come on, Lucian. You're making this peasant look good. Are you seriously struggling to handle him?"

Lucian snarled, his pride wounded further. He stomped forward, the ground rippling beneath his feet, but Liam's sharp voice cut through the tension.

"Careful, Lucian," Liam said, his tone smooth. "Push too hard, and Chris might decide you're the weak link here. After all, how many second chances does he give his tools?"

Lucian froze for a brief moment, his eyes flickering toward Chris, who was now watching him with a raised brow.

Logan chuckled from the far exit, his arms crossed as he leaned casually against the wall. "Wow, Lucian. He's not just beating you physically; he's getting in your head, too. You're making this too entertaining."

"That's rich coming from someone too scared to step in," Liam said, redirecting his gaze to Logan. His voice carried a subtle edge, laced with just enough mockery to plant the seed of irritation.

Logan's smirk faltered, and he stood up straighter. "Scared? Of you?"

Liam tilted his head, his calm demeanor unshaken. "You've been standing there the whole time, letting Lucian embarrass himself. At least he's trying. You? You're just a spectator, pretending to be above it all. Guess that makes sense, though. You wouldn't want to mess up your hair."

The jab landed, and Logan's grin vanished. He pushed off the wall, his fists clenching as a faint ripple of water myst formed around his hands. "You've got a big mouth for someone about to get wrecked."

Chris's eyes narrowed slightly, his amusement tempered by curiosity. "Logan, hold up. I didn't say—"

"Relax, Chris," Logan interrupted, stepping closer to the center of the colosseum. "I'll just shut him up for you. Lucian clearly can't."

Lucian glared at Logan, but before he could protest, Liam spoke again, his tone still maddeningly calm.

"Perfect," Liam said, his hands still in his pockets as he turned slightly to face both Logan and Lucian. "Two of you should make this more interesting. But just so we're clear—if I beat you both, does that mean Chris will finally stop hiding behind his lackeys?"

Chris's smirk returned, though his eyes gleamed with a dangerous edge. "You're awfully confident for someone about to get crushed. But sure, let's see what you've got."

As Logan stepped forward and joined Lucian, the blocked exits momentarily shifted—creating the perfect opening Liam wanted.

Liam's stoic expression didn't waver as he finally moved his hands out of his pockets, the faint crackle of flames surrounding him. The fiery aura rippled and flared around his form, bathing the small colosseum in a warm, menacing glow.

"Well, if things are going to get this serious, I better take you guys seriously," he said, his voice calm but sharp as he shifted into a fighting stance.

Logan smirked, though there was a flicker of unease in his eyes. "What happened to your daggers, huh? Not gonna bring them out with your fancy space magic again?"

Liam suppressed a chuckle at the naivety of the statement. 'How pathetic—they still think it's space magic. It's better this way. At this point, I can't really tell who deserves to know I'm a dark magic user.'

He allowed himself a faint smirk. "After spending a few minutes with you two, I figured it'd only be fair if I used my bare hands and my flames. After all, I can't afford to waste my daggers on people who aren't worthy."

The mockery in his tone struck home, and Logan's smirk dropped as his fists tightened. Lucian growled, the ground trembling faintly beneath him.

"That's it. I've had enough of your mouth!" Lucian bellowed, stomping forward.

"Let's shut him up together," Logan added, water myst coiling around his arms like serpents as he lunged.

The two boys charged simultaneously, their movements driven by raw aggression. Lucian slammed his fists into the ground, sending jagged stone pillars shooting toward Liam in a wave. Logan followed up with twin jets of water, their high-pressure streams slicing through the air like blades.

Liam moved swiftly, weaving between the attacks with practiced ease. He ducked under a stone spike, the heat from his flames vaporizing the edges of Logan's water streams before they could reach him.

"You're quick, I'll give you that," Logan said, frustration creeping into his voice. "But let's see how long you can keep dancing around!"

Lucian snarled and thrust his hands forward, creating a dome of earth spikes around Liam to limit his movement. "Got you now!"

Liam's flames flared brighter, licking at the walls of the earthen trap as he crouched low, his voice steady. "Got me? You sure about that?"

With a burst of flame, he launched himself upward, vaulting over the spikes and landing lightly just outside their range. Logan seized the opening, sending a wide arc of water slicing toward Liam's legs.

Liam pivoted smoothly, his flames countering the attack in a hiss of steam. "For two people working together, you're not exactly in sync," he said, his tone laced with subtle derision.

"Shut up!" Lucian roared, slamming both fists into the ground. The earth beneath Liam cracked and shifted violently, forcing him to leap into a backflip to avoid being caught in the upheaval.

For minutes, the colosseum became a chaotic dance of clashing elements. Flames, water, and earth collided, sending shockwaves through the arena. Despite the intensity, Liam stayed on the defensive, evading their attacks with measured precision.

'This is convincing enough. They're too focused on trying to hit me to notice anything else,' Liam thought, his sharp gaze darting toward the exit behind Logan. 'The opening I've been waiting for is finally here.'

Lucian lunged again, his fist coated in hardened stone, but Liam sidestepped, letting the punch crash harmlessly into the ground. Logan followed with a sweeping kick, water trailing behind it, but Liam leaned back, narrowly avoiding the strike.

In one fluid motion, Liam's flames flared brighter, enveloping his entire body. He stepped forward, as if preparing for a counterattack, and then—

Whoosh!

With a final dodge that seemed to morph into an attack, Liam executed a blazing maneuver he had adopted after observing Galen: the fiery sprint he had found very useful which he now likes to call Flame Dash.

The flames around him surged, propelling him forward in a burst of speed so blinding that neither Lucian nor Logan could track him. The heat left a searing trail in his wake as he darted toward the exit.

Your journey continues on empire

"Where—?!" Lucian stammered, spinning around in confusion.

Logan's eyes widened as he turned, too late to stop him. "What the—!"

Even Chris, who had been leaning casually against the pillar, was caught off guard. His smirk faltered as his eyes searched the arena, but Liam was already gone.

The only sound left was the crackling of residual flames and the faint hiss of steam, the three standing in stunned silence as they realized their quarry had slipped through their grasp.