

ShadowBound 85

Chapter 85: How Much Are You Willing To Learn

Mystica leaned forward, her mischievous smile widening as her eyes gleamed with curiosity. "Before we begin, I have a question for you, Liam."

Liam stood silently, his expression unreadable as he waited for her to continue.

"How quickly do you want to progress and how strong do you want to get?" Mystica asked, her voice laced with playful intrigue.

Liam's eyes narrowed slightly. The question caught him off guard, and a flicker of irritation surfaced in his otherwise calm demeanor. "What kind of question is that?"

Mystica chuckled softly, tilting her head as if enjoying his reaction. "Let's just say my... investigation into you didn't stop at your lack of magical knowledge. I also traced your background—your life before you arrived in Grandeur City."

Liam's gaze hardened slightly, though he remained silent.

"Ah, so you did live with the Silverhart family," Mystica continued, her voice dripping with teasing satisfaction. "Quite the noble household in Nystra City, aren't they?"

Liam's expression didn't falter, though his thoughts churned. 'So she managed to trace me back to Nystra. These instructors never fail to impress with their reach.'

Mystica leaned back, her smirk growing smaller but still present. "From all the information I've gathered, it seems you have no family, Liam. Not a single blood relative."

"Tell me something I don't already know," Liam said, his tone calm, though a faint edge of irritation slipped through.

"Ah, so I'm right," Mystica replied, her smirk returning in full force. "Which means... you're on a path of revenge, aren't you?"

Liam didn't respond, but his silence spoke volumes.

"I'll take that as a yes," Mystica said, her voice almost triumphant.

"What's your point?" Liam asked, his tone low and measured.

Mystica's eyes gleamed with curiosity as she pressed on. "I want you to answer my question. How quickly do you want to progress and how strong do you want to get?"

The place fell silent as Liam studied her. His thoughts swirled. 'She's good. She might even know about the Dark Forest... but she's deliberately not mentioning it. Why? To avoid spooking me? Or is it a test?'

For her part, Mystica watched him intently, her thoughts equally calculated. 'I can let him know I know about the Dark Forest but for some reason, I know he knows I know about the Dark Forest.' She paused.

'Those eyes..., I hate and love them at the same time. They give away nothing, yet they remind me so much of—' She cut her thoughts short, her smirk faltering briefly before regaining its strength.

Finally, Liam broke the silence. His voice was steady, yet his words carried weight. "I want to grow strong as fast as possible and as much as I can. I don't intend to lose when I confront a Blood Demon."

Mystica's eyes widened slightly at his blunt declaration. Then, she laughed softly, the sound tinged with both amusement and approval. "I see. Then you need to get ready to dive into the foundations of magic and absorb everything as quickly as possible, so we can move on to what you really need."

"If that's all, then let's get started," Liam replied, his calm gaze unwavering.

Mystica grinned, her usual mischief returning as she stood. "Very good. First thing you have to learn is Myst resonance. And I believe you already know about that but, understanding completely will help you even more."

Sheila weaved through the dense forest, frustration etched on her face. "Where the hell are those two idiots, anyway? Can't they just stay in one place for once?" she muttered, her tone laced with irritation.

As she pushed through some low-hanging branches, her thoughts inevitably turned bitter. 'This is all because of that bastard.' Her jaw tightened as Liam's face came to mind.

'Thanks to some dark magic user, I'm stuck wasting my time with people I'm clearly stronger than. What a joke.'

Her grumbling was interrupted by a sudden, sharp flash of light hurtling toward her. Her instincts kicked in, and she tilted her head just in time. The projectile zipped past her, embedding itself into a nearby tree with a solid thunk.

"What the—" Sheila spun around, spotting a metallic arrow lodged in the bark. Her eyes narrowed as recognition dawned.

"Why is that idiot firing arrows in my direction?" she hissed, storming toward the tree. She reached out to yank the arrow free, but as soon as her fingers touched it, the arrow dissolved into nothing.

"Excuse me?!" Sheila stared at her empty hand in disbelief. Before she could process what had just happened, a familiar, cheerful voice echoed through the trees.

"Hehehe, that one was faster than I thought!"

Dylan appeared, jogging toward her with an exaggerated grin.

"Oh hey, Sheila! Fancy meeting you here. Weren't you supposed to be hanging out with Mystica and Liam?"

"I don't want to talk about it, idiot," Sheila snapped, glaring at him.

Dylan raised an eyebrow but didn't press.

"Also, you almost killed me with your stupid arrow!" Sheila continued, crossing her arms as her glare intensified.

Dylan scratched the back of his head, his grin turning sheepish. "Ah, really? My bad!"

"Yeah, your bad," Sheila shot back, dripping with sarcasm. "By the way, where's your dumb arrow?"

Dylan's eyes scanned the area like a confused puppy. "Huh, it was right there a second ago. Did you take it?"

Sheila rolled her eyes. "It disappeared, you moron. What kind of freaky arrows are you using?"

"Whoa, that's so cool! I didn't know it could do that!" Dylan exclaimed, looking genuinely impressed with himself.

Sheila let out a loud, exasperated sigh. "Oh my god, you are insufferable."

Before Dylan could respond, another voice called out.

"Dylan! I told you not to shoot your arrows this way!" Ariana appeared, slightly out of breath, her auburn hair sticking to her forehead.

Dylan threw up his hands defensively. "What? It's not my fault! Sheila was just standing there! Who does that in a training area?"

Ariana pinched the bridge of her nose and sighed. "You're impossible, you know that?"

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Sheila, choosing to ignore Dylan's nonsense, rolled her eyes and muttered, "This is why I didn't want to find you two."

Dylan gasped dramatically, clutching his chest as though Sheila had just stabbed him. "Sheila! That's so mean! After all we've been through—wait, we haven't been through anything. But still! My heart!"

Ariana smacked him lightly on the back of the head. "Focus, you clown."

Dylan grinned mischievously but then turned to Sheila with a curious look. "So, why are you here, anyway? Shouldn't you be with Mystica?"

"She said Liam needed personal lessons since, apparently, he doesn't even know the basics of magic," Sheila replied with a scowl, her disdain for Liam evident in her tone.

"Ohhh, I see," Dylan said, nodding sagely. Then he paused, his face slowly morphing into a look of horror as realization struck. "Wait. Wait. Are you telling me that bastard gets to train alone with Mystica?!"

Before anyone could answer, Dylan dropped to his knees like a melodramatic actor in a tragic play.

"Noooooooo!" he wailed, flailing onto the forest floor. "Why him? Why not me? Mystica, my queen! My goddess! Why have you forsaken me?" He rolled over dramatically, fake crying and clutching at invisible wounds.

Sheila stared at him, unimpressed. "Are you done yet?"

Ariana crossed her arms, smirking. "You're such a baby."

Dylan shot up, pointing at her accusingly. "You don't understand! This is a betrayal of the highest order! I could have been learning so much! Instead, he gets all the attention?!"

"You're hopeless," Sheila muttered, turning away. "I can't believe I wasted time looking for you two."

Dylan scrambled to his feet, throwing an arm around her shoulder. "Oh, come on, Sheila! Don't be mad. You're totally my favorite teammate."

"Get off me before I break your arm," Sheila growled, shrugging him off.

Ariana burst into laughter, shaking her head. "You're the worst, Dylan."

"And yet you both can't live without me!" Dylan declared, striking a ridiculous pose.

"Let's test that theory," Sheila said dryly, walking away.

"Oh, Sheila, wait!" Dylan called after her, tripping over a root in his haste.

Ariana sighed, rubbing her temple. "Why do I even bother?"