

ShadowBound 111

Chapter 111: Such A Pain

"That bastard—lowly trash!" Chris growled, his voice venomous as he slammed his fist against the stone pillar he had been leaning on, the force cracking the surface slightly.

His furious gaze swept across the arena, still trying to process how Liam had outmaneuvered them so effortlessly.

Lucian clenched his fists, gritting his teeth in frustration. "Damn it! He was playing us the whole time. I should've just flattened him when I had the chance."

Logan, scratching the back of his head with an awkward chuckle, tried to lighten the tension. "Well, uh... I mean, he was fast, right? Like, really fast. Maybe he's just—"

"Shut up, Logan!" Chris snapped, turning to face his lackeys with a glare that made both of them flinch. "I should've known he'd try to pull something like that! And you two—" He jabbed a finger at them, his tone dripping with disdain. "—what the hell were you doing? Playing tag with him?!"

Lucian growled under his breath, his pride clearly wounded. "I was doing my job. He kept dodging everything I threw at him, and every time I got close, he slipped away. He's more slippery than he looks!"

Logan shrugged, trying to deflect some of the blame. "Hey, don't look at me like that! I wasn't the one who let him waltz out of here like a fireball on legs."

Chris's eyes narrowed dangerously. "Both of you are pathetic. You let some no-name flame user outsmart you. Do you have any idea what this makes me look like?" He gestured to himself, his tone rising. "The great Chris Rature, outdone by some trash who didn't even use his full strength!"

Lucian took a step forward, his voice defensive. "Look, I'll crush him next time, I swear. Just give me another chance, and—"

"There won't be a next time if he decides to rat us out to someone higher up!" Chris interrupted, his voice like thunder. "Do you even think before you act? If word gets out that we cornered him like this and still couldn't get the job done, our reputations are finished!... My reputation is finished."

Logan raised his hands in mock surrender. "Alright, alright, no need to blow a fuse. The guy's gone now, so how about we regroup and figure out how to track him down?"

Chris's jaw tightened, his anger barely contained. "Track him down? Are you stupid, Logan? If he's half as smart as he seemed, he's already long gone. And thanks to you two, he has the upper hand now."

Lucian glared at the ground, the weight of Chris's words settling in. "Then what do we do? Just let him get away after making fools out of us?"

Chris sneered, his piercing green eyes flickering with frustration and a spark of cunning. "No. We don't let this go. He might've slipped away this time, but he'll slip up eventually. And when he does, I'll make sure he pays for humiliating me."

Logan crossed his arms, his usual smirk replaced with a rare seriousness. "Alright then. So, what's the plan, oh fearless leader?"

Chris turned away from them, his gaze fixed elsewhere as he clenched his fists. "For now, we wait. Let him think he's safe. But mark my words, the next time we meet, it'll be his flames that are snuffed out. Besides we all stay in this academy."

"Bunch of idiots. Seems like they always have time on their hands. Such a pain," Liam muttered under his breath, weaving his way through the academy grounds. His steps were measured, his expression unreadable, though his mind was racing.

Escaping those three had been more than luck; it had been a calculated exploitation of their arrogance. Liam had spent enough time observing people to understand one thing: pride, overconfidence, and ignorance were as sharp a weapon as any blade in his hand.

Still, his escape wasn't perfect. Chris's trust, however minimal, had been the key factor. If Chris hadn't let his ego blind him, hadn't underestimated Liam even for a second, the escape would've been impossible.

"Flame Dash wouldn't have saved me then," Liam muttered to himself, his tone laced with a hint of irritation.

Chris was a lightning user, and that made him inherently faster than most, faster than Liam wanted to acknowledge. Proudful or not, Chris wouldn't have ignored a technique as versatile as Flame Dash.

If anything, Chris probably had his own version of it—something far quicker and deadlier, honed by his lightning affinity. If Chris had chosen to pursue him seriously, Liam wouldn't have stood a chance.

'Thank gods he didn't.' Liam allowed himself a small breath of relief, though his expression remained composed.

But Liam wasn't naive. He knew this wasn't over. The humiliation of being outmaneuvered, of being outsmarted—Chris wouldn't let it go. And if Chris wouldn't, neither would Logan or Lucian. They would regroup, strategize, and come at him again, stronger and more prepared.

'I may have escaped this time, but next time, they'll be ready. And I'm not strong enough to take all three of them head-on.'

Liam's eyes narrowed as his thoughts shifted. His flames alone wouldn't be enough. Sure, they'd grown stronger during his time at the academy, but against someone like Chris? Or even Lucian and Logan together? He'd be overwhelmed.

Of course, there was always his dark magic—his true power. But that was an option he was reluctant to use. Revealing it wasn't just risky; it was dangerous.

'Flames are all they know, and it's better that way.' Liam clenched his fists, his mind swirling with plans. If Chris and his lackeys came after him again, he couldn't rely on tricks alone. He needed to be stronger, faster, and more prepared.

But strength required time, and time wasn't a luxury he had.

"Well," Liam muttered, a faint smirk tugging at his lips as he glanced toward the distant grounds, "if they want to come after me, I'll make sure they regret it." [Read latest stories on empire](#)

With that, he adjusted his uniform, shoved his hands back into his pockets, and strode forward.

The rest of the day passed in a blur, largely uneventful for Liam. With no pressing tasks or engagements, he found himself with plenty of time to think—and to recover. At least he'd finally managed to eat, though dinner felt like an eternity away.

Earlier, he'd barely scraped by with the small amount of food he'd managed before Chris and his lackeys had interrupted him. It wasn't much, but it had been just enough to keep him going until the academy's dining hall opened its doors for the evening meal.

Liam's dinner routine had become almost predictable, though far from solitary. Dylan, with his endless jokes and antics, had been a constant presence since the very beginning. Asher, ever competitive and sharp-tongued, joined in as well, adding an edge to the evening conversations. More recently, Ariana had started tagging along, a natural extension of Liam's training sessions with Mystica.

The evening passed swiftly, much like the rest of the day. After finishing his meal and bidding the group a curt goodnight, Liam returned to his room.

Once inside, the air of solitude allowed him to focus. He spent the rest of the night honing Shadow Solidification, pouring his energy into perfecting the technique. Though tempted to visit one of the academy's training grounds for a more practical session, he ultimately decided against it.

'Not ready to test this out on a larger scale just yet,' Liam thought as he summoned small shadows, shaping and reshaping them with precision.

For now, his room was enough—a quiet space where he could refine his control without interruptions or the prying eyes of others.