

ShadowBound 86

Chapter 86: Quick Mastery

Ariana hesitated as Dylan rolled himself off the ground, brushing dirt off his shirt with exaggerated drama. Finally, she called out tentatively, "Umm... Princess?"

Sheila turned to her, raising an eyebrow. "What?"

Ariana fidgeted, trying to choose her words carefully. "You, uh... don't seem to like Liam very much. Is there, um, a problem between you two?"

Sheila's piercing gaze lingered on Ariana for a moment, making her shift uncomfortably. "If there is, what does that have to do with you?"

"Nothing! I mean, not really," Ariana stammered. "It's just... well, Liam seems like a nice guy, and I don't get why you'd hate him."

Sheila let out a dry laugh, folding her arms. "Oh, is that so? Let's see if you still think he's so nice when you learn he's a dark magic user." Her voice was sharp, her tone dripping with disdain.

Ariana blinked, taken aback. "Uh... okay?" She tilted her head, clearly confused. "But... what's wrong with him being a dark magic user?"

Sheila's expression darkened, her icy blue eyes narrowing. "Are you joking? Dark magic users are monsters. Haven't you heard the stories? They're the ones who'd wipe out the human race if the demons weren't already trying to do it first."

As soon as the words left her mouth, Dylan—who had been rolling around aimlessly moments before—suddenly froze, then erupted into loud, uncontrollable laughter.

"Pfft—HAHAHA! Sheila, you actually believe that nonsense? Oh my God—hahaha—it's like something out of a bad bedtime story!" Dylan clutched his stomach, tears streaming down his face as he doubled over with laughter.

Sheila scowled, glaring daggers at him. "Shut up, you clown," she snapped, her tone laced with irritation.

Still chuckling, Dylan wiped his eyes. "Seriously, Sheila, I thought you were smarter than that. You've been duped by scary campfire tales!"

"Moron," Sheila muttered under her breath, clearly done with his antics.

Ariana, meanwhile, had been listening quietly, her brows furrowed in thought. "I mean... I don't know what you were told about dark magic users," she said finally, her tone calm but firm, "but I heard something different."

"Oh really? Enlighten me," Sheila replied with an arched brow, her voice skeptical.

"Well," Ariana continued, "I was told dark magic itself isn't evil. It's the intention behind it that matters. And honestly? Liam's been nothing but kind to me, even if he seems rough around the edges."

Sheila let out a scoff. "Kind? You've known him for a mere month."

"Still longer than you've spent trying to actually get to know him," Ariana retorted with an unexpected edge to her voice.

Dylan, now sitting cross-legged on the ground, chimed in with a lazy grin. "She's got a point, Sheila. Maybe your 'dark magic equals evil' theory is just a teensy bit outdated?"

"Stay out of this, Dylan," Sheila growled.

Dylan held up his hands in mock surrender. "Hey, I'm just saying. Liam is actually not a bad person even though he has such a dark expression all the time. I mean, if he was secretly planning to destroy us all, wouldn't he have started with you?"

Ariana stifled a laugh as Sheila glared at him, her lips twitching as though she were debating whether to punch him or walk away.

"Unbelievable," Sheila muttered, turning on her heel. "I don't have time for this nonsense."

Dylan leaned toward Ariana with a mischievous whisper. "Do you think she's mad because Liam's cooler than her?"

Ariana smirked, suppressing a giggle. "Definitely."

"I heard that!" Sheila barked, stomping off into the forest, leaving Dylan and Ariana snickering behind her. Explore more adventures at [empire](#)

"So, are you ready?" Mystica asked, her voice smooth and teasing as she waved a hand, making the rock she had been sitting on vanish into thin air.

Liam nodded, settling cross-legged on the forest floor. The dense canopy above cast dappled shadows, and the air felt alive with Myst's subtle hum. "You said I need to first sense the Myst in the air, absorb it, and channel it into my dark magic. Myst strengthens magic, right?"

"Exactly," Mystica replied, reclining on a nearby log beneath the shade of a tree. Her lips curled into her trademark smirk. "You've got the theory down. Now, let's see you put it into practice."

She leaned back, crossing one leg over the other. "And don't stress if you don't get it right away. I'm not expecting miracles on the first try." Her tone softened into something almost kind, though her playful glint remained.

Liam glanced at her, his expression flat. "Do I look like a kid to you?"

"Oh, forgive me, young knight," she said with exaggerated formality, her voice dripping with mockery. "Please, proceed."

With a sigh, Liam ignored her quip and straightened his posture. Closing his eyes, he let the forest's ambient sounds fade, focusing solely on the flow of Myst around him.

To harness magic, one needed to absorb Myst—the ethereal energy that flowed through the world like an invisible current.

Myst was not magic itself but the lifeblood that nourished it, enabling growth, strength, and mastery. For a mage, learning to align with this energy was akin to discovering an endless reservoir of potential.

Mystical Resonance involved several steps, beginning with awareness. Liam needed to sense the faint, rhythmic hum of Myst around him. Like listening to the distant crash of waves on a shore, this required focus and stillness.

Once he tuned in, the next challenge was to draw it in. This was delicate work—like pulling in a breath without disturbing the natural flow. The absorbed Myst would then be guided inward, circulating through his body before being directed into his magical core.

For Liam, this meant channeling it into the dark magic nestled deep within him, much like stoking the embers of a fire into roaring flames.

Liam closed his eyes and allowed his breathing to slow, inhaling deeply and exhaling with deliberate control.

At first, the forest around him was nothing but faint rustling leaves and distant bird calls. But gradually, he began to feel something more—a subtle pressure in the air, like an unseen tide brushing against his skin.

"That's it," Mystica murmured softly to herself, watching him.

The Myst felt faint at first, like threads of silk gliding over his senses. Liam focused, imagining these threads weaving together and drawing closer to him.

He reached out with his mind, his will acting as the needle that gathered them. Bit by bit, the Myst responded, funneling toward him like water being drawn into a vessel.

As the Myst entered his body, Liam guided it with precision. He visualized the energy as liquid fire, flowing through his veins and merging with his dark magic.

The connection felt both exhilarating and natural, like pouring oil onto a flame and watching it burst to life. His magic swirled with newfound intensity, its presence inside him sharp and vivid.

For a moment, Liam simply sat with this sensation, marveling at how the Myst amplified his magic. It was as though he had unlocked a deeper, more primal connection to his power. He let the energy settle, steadying the roaring fire within to ensure control.

After a few minutes, a soft sigh escaped Liam's lips, and his eyes fluttered open. Calmly, he rose to his feet, brushing the dust from his pants.

Mystica, who had been watching with a mixture of amusement and intrigue, tilted her head. "Getting up already? Did you give up that quickly?"

"I'm done," Liam replied simply, his tone even.

Mystica blinked, her smirk faltering for a brief moment. "Wait, done? As in... you finished?" She straightened up, clearly surprised.

"Yes," Liam said, meeting her gaze with his usual unbothered expression.

Mystica leaned back again, tapping her chin thoughtfully. "Huh. You're not bad, young knight," she admitted, her teasing tone returning. "But I suppose I shouldn't be too surprised. Dark magic users... they've always been known for their absurd potential."

Liam ignored the statement. "Do what's next?"

Mystica's smirk widened, the playful glint returning to her eyes. "Oh, don't get cocky, dear. This is just the beginning. But I have to admit, if you are able to quick this quick process up, then you might just finish the basis in just 3 or 4 days."

"Good," Liam replied, crossing his arms. "The quicker the better."

Mystica chuckled softly, her voice dripping with amusement. "Oh, you're going to be so much fun to teach. Let's get into thing, shall we? "