

ShadowBound 193

Chapter 193: I Need More Intel

Ariana watched as her magic screen faded away, the glowing rune marks on her wrist vanishing just as Mystica had explained earlier. In its place, a neatly organized schedule appeared, displaying her selected courses alongside her class times.

Primary 1: Elemental Myst Mastery Discover hidden stories at

Primary 2: Spatial Manipulation and Dimensional Warping

Secondary: Alchemy and Potion Crafting

Her eyes scanned the schedule, noting the school hours—8 AM to 4 PM. It was a long day, but at least she had chosen courses that intrigued her. With a small sigh of relief, she turned to Liam with a grateful smile.

"Thanks, Liam. Really."

Liam just nodded, leaning slightly against his doorframe. "I just pointed out the obvious."

Ariana giggled softly. "Still, I appreciate it."

She stepped toward the door, but before leaving, she hesitated for a second, shifting her weight from one foot to the other. Finally, she turned back to face Liam, tucking a strand of auburn hair behind her ear.

"Um... are you going for dinner now?" she asked, her voice a little softer than before. "Because... I was heading there too."

Liam noticed the slight nervousness in her tone but didn't comment on it. He shook his head. "Not yet. I have something to take care of first. I'll be there later."

Ariana nodded, trying not to look too disappointed. "Oh, okay. I'll, uh... see you there, then."

Liam gave a small nod. "Yeah."

Ariana hesitated for just a second longer, then quickly turned and walked down the hall. As she disappeared around the corner, Liam exhaled quietly, shutting his door behind him.

As Liam sat back down on his bed, he summoned his magical screen again, eyes narrowing as he reread the description for Tactical Espionage and Diplomacy. Something about it held his interest in a way that the other courses didn't. The more he considered it, the more it felt like a course tailor-made for someone like him.

Yet, there was a dilemma.

Selecting this course meant forsaking Forgemastery and Strategic Command and Leadership. Both had their own advantages.

Forgemastery would grant him self-reliance. If he ever needed a weapon refined, armor adjusted, or some kind of custom gear, he wouldn't have to rely on a blacksmith or enchanter. He could handle it himself. The thought of being dependent on someone else, especially when it came to equipment, was frustrating.

Strategic Command and Leadership, on the other hand, was an investment in knowledge. Liam wasn't interested in leading people—he preferred working alone. But battle tactics, real-time strategy, the ability to see beyond the immediate fight and plan several steps ahead? That was invaluable. It would refine his combat awareness, giving him a sharper vision in battle.

And yet... Tactical Espionage and Diplomacy.

The first half of the name was enticing enough. Espionage meant deception, stealth, the ability to manipulate a battlefield without ever being seen. That aligned well with his style—silent, calculated, unpredictable. However, diplomacy? That part seemed off to him. He wasn't exactly the negotiating

type, nor did he care much for politics. The idea of sitting in meetings, talking things out, shaking hands—ugh.

His fingers tapped against his knee as he mulled it over.

What if this course wasn't just about talking?

Maybe there was something deeper hidden in the description, something Mystica had deliberately left out. If so, then he needed more information before making a final decision.

Before he could think further, a small, irritated chittering noise snapped him out of his thoughts.

Liam glanced down just as Nyxie, still in her small cat-sized form, crawled up onto his shoulder, nudging his cheek with her snout in an exaggeratedly dramatic way.

He sighed. "What now?"

Nyxie let out another soft, almost offended growl before flopping onto his lap, flicking her tail aggressively. She then turned her glowing eyes up at him, her expression painfully obvious.

-Why did Ariana leave?-

Liam blinked, then sighed again, rubbing his temple. "She wasn't going to stay here all night, you know."

Nyxie huffed and crossed her small front paws, looking unconvinced.

Liam glanced down at her and, for some reason, could feel her sulking. It wasn't like they could communicate with words, but he understood her frustration. She had clearly taken a liking to Ariana—probably because Ariana actually showered her with attention instead of telling her to stay hidden all the time.

"You're being dramatic," Liam muttered, but he reached out and scratched the top of her head anyway. Nyxie purred, but then quickly turned away with an air of indignant pride, as if she wasn't enjoying it.

With a shake of his head, Liam dismissed his magical screen. 'If I'm going to pick this course, I need answers first.'

Mystica would know more. Whether she had intentionally left out details or simply forgotten to mention them, Liam would make sure to find out.

For now, though, it was time for dinner.

"Alright, enough sulking. Back into the shadow," Liam said, giving Nyxie a pointed look.

Nyxie gave him an exaggerated stare, then grumbled before sinking into his shadow, her form dispersing into the dark mist beneath him.

With that settled, Liam stood up, grabbed his jacket, and stepped out of his dorm, making his way toward the cafeteria.

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For the rest of the night, Liam had dinner with his friends, though his mind lingered on the two mysterious courses. As they ate, it quickly became clear that he wasn't the only one who had discovered them. Conversations around the cafeteria buzzed with speculation, with nearly every table discussing Spatial Manipulation and Dimensional Warping and Tactical Espionage and Diplomacy.

The first course, Spatial Manipulation and Dimensional Warping, had immediately caught the attention of those with space affinities. However, that number was small. Space was a rare element, meaning the class itself would have very few students, but that also meant more focused lessons and specialized training. Those fortunate enough to have a space affinity were clearly thrilled—they had an entire course dedicated to mastering abilities that most other magic users would never have access to.

Fewer students also meant more one-on-one training with the instructors, which could accelerate their mastery. Ariana was lucky—this was a major opportunity for her.

Meanwhile, Tactical Espionage and Diplomacy sparked a very different kind of interest. Unlike Liam, who felt an almost instinctive pull toward the course as if there was something deeper hidden within it, most students—especially the boys—saw it in a much more shallow light.

Some viewed it as a chance to become "cool," associating espionage with spies, stealth, and secret missions. They imagined themselves as shadowy figures weaving through battlefields unseen, whispering coded messages, and outmaneuvering opponents with clever tricks.

Then there were those drawn to the diplomacy side—specifically, the ones who hated combat. For them, this course seemed like the perfect loophole: a way to remain relevant without actually fighting. They envisioned themselves as negotiators, making deals and settling disputes with words rather than weapons. Some even entertained the idea of climbing political ranks through diplomacy, seeing this as a stepping stone to positions of influence.

Liam could clearly see how shallow minded they were due to their reasoning. He doubted the course was as simple as most students assumed. If anything, the description felt too vague—as if the real purpose of the course had been intentionally obscured. That, more than anything, made him certain he needed more information.