

ShadowBound 126

Chapter 126: Recovery 2

Liam slowly opened his eyes, his vision blurry as the soft light of dawn filtered through the curtains. His body felt heavy, as though weighed down by an invisible force, but the dull ache that had plagued him the day before was beginning to fade. His mind felt clearer now, though fragments of the previous day's events lingered like a distant echo.

"Look who's finally back among the living," Mystica's voice broke through the silence, smooth and teasing. She sat casually by the window, legs crossed, a leather-bound book resting in her hands. The sunlight framed her figure, casting a warm glow on her hair. Her eyes locked onto his, glinting with her signature playful amusement.

Liam groaned, running a hand through his disheveled hair as he pushed himself upright. His muscles protested, but he ignored the discomfort. "How long... was I out?" His voice was hoarse, barely louder than a whisper.

Mystica snapped the book shut and leaned forward slightly. "Well, if you don't count your dramatic wake-up yesterday, you've been out for three days straight. And since then? Almost twenty-two hours. Impressive, really."

Liam sighed, finally settling in a sitting position with his back against the headboard. "So... you showed up just in time, huh? Took care of the demons after I passed out?" His tone was flat, exhaustion evident, but his eyes searched hers for answers.

Mystica placed the book on the side table, her expression softening. "Yeah, I arrived in time to clean up the mess. I wanted to apolo—"

"Don't," Liam interrupted, his voice firm but calm. "No disrespect, Mystica, but an apology isn't what I need. You didn't do anything wrong. I made the choice to follow those knights. No one forced me."

Her gaze lingered on him, her teasing demeanor replaced by something quieter, more introspective. "Still," she said softly, "I gave you permission to go with them. It feels like my responsibility."

Liam shook his head, resting his arms on his knees. "You saw how restless I was. You made a call. Even if it was your decision, it doesn't matter now. Truthfully? If I hadn't gone, no one would've known those kinds of demons were out there. And by the time someone noticed, all we'd have found were corpses. No trace of what killed them."

Mystica leaned back in her chair, watching him intently. "That's... one way to see it," she admitted, a flicker of a smile returning. "You're nothing if not practical, I'll give you that."

"Practicality kept me alive," Liam muttered, his voice tinged with dry humor.

"Fair enough," she said, her tone lightening. "Anyway, enough about that. How are you feeling? And your myst reserves—are they stable?"

Liam closed his eyes for a moment, focusing inward. The familiar ebb and flow of myst was faint but present, like a river reduced to a trickle. "Weak," he admitted. "But it's coming back."

"Good," Mystica said with a small nod. "You'll need that strength soon enough. For now, though, rest. You've earned it."

"I believe I've rested enough," Liam said, his voice low but firm. He made a sluggish attempt to sit up, "I just need to use Myst Recovery to replenish my myst reserves, that's all."

Mystica raised an eyebrow, the playful glint in her eyes never wavering. "If you say so. By the way, hungry?" She stood gracefully, a subtle smirk curving her lips as she moved.

"Yeah." Liam's admission was quiet, the realization of his own physical weakness making his voice sound more tired than usual. He tried to stand but found his legs unsteady. He caught himself on the edge of the bed, pausing for a moment before speaking again. "Um... if I may ask, what exactly am I doing in your chamber?" It was only now that he noticed the soft, luxurious surroundings—far from the sterile, clinical environment of the infirmary.

Mystica's expression shifted to something more composed, though still tinged with her usual humor. "Well, the main reason is to keep the academy from asking too many questions about how you got so

seriously injured. Since you're asking, why don't you come over here, eat, and we can talk about it?" She gestured to a small, neatly set dining table across the room.

She gave a casual flick of her hand towards a chair near the window. "Also, you might want to grab that shirt and put it on," she added, pointing to a simple white shirt draped over the back of the chair.

Liam walked over in silence, still feeling the weight of his exhaustion. As he picked up the shirt and began buttoning it, his thoughts briefly wandered. His gaze flicked to the new pants he was wearing—loose and comfortable, but unfamiliar. 'How am I in new pants?' he wondered, his mind clouded with questions.

He glanced back at Mystica, who was seated at the table, casually waiting for him. A brief, unbidden thought crossed his mind. 'Did she...?'

His mind raced through possible scenarios of how she might have undressed him to change his clothes, but he quickly dismissed the thought, a wave of discomfort sweeping over him. He wasn't about to entertain that line of thinking.

Liam took a seat at the table. Mystica's gaze followed him, her posture relaxed. She leaned forward, folding her hands on the table, her voice turning more serious as she spoke.

"You're probably wondering why you're here, why I kept you hidden away." She paused for a moment, her eyes glinting with an unreadable emotion. "It's not just to nurse you back to health, though that was part of it. The main reason? I erased and hid everything about you, Liam—everything about what happened that night with the blood demons."

Liam stayed silent, watching her with an inscrutable expression, though his mind whirled. Mystica continued without waiting for a response.

"I erased the memories of everyone at the Avanclores party who saw you that night," Mystica explained, her voice calm yet carrying a weight. "Every single person I could find who witnessed you fighting those demons. They don't remember you or what you even look like."

She leaned back slightly, studying him carefully, watching for any sign of reaction. "I erased their memories and forged a new one—one where I was the one who dealt with the demons."

Liam's eyes narrowed just slightly, but his face remained impassive, his gaze locked on her with quiet intensity. It wasn't surprising to him; in fact, it seemed like the only sensible course of action. People in this world already viewed his kind with suspicion—if not outright fear. The demons weren't the only ones they considered monsters.

Mystica's voice softened, though the gravity of the situation still hung in the air. "You see, if anyone found out you were a dark magic user... it would be dangerous. People of this world have always feared and loathed dark magic. No matter what you do, they'll always see you as a threat. As a monster. And you'd be hunted. The Supreme Council of the Zones... they despise dark magic users above all else. I hope you understand why I made this decision."

She paused, studying him closely, waiting for any hint of emotion. But Liam remained still, his expression unreadable.

Liam's voice was flat, devoid of any inflection. "I would've done the same thing. Hiding the truth, erasing their memories—it's what I would've done for myself."

Mystica's lips curved into a faint smile, the approval clear in her eyes. No further explanation was needed. He understood perfectly. When someone shared the same reasoning, there was little need for words.

The silence between them lingered for a moment before Mystica shifted in her seat, her fingers tapping lightly on the table. "Good. I'm glad we're on the same page. It's for your own safety, after all. But know this—it's not something I can undo. Once memories are erased, they're gone. Forever."

Liam nodded slowly, his gaze unwavering. "Is that something I should care about? Those people you erased their memories of? We aren't connected, and honestly, they never meant anything to me. I was dead to them before this. The name Liam Hunter is only known by a few people here, and none of those people were at that party."

He took a bite of his food, his voice steady. "More importantly, I'm not looking for fame or recognition, and I wasn't trying to be a hero that night. Everything I did, I did for myself."

Mystica watched him closely, taking a bite of her own meal. "Well, that's good," she said with a knowing smile.

Her thoughts, however, wandered for a moment. 'He says he doesn't care, but he managed to keep the fight contained, minimizing casualties.' Her gaze lingered on him for a brief second, the faintest smirk tugging at her lips. 'Or maybe... he truly does care.'

The day passed in a quiet, almost meditative rhythm. Liam spent most of his time in solitude, deep in concentration as he practiced Myst Recovery, trying to restore his myst energy. The soothing process helped him regain some of the strength he'd lost, though it was clear he still had a long way to go. Mystica, with nothing pressing to occupy her time, stayed within the room, lazily flipping through pages of a book, her attention flickering between the text and the soft hum of the atmosphere.

As the evening rolled in, the shadows grew longer, and the night air seemed to press against the walls. Liam stood by the door of Mystica's room, his hand resting against the doorframe. The familiar feeling of irritation began to simmer beneath his calm exterior.

"Do I really have to use the door every time just to get back to my own room?" he asked, his voice tinged with annoyance, his tone flat but carrying a clear hint of frustration.

He had never quite gotten used to it—this peculiar way of traveling between spaces. The teleportation method, a form of mystic transport that Mystica had insisted upon, always left him with an uncomfortable sense of disorientation. The way she'd whisked him away to her chamber without warning the first time still left a bitter taste in his mouth.

Mystica, without looking up from her book, smirked mischievously. "Well, yeah. I can't teleport you directly, and besides, I need a bit of time to cool down," she replied casually.

Liam let out an exasperated sigh, his eyes narrowing slightly. "Fine." He ran a hand through his hair, then glanced at her again, his curiosity finally getting the better of him. "By the way... care to tell me exactly what I've missed out on these past four days?"

Mystica's smirk widened as she lifted a brow, unbothered by his question. "Nope. If you want the details, go ask Dylan, Sheila, or Ariana," she said, dismissing him with a wave of her hand. Her voice was light, almost sing-song, making it clear that she found his curiosity mildly amusing.

Liam's dry expression remained unchanged. "Does it hurt to just tell me?" he asked, not bothering to hide the sarcastic edge in his tone.

"Yes and no," Mystica responded with a shrug, her voice still teasing. Then, as if sensing his growing irritation, she leaned back and grinned playfully. "But damn, you're asking too many questions. Get going already. Unless," she paused, her eyes narrowing, "you wanna stay and watch me go naked? We could take a bath together."

Liam's eyes shot wide for a brief second, and his stomach churned in disgust. His hand tightened on the doorframe as he turned to open the door. "Disgusting," he muttered under his breath, his voice low and laced with distaste.

He didn't wait for a response. Without another word, he walked through the door, his face still twisted in mild repulsion. The door clicked shut behind him, leaving Mystica with nothing but her mischievous grin and the quiet echo of her laughter.