

ShadowBound 127

Chapter 127: Catching Up

Liam stepped through the teleportation portal, the soft hum of myst dissipating as it closed behind him with a faint whoosh. He stood in the center of his modestly furnished room, the faint glow of an enchanted crystal casting long shadows across the wooden floor. Letting out a deep sigh, he ran a hand through his messy hair, Mystica's teasing remarks still lingering in his thoughts.

"Such a pain," he muttered under his breath, shaking his head.

The room was quiet, save for the occasional creak of the floorboards beneath his boots. Liam moved to sit on the edge of his bed, his posture slouched but his mind sharp. Four days of being unconscious—it was a significant amount of time. Too much time. His thoughts churned, piecing together what little he knew.

'Four days... That's longer than the time it took me to recover from the Dark Forest.' He glanced down at his right arm, his fingers flexing involuntarily. 'If I could've healed myself, would it have made a difference in that fight? Probably not. Healing takes myst, and if my reserves had run dry... I would've been in the same position anyway.'

His jaw tightened at the thought. 'Still, relying on others is starting to piss me off. I need to figure out how to heal with dark magic. There's got to be a way.'

Liam's gaze drifted to the wooden floor, his focus distant. He clenched his hand, trying to summon one of his daggers, but the attempt fizzled out, leaving his hand empty. A flicker of frustration crossed his face.

"My myst reserves are still too low," he muttered, flexing his fingers again. "But at least I can still do this."

He extended his palm, and a small flame flickered to life, dancing in the dim light. The sight of it was comforting, even if it felt incomplete.

'I wonder I missed in the past four days?' he thought, his brow furrowing. 'Weaponry training, for sure. That's two days of drills gone for me. But the theory classes—that's the real issue. Those professors move fast, and catching up isn't going to be easy.'

He paused, the realization hitting him like a wave. "Wait... it's not just two days. It's three," he muttered aloud. "Weaponry training doesn't bother me much, but the theory... I can't fall behind there."

He dismissed the flame with a flick of his wrist, leaning back onto the bed. The mattress creaked under his weight as he stared up at the ceiling, his thoughts slowly quieting.

"I'll catch up, starting tomorrow," he murmured, his voice low and resolute. "But for now... I need sleep."

His eyes grew heavy, his exhaustion finally taking hold. Within moments, his breathing evened out, and sleep claimed him once again.

Morning came, and Liam was already up, moving through his usual routine with practiced efficiency. He had bathed, dressed in his school uniform, and was now standing at his door. The faint morning light filtered through the hallway windows as he stepped out, the door clicking shut softly behind him.

His footsteps echoed quietly as he walked down the corridor, descending the stairs to the ground floor.

I feel much better than yesterday, he thought, flexing his fingers lightly. 'Crimson Breathing worked wonders again. Amplifying Myst Recovery even while sleeping always speeds up the process.'

Reaching the bottom floor, his gaze landed on Naya, his assistant staff member, sitting at the counter with her colleagues. She was chatting casually, her expression relaxed until she noticed him approaching. Her eyes widened slightly in surprise as she quickly stood and walked toward him.

"H—hey," she greeted, her tone tinged with concern. "I haven't seen you in days. Are you feeling better now? Your friends told me you were under the weather." She offered him a polite bow.

Under the weather? That's definitely something Mystica told Dylan to say. Liam suppressed a sigh but nodded. "Yes, just a minor fever. Nothing serious."

Before Naya could respond further, he added, "Anyway, have a good day," and brushed past her, heading for the door.

"S-sure. You too..." she called after him, hesitating before muttering under her breath, "...I guess."

She watched him leave, her brows furrowing slightly. He seems... different. Nicer than the first time I met him. Did being sick change him a little, or am I just imagining things?

Her thoughts were interrupted by one of her colleagues calling out to her. "Hey, Naya, what are you doing over there?"

"Hm?" Naya snapped out of her reverie and turned toward them. "Nothing. I was just checking on my student. He's been sick for a few days, and I hadn't seen him. Not that I care much," she added with a shrug, "but I need him healthy if I want to keep getting paid, right?"

Her colleague chuckled, shaking their head. "You're not wrong. Playing 'maid' for students young enough to be your siblings is frustrating, but the paycheck makes up for it."

"Exactly," Naya agreed, brushing her hair back as she returned to her seat. "Anyway, we should get moving before the headmistress shows up and decides to give us another lecture."

"Good point," another chimed in as they all hurried to wrap up their conversation.

As Liam stepped out of the building and onto the school grounds, he moved with calm purpose. It didn't take long before he reached the main corridor, its familiar buzz of activity filling the air. Without hesitation, he headed for his classroom, his pace steady.

When he finally reached the classroom door and pushed it open, the usual chatter greeted him. Unlike the first day of school, when nearly every eye had turned toward him, today, no one seemed to care. For Liam, that was just how he liked it—quiet, unnoticed, and undisturbed.

However, not everyone ignored him. Sitting at the front of the class, Ariana and Sheila glanced his way. Ariana's face lit up with a bright smile, genuinely happy to see him, while Sheila's expression was more subdued but still carried a subtle hint of relief.

Liam walked quietly to his desk, his presence unremarkable until Dylan's sharp voice cut through the noise.

"Guess who's finally decided to beat the so-called 'fever,'" Dylan said, leaning back in his chair with a smirk.

Before Liam could respond, Asher chimed in with his usual taunting tone. "Hey, wannabe. I heard you were sick. Don't tell me a little time away from Galen has made you soft, huh?"

Liam ignored them, his stoic expression unwavering, as he slid into his seat without a word.

"Still as cocky as ever, huh?" Asher snapped, his irritation growing.

"No need to be loud, tiger," Charlotte drawled, propping her head on her hand as she lazily glanced at Liam. Her lips curved into a playful grin. "He's probably just keeping his cool—for someone as lovely as me, of course."

Her eyes gleamed mischievously as she leaned forward. "So, Liam, what do you think of me?" she teased, her voice dripping with exaggerated seduction.

Dylan joined in, clutching his chest dramatically. "Don't tell me you're leaving me for him, Charlotte! My heart couldn't take it!"

Charlotte waved him off with a smirk. "Oh, hush. How could I resist someone so stoic and handsome?" She turned her attention back to Liam, her grin widening. "So, Liam... your thoughts?"

For a moment, Liam remained silent, his expression unreadable. Then, finally, he spoke, his voice calm and devoid of interest. "Sorry, but... who are you again?"

The entire group paused for a beat before Charlotte chuckled, brushing off the remark. "Fair enough. We've never actually spoken, so I'll let that slide."

"I'm Charlotte Raven, the third rank of the first years," Charlotte said, leaning slightly forward with a smirk that was equal parts confidence and mischief. Her tone was sweet, yet laced with a deliberate playfulness.

'I know that. I was hoping that would make you stop talking,' Liam thought, his expression unreadable.

"I see," he replied flatly, his red eyes glancing toward the window instead of her. "Nice to meet you, then."

Charlotte's grin widened at his lack of reaction. It was as though his indifference only fueled her determination.

"You know," she continued, brushing a strand of her curly hair back in an exaggerated motion, "it's rare to see someone as composed as you, Liam. Most guys can't help but trip over their words when I'm around."

"I can't imagine why," Liam replied dryly, still gazing out of the window, his voice tinged with sarcasm that went unnoticed by most of the class.

Dylan, catching the exchange, stifled a laugh. "Ouch, Charlotte. I think you're losing your touch."

"As if," Charlotte shot back, tossing Dylan a glare before turning her attention back to Liam. "You're just playing hard to get, aren't you? I like that—it makes you even more interesting."

Liam didn't dignify her with a response, instead flexing his hand slightly as though testing the myst recovery he'd achieved overnight.

"Liam," Charlotte purred, leaning closer, "you don't have to act so shy. We could make such a powerful duo, don't you think? You, the stoic fighter, and me, the unstoppable queen."

Before Liam could deliver another dismissive comment, the sharp sound of a door slamming open cut through the chatter. The professor entered the room with a commanding presence, silencing the class instantly.

"Take your seats," the professor barked, his piercing gaze sweeping across the room. "We have a lot to cover today, and I will not tolerate any distractions."

Charlotte straightened immediately, though the smirk lingered on her face as she whispered under her breath, "Saved by the professor, huh? I'll let you off for now."

Liam didn't respond, his focus shifting entirely to the lecture. However, as the professor began speaking, Charlotte's occasional sideways glances made it clear she wasn't done with him yet.

Liam sighed inwardly, already predicting the nuisance she would continue to be. For now, though, he tuned her out, focusing on the lesson at hand. There were far more important things to worry about than Charlotte's antics.

One of those important things was figuring out who the hell this professor was.