

ShadowBound 145

Chapter 145: Magic Concealment

Mystica placed her book down, finally giving Liam her full attention. Her violet eyes gleamed with their usual playful mischief as she gestured toward the chair opposite her.

"Come now, don't just stand there like a stranger," she teased, motioning for him to sit.

Liam, unfazed, stood his ground. "Just tell me what you want. I've got things to do before bed, and you're eating into my time," he said, his tone calm and respectful, though his patience was clearly thin.

Mystica smirked, leaning back in her chair. "Oh, my dear Liam, when will you learn to 'obey before you complain'? You know, that's a core value of you knights."

Liam remained silent, his expression blank, but Mystica's smirk only grew. "What I have for you today," she continued, "is far more important than whatever trivial thing you're planning to do later. Trust me."

She leaned forward slightly, her tone turning playful as she added, "So, do both of us a favor and sit with your lovable teacher." Her smile turned seductive, and Liam couldn't help but feel like he'd rather be anywhere else.

Suppressing a sigh, Liam walked over and sat down without a word.

"Drink?" Mystica offered as soon as he sat.

"I don't drink," Liam replied curtly.

"Pfft, not like you're old enough anyway," Mystica said with a mocking laugh. She poured herself a glass of wine from the ornate bottle on the mini table between them and took an elegant sip.

Setting her glass down, she finally got to the point. "Alright, let's get serious. The reason I summoned you is the upcoming practical exams."

"The battlefield stuff?" Liam asked, tilting his head slightly. "What about it?"

"It's about your magic," Mystica replied smoothly.

"Don't worry. I won't use it in front of anyone." Liam said.

Mystica chuckled softly, her smirk returning. "That's not the issue, Liam. Let me explain."

She leaned back, her tone turning instructive. "First of all, you know Vlardia is a separate realm created specifically to test students. It's also where captured demons are kept, correct? During the three days you're there, every single one of you will be under strict surveillance by the academy heads."

She paused, watching Liam carefully before continuing. "The Headmaster and his delightful assistant Gordon will be monitoring you. But it doesn't end there. Knights and mages—myself included—will also be watching. Regulus, Kaelen, Ember, Magnus, and even Galen might join in... though with those two, it depends on their mood."

Liam nodded slowly, piecing it together. "The Headmaster mentioned the Vlardia setup. He also said points would be deducted based on our actions, so the surveillance part isn't surprising."

"Good, saves me some effort," Mystica said, taking another sip of her wine. "Now, here's where it gets tricky."

She leaned forward, her tone turning serious. "You know that every time magic is used, it leaves faint traces of energy behind?"

"Of course. But those traces can't be seen unless someone enhances their eyes with light or dark magic. You taught us that in class," Liam said.

"Exactly," Mystica said, her smirk widening. "The magical screens that will be cast during the exams are imbued with light magic. That means anyone watching will see everything—including the faintest traces of magic left behind."

Liam's brows furrowed slightly, but he stayed silent as Mystica continued. "It gets worse. The type of magic you use most frequently leaves a lingering aura around you. And right now, my dear, you're practically drenched in dark energy. It's all over you."

Liam exhaled sharply, leaning back in his chair. "So what are you proposing?"

Mystica gave him an approving nod, as if she'd been waiting for that question. "The best course of action is to conceal your dark magic—completely. And we need to start now if we want this to go smoothly.

"And before you saying anything, I know you have the willpower to stop using it, Liam. But that's not enough. The energy itself lingers, and unless we deal with it now, you'll be caught the moment you step into Vlardia."

"I see. Let's do it then. If hiding my magic is necessary, I have no problems with your decision," Liam said, his tone even.

Mystica's smirk widened, a mix of surprise and satisfaction on her face. "Well, look at you, catching on quicker than I expected. Not that I'm complaining—it makes my job easier."

She gestured toward an open area in the room. "Alright, stand over there. But before we begin, summon your daggers. Once this is done, you won't be able to use your dark magic until I undo the process."

Without hesitation, Liam stood and summoned his dual daggers, the blades shimmering with a faint dark aura as they materialized. He placed them carefully on a nearby table. For a moment, he considered summoning his sword as well but decided against it.

Mystica rose from her seat and grabbed a small glass vial from a nearby shelf. As she approached Liam, she uncorked the bottle and poured its contents—a fine, dark powder—onto the floor in a deliberate, circular pattern around him. The powder glimmered faintly, forming intricate symbols as it settled.

The circle was wide enough to accommodate both of them. Mystica stepped inside, raising her hands toward Liam. "Now, take my hands and repeat everything I say exactly as I say it."

Liam clasped her hands firmly and gave a nod.

Mystica began to chant, her voice low and resonant. "Arkaios..."

"Arkaios..." Liam repeated, his tone matching hers.

"Nymbrath..."

"Nymbrath..."

"Solus Atra."

"Solus Atra."

The moment the final words left their lips, Mystica swiftly stepped out of the circle. The dark powder began to shimmer, rising from the floor like tendrils of smoke. The substance swirled around Liam, moving with an eerie, serpentine grace.

The tendrils thickened, forming a vortex of shadow that encased him entirely. Liam stood still as the shadows pressed against his body, seeping into his skin like ink dissolving in water. His vision blurred momentarily, and a faint hum resonated in his ears, as though the magic itself was alive.

The room darkened slightly, the energy within the circle intensifying. Liam felt a cold, numbing sensation spread across his body, followed by an odd lightness, as though a part of him was being stripped away. The shadows pulsed, glowing faintly before retreating into the symbols etched on the floor.

When the process concluded, the room fell silent. The circle dimmed and faded, leaving no trace of the ritual. Liam stood there, the faint aura of dark energy that always surrounded him now gone but not completely. He glanced at Mystica, before looking at his hand.

"Try casting any dark magic spell," Mystica said, leaning casually against the edge of her chair.

Liam extended his hand and focused, attempting to conjure even the simplest spell. Nothing happened. The usual pulse of dark energy was completely absent.

"Looks like it worked," Liam said flatly, lowering his hand.

Mystica smirked, brushing her hair back with a flourish. "Of course it did. I'm Mystica—have you forgotten?" Her tone was dripping with pride.

She crossed her arms and continued, "Just so you know, while your magic is concealed, the residual dark energy around you hasn't completely vanished. You'll need to use your fire magic as much as possible before the practical exams to mask it further."

"Understood," Liam replied.

"Good. Now it's time for you to leave." Mystica raised her hand, and with a flick of her fingers, her air magic lifted Liam's daggers from the table. They floated toward him, and he caught them effortlessly.

Before she could snap her fingers to teleport him away, Liam spoke up. "Hey, Mystica."

"Yes?"

"That mage who was at the announcement tonight—Gordon Storm. How strong is he?" Liam asked, his tone measured but curious.

Mystica arched an eyebrow, her lips curling into a teasing grin. "Gordon? Why the sudden interest? Is it because he boldly declared himself the strongest mage in the Tempest Kingdom?"

"Most likely," Liam admitted.

Mystica chuckled, swirling the wine in her glass before taking a sip. "Don't let that two-faced idiot get under your skin. That title is purely self-proclaimed. But, he is one of the strongest mages in the academy. His affinities—lightning and light—make him formidable."

"I see," Liam said simply.

Mystica's expression darkened slightly as she set her glass down. "But listen carefully. You should never get close to him. Gordon is the closest thing to a demon in human form that I've ever seen. He'll do anything for his own gain. So steer clear of that bastard, no matter what."

"Understood," Liam said, his voice calm. He paused, a thought crossing his mind. "I now assume he's one of the reasons you wanted my magic concealed."

"Exactly."

"Wait," Liam said before she could snap her fingers again. "I have one more question. When I fought the blood demons, I used a significant amount of dark magic. What happened to the traces left behind?"

Mystica's smirk returned, though it was tinged with exhaustion. "I erased them, of course. It was a hassle—nothing I couldn't handle—but it did cost me some effort."

"I see. Thank you for your help," Liam said, offering her a small bow of respect.

"You're welcome, sweetie. Now, bye-bye," Mystica said with a playful wave before snapping her fingers.

In a blink, Liam vanished from the room, leaving Mystica alone. She let out a long, drawn-out sigh and drained the last of her wine in a single gulp.

"Now," she muttered, standing and stretching, "time for me to enjoy a sexy, hot bath."