

ShadowBound 76

Chapter 76: Leave Your Childish Games Back At The Castle

As Dylan and Asher continued their relentless back-and-forth, their banter filling the infirmary with unnecessary noise, Ariana sat off to the side, visibly unimpressed.

"Could you two quiet down already? Liam is still recovering, you know," she said with a sigh, rubbing her temples.

Asher shrugged, his usual arrogance on full display. "If he's still asleep, that's on him. Weaklings need their beauty rest, I guess."

Dylan smirked. "Says the guy who just woke up five minutes ago. Pretty sure you were snoring loud enough to shake the walls."

Asher shot him a glare, but before their argument could escalate, Ariana's attention snapped to Liam. His eyes fluttered open, the faintest groan escaping his lips.

"Hey, guys, he's awake!" Ariana called out, her voice a mix of relief and excitement.

"Well, look who decided to join the land of the living," Asher said mockingly, turning to Liam with a proud smirk.

Liam sat up slowly, his movements deliberate as he adjusted to being conscious again. He swung his legs over the edge of the bed, rubbing his temples to shake off the lingering haze.

"Honestly, I didn't expect you of all people to take this long to wake up," Dylan said with a wide grin.

"I did," Asher added with a scoff. "It just proves his body can't keep up with mine. Guess I'm tougher, huh?"

Dylan chuckled. "You might be right, buzz cut."

"Oh yeah, that reminds me..." Dylan said, suddenly turning toward a nearby bed. "I grabbed your daggers when Ariana and I carried you guys here. I left them right... here."

He stopped mid-sentence, his grin fading as he scanned the bed, confusion spreading across his face. "Wait, where are they? I swear I left them right here!"

Ariana frowned, her arms crossed. "Seriously, Dylan? How could you lose them already?"

"I swear I didn't! They were just here!" Dylan stammered, scratching the back of his neck awkwardly. He turned to Liam with a sheepish smile. "Sorry, man. I didn't mean for this to happen."

"It's fine, Dylan," Liam said calmly as he stood up. "I've got them right here."

With a flick of his wrist, one of Liam's daggers materialized in his hand, its dark, polished surface gleaming faintly in the dim light.

Dylan and Ariana stared, wide-eyed. "Whoa... is that... spatial magic?" Dylan asked, his curiosity piqued.

"No," Ariana said firmly, her gaze fixed on the dagger. "That's dark magic, isn't it?"

Liam gave a small nod, his expression stoic as he let the dagger vanish again. "Yeah."

Ariana's eyes lit up with a mix of admiration and intrigue. "I never thought I'd meet a dark magic user. Weren't they supposed to be... extinct?"

"Yeah, same here," Dylan added, his grin returning. "That's seriously cool."

"Thanks for bringing me here," Liam said, giving them both a slight nod. "But I should get back to my room."

As he turned to leave, Ariana quickly stood and grabbed a shirt folded neatly on a nearby table. "Wait! At least wear this. You can't just walk around the academy shirtless."

Liam paused, taking the shirt from her. Without a word, he slipped it on and adjusted the fit.

"Thanks," he said simply before heading for the door, his usual calm demeanor unshaken.

Dylan watched him leave, shaking his head in amazement. "Man, that guy is something else."

Ariana nodded in agreement, her eyes lingering on the door. "Yeah... definitely something else."

As Liam approached the exit of the healer's quarters, his sharp eyes briefly caught sight of Sheila, who appeared to be there for treatment as well.

Her presence barely registered in his mind as he continued walking, his stride steady and indifferent.

Sheila's gaze, however, locked onto him instantly. Her expression soured the moment she recognized him—the same person who had humiliated her twice since she arrived at the academy.

Standing just outside the exit, Sheila stepped into Liam's path, her frown deepening. "Hey, you," she called out, her voice sharp.

Liam ignored her, his pace unwavering as he walked right past her without so much as a glance.

Irritated, Sheila quickly closed the distance, stepping directly in front of him. "I was talking to you, peasant," she snapped, her tone laced with disdain.

Liam's cold, red eyes finally flicked to hers. "Hey..." he began, his voice calm but cutting, "...move it. You and I aren't close enough to be chatting like old friends."

Sheila's irritation flared into anger. Her clenched fists trembled at her sides. "I see," she said, her tone icy. "Seems my goodwill in sparing you humiliation hasn't taught you to respect royalty."

Liam didn't flinch, his expression as unyielding as stone.

Sheila's frustration boiled over. "Fine. I challenge you to a duel," she declared. "If I win, you will show me the respect I'm owed, no matter who's present. And if you win, you can—"

"Hey..." Liam interrupted, his tone sharper now. "...this is an academy. If you're here to play royal games, go back to your castle, Princess. If you want a sparring partner, find someone else to waste your time with."

The bluntness of his words struck like a slap, and Sheila's patience finally snapped. Her fists clenched tighter, frost forming around her fingers as cold air began to radiate from them.

"So, if you'll excuse me..." Liam continued, already walking past her, "...I'll be going now."

But as he moved to pass, Sheila's temper erupted. She launched a fist toward him, frost trailing behind it.

Liam's body moved on instinct. He dodged the strike by a hair's breadth, the icy force of the attack grazing his cheek and chilling the air around him. He stopped, turning to face Sheila with menacing deliberation.

His eyes bore into hers, their dark intensity amplified by the flicker of rage sparking within them. "I said, move it," he growled, stepping closer.

Sheila froze.

To anyone watching from afar, it would seem like Liam's commanding tone had cowed her, leaving the proud princess standing there as he brushed past. It might have even seemed laughable—a royal, stopped in her tracks by someone of lower status.

But the truth was far more terrifying.

In that fleeting moment, as Liam's words struck her, Sheila saw something more than a fellow academy student before her.

A suffocating, overwhelming aura cloaked him, radiating darkness and sheer bloodlust. And in her mind's eye, Liam's face vanished—replaced by the visage of a monstrous dragon, its eyes searing into her soul.

Her body wouldn't move. Her breath caught in her throat.

By the time Sheila regained her composure, Liam was already gone, his figure disappearing into the distance.

'What... what did I just witness?' she thought, her heartbeat pounding in her ears. 'That couldn't have been human.'

She shivered, recalling the sensation of that unfathomable bloodlust. Not even her brother Percy—the person she looks up to so much—had emanated something so terrifying.

For the second time in her life, Princess Sheila Granger had tasted fear.