

ShadowBound 83

Chapter 83: The Actual Concept

Sheila's unease deepened, though she kept her expression composed.

'Understand it? What kind of question is that? Myst is Myst—it's everywhere. What more is there to say?' Despite her frustration, she held her tongue, waiting for the conversation to unfold further.

Liam, standing beside her, was a picture of stoic calm, but inwardly, his thoughts churned.

'Now that I think about it... what is Myst, really? I've never asked myself that. All Draven ever taught me was that Myst is everywhere, and it's up to each individual to use it as they see fit. But for all my training, I've never stopped to consider the essence of Myst itself. I've been so focused on mastering techniques that I've ignored the foundation of it all.' His jaw tightened slightly, though his face betrayed no emotion.

Mystica's sharp gaze flicked between the two of them, a playful smirk tugging at her lips. "Why do you both look like I've just asked you to solve the mysteries of the universe?" she teased, her voice light but laced with intent.

Her smirk widened as she turned her attention to Sheila. "More importantly, why so uneasy, Princess?"

Sheila flinched slightly, her composure faltering. "W—what do you mean?" she asked, her voice uncharacteristically unsure.

Mystica leaned back slightly, her expression the perfect blend of amusement and curiosity. "Oh, you know exactly what I mean," she said smoothly.

"You've been blessed with one of the most significant elements of magic—light. Surely dear mummy and daddy spared no expense ensuring you had the finest tutors to teach you about Myst, yes?" Her tone was casual, but her words carried a pointed edge, as though she was chipping away at Sheila's defenses.

Sheila blinked, suddenly grasping Mystica's intent. Of course! Why am I panicking over something I already know? The realization steadied her nerves.

"Yes, you're right," she replied, her voice now more confident.

Mystica's smirk deepened, clearly enjoying the shift in tone. "Good. Then why don't you enlighten us, Princess? Share what your oh-so-fancy tutors have taught you about Myst."

Her voice dripped with playful provocation as she leaned forward, resting her chin on her hand, as if waiting for an entertaining answer.

Sheila straightened her posture, now more determined not to falter under Mystica's mischievous scrutiny. "Myst," she began, her voice steady but thoughtful, "is the life force of our world. It's the energy that flows through every living thing."

Mystica raised an eyebrow, her grin softening into an approving smile. "Not bad," she said, her tone carrying a hint of sincerity. "You're off to a decent start, Princess. But all you've done is repackage what Liam just said."

Sheila blinked in surprise. She had thought her explanation was exactly what Mystica had been asking for.

"Well then," Mystica continued, leaning back on the rock she was perched on, crossing her legs with a graceful motion. "Looks like it's up to me to fill in the gaps."

She adjusted her posture slightly, settling in before beginning. "Myst is indeed the essence of our world," she started, her tone shifting to one of a teacher delivering a lecture.

"But to truly understand it, you need to think of it as the foundation—a primal energy that exists everywhere and in everything. Myst is the invisible force that governs life, death, and the flow of magic. Without it, neither mages nor knights could do what they do."

She paused, her violet eyes glinting with interest as she scanned their faces. "Myst is present all around us, even now. It permeates the air, the ground, even the water in that pond over there. However, being surrounded by Myst doesn't mean everyone can use it. That's where the concept of a core comes in."

"A core?" Liam asked, speaking for the first time, his voice steady but curious.

"Ah, finally, the quiet one speaks," Mystica teased with a playful smirk before continuing. "Yes, a core, it nothing different from what every demon and magical beast has."

"To be more precise, think of it as a vessel or a magical organ within the body. It's what allows beings to store, shape, and use Myst. Without a core, Myst is just an untouchable energy around us, like air to a bird that doesn't fly."

She turned her gaze back to Sheila. "Unlike magical beasts and demons, who are born with stable and powerful cores, humans are a bit... limited. Most people have weak or underdeveloped cores, meaning they can only store a tiny amount of Myst—barely enough to light a candle or heal a scratch. That's why not everyone can become a mage or a knight."

"Then how do some people manage to use Myst?" Sheila asked, her earlier unease giving way to genuine curiosity.

"Good question," Mystica said, nodding approvingly. "For those with the potential—like you two—there's usually a combination of natural talent, training, and sometimes even external aids, like artifacts or potions, to strengthen their cores and enhance their ability to use Myst."

Sheila nodded slowly. This was all information she already knew but presented in a way that made her feel like a child again.

Mystica turned her attention to Liam, her smile taking on a sharper edge. "Now, Liam, I imagine most of this is news to you. After all, it's not like you've had the luxury of a proper education in Myst, have you?"

Liam's expression remained unreadable, though his thoughts stirred. 'So, she knows... I shouldn't be surprised.'

"Oh, don't look so shocked," Mystica said with an amused chuckle. "Of course I did a little background check before deciding to teach you. And what I found was fascinating. You've never attended a formal school until last year. Yet here you are, using advanced techniques with power that rivals students who've been training for years."

She leaned forward slightly, her eyes narrowing with interest. "How is that possible, Liam? How does someone with no formal training wield the level of magic you do?"

Sheila's jaw tightened, her mind flashing back to that deadly aura Liam had unleashed before. 'No proper education, yet he could do that? What kind of monster is he?'

Liam remained calm, his voice quiet when he finally spoke. "I learned it on my own."

"Clearly," Mystica said, her voice laced with intrigue. "Your strength is undeniable, but it's also... unconventional."

Mystica's gaze lingered on Liam, her tone dripping with playful mockery. "I guess all dark magic users really are the same," she mused, her words deliberately provocative.

In an instant, Sheila moved, her speed blinding. Before anyone could react, she stood inches from Liam, her palm outstretched.

Sharp, crystalline edges of ice materialized from her fingers, hovering dangerously close to his throat. The cold radiated off them, chilling the air between them.

Mystica leaned back slightly, her amused chuckle breaking the tension. "Oh, now this is interesting. The princess has finally decided to show her wariness," she said, her voice laced with mischief.

Sheila's eyes blazed with intensity, her voice sharp and commanding. "Dark magic user, huh? Who the hell are you, Liam Hunter?"