

Chapter 29

Bookstore — Opening Moves

The science section of the bookstore was quiet and intimate, tucked away in a corner where the tall wooden shelves created natural alcoves of calm. Soft golden lighting spilled from brass fixtures mounted high on the walls, casting warm pools across the dark oak floors and turning the spines of hundreds of books into a rich tapestry of deep reds, blues, and golds. The air carried the comforting, layered scent of aged paper, fresh ink, polished wood, and the faint, clean metallic trace of rain still clinging to coats and hair from outside. Rain tapped gently against the large windows somewhere beyond the rows, a soft, steady rhythm that made the whole space feel cocooned and private. Distant piano music drifted from hidden speakers near the ceiling — slow, contemplative notes that invited lingering rather than rushing.

Shammy still held the psychology book in her long fingers, the weight of it balanced perfectly as she stood with her usual impossible grace — tall frame relaxed yet commanding, silver-white hair catching the golden light in faint ionized gradients that shifted subtly with every small movement. Her electric blue eyes were calm, but beneath the surface there was a quiet, atmospheric warmth and genuine curiosity, the pressure around her gently equalizing the small space between the shelves into something almost intimate.

The man beside her leaned casually against the shelf, the book he had been reading now closed and held loosely at his side. Mid-thirties, calm gray eyes, a mildly amused expression that suggested he had been quietly waiting for this exact moment.

Neither of them seemed in a hurry.

The man spoke first, voice low and easy, carrying a hint of dry humor as he studied her.

“You observe a lot.”

Shammy turned the book over slowly in her hands, the motion graceful and deliberate, her tall frame shifting just enough that the air around them felt warmer near her.

“Yes.”

He nodded once, eyes never leaving hers.

“I noticed.”

Shammy glanced at the book he had been reading, electric blue eyes soft with quiet interest.

“Physics.”

“Yes.”

“Research or curiosity.”

He smiled faintly, the expression warm and open as he pushed himself away from the shelf slightly, stepping closer so their arms brushed in the narrow aisle.

“Both.”

Shammy considered that answer for a moment, then closed her own book with careful fingers and

returned it to the shelf. As she did, her hand brushed lightly against his sleeve — a brief, intentional touch that lingered just long enough to register, warm and unhurried.

“Acceptable.”

He tilted his head slightly, a small smile tugging at his mouth as he leaned a little closer, shoulder now comfortably against hers.

“That sounded like a test.”

Shammy closed the last bit of distance between them, her tall frame aligning warmly with his as she met his gaze directly, voice calm but carrying a subtle, atmospheric tease.

“Observation.”

He chuckled quietly, the sound low and genuine, his free hand rising to rest lightly at her elbow — a gentle, steady touch that stayed.

“Well then.”

He extended his other hand slightly, palm open.

“Jonas.”

Shammy looked at it for a moment, then took it — her long fingers wrapping around his with calm strength, the handshake lingering a beat longer than necessary, warm skin against warm skin.

“Shammy.”

Jonas raised an eyebrow, but his smile widened as he kept her hand in his for a moment longer, thumb brushing one slow circle along her knuckles before releasing.

“Just Shammy?”

“Yes.”

He nodded, stepping even closer so their bodies were aligned in the narrow space between the shelves, the contact comfortable and charged.

“Fair enough.”

Shammy returned the book fully to the shelf, her shoulder brushing his chest as she did. Jonas watched her carefully, his hand finding the small of her back — light, warm pressure that stayed.

“You came here to study people.”

Shammy did not deny it. Instead she turned fully toward him, tall frame leaning slightly into his touch, electric blue eyes warm with quiet curiosity.

“Yes.”

Jonas folded his arms loosely, but the gesture brought him closer, his arm brushing hers as he studied her face.

“And I was the one who noticed first.”

“Yes.”

Jonas smiled, his hand sliding from her back to rest lightly at her waist — gentle hold, thumb stroking one slow circle through her coat.

“Which means I passed some kind of test.”

Shammy tilted her head slightly, silver-white hair shifting as she allowed the faintest trace of a smile, her own hand coming up to rest lightly on his forearm, fingers tracing a gentle path.

“Possibly.”

Jonas laughed softly, the sound warm between them as he leaned forward until their foreheads nearly brushed.

“Good.”

He gestured toward the aisle with his free hand, but kept his other at her waist, holding her close.

“So what happens next in this experiment.”

Shammy studied him carefully, her tall frame relaxed and warm against his, electric blue eyes soft and engaged.

“You continue participating.”

Jonas raised an eyebrow, but his smile stayed as he pulled her a fraction closer, bodies aligned comfortably.

“Voluntarily.”

Shammy nodded once, her hand sliding up to rest on his shoulder, fingers curling gently into his coat.

“Yes.”

Jonas leaned forward slightly, voice low and fond.

“And what do I get out of this arrangement.”

Shammy answered simply, but her voice carried quiet atmospheric warmth as she stayed in his hold, forehead almost touching his.

“Data.”

Jonas burst out laughing — warm, delighted, the sound filling the small space between them as his arms slid fully around her waist in a loose, comfortable embrace.

“That might be the most honest answer I’ve heard all week.”

Shammy said nothing, but she remained in his arms, her own hands resting lightly on his chest, thumbs stroking slow, gentle patterns.

Jonas looked at her for a moment longer, then smiled again, pulling her closer so their bodies pressed

warmly together.

“Alright.”

Shammy waited, silver-white hair brushing his cheek.

“I’m curious.”

Shammy nodded once, electric blue eyes warm on his.

“Good.”

Jonas glanced around the bookstore, but kept her held close.

“So what exactly are you studying.”

Shammy answered calmly, but her voice was softer now as she leaned into him, one hand sliding up to rest on the side of his neck.

“Reactions.”

Jonas tilted his head, thumb stroking slow circles at her lower back.

“To what.”

Shammy met his eyes, the faintest trace of amusement and warmth in her expression.

“Unpredictability.”

Jonas grinned, pulling her gently closer until their foreheads touched.

“Well.”

He placed his book back on the shelf with one hand while keeping her held warmly with the other.

“You picked a good location for that.”

Shammy waited, her tall frame relaxed and comfortable against him.

Jonas gestured toward the aisles, voice low and fond.

“Bookstores are full of quiet chaos.”

Shammy allowed the faintest trace of amusement to touch her lips as she stayed in his arms.

“Explain.”

Jonas pointed lightly around the room, but kept one arm securely around her waist.

“Every person here thinks they’re alone with their thoughts.”

He looked back at her, eyes warm.

“But they’re not.”

Shammy considered that, her hand sliding up to rest on his shoulder as she leaned into him.

“Interesting.”

Jonas shrugged slightly, pulling her closer.

“I’ve spent a lot of time in places like this.”

Shammy studied him carefully now, her tall frame warm against his, electric blue eyes soft and engaged.

“You observe too.”

Jonas nodded, thumb stroking gentle circles at her waist.

“Yes.”

Shammy tilted her head slightly, silver-white hair brushing his cheek.

“That complicates the experiment.”

Jonas grinned, leaning in until their foreheads touched again.

“Good.”

Shammy said nothing.

Jonas continued, voice low and intimate.

“So what’s the next step.”

Shammy answered calmly, but her arms slid around him in a warm, steady embrace.

“Escalation.”

Jonas raised an eyebrow, still holding her close.

“Oh?”

Shammy gestured toward the bookstore café in the corner with a small tilt of her head, but stayed comfortably in his arms.

“Coffee.”

Jonas laughed quietly, the sound warm against her skin as he kept her held close.

“Well.”

He pushed himself away from the shelf, but only far enough to keep her in his arms as they began to move together.

“That’s a classic variable.”

Shammy began walking, her tall frame moving gracefully beside him, one hand still resting lightly on his arm.

“Yes.”

Jonas followed, his arm staying around her waist, bodies close and comfortable.

“But I suspect,” he said lightly, voice fond,

“that’s not the interesting part.”

Shammy glanced sideways at him, electric blue eyes warm and teasing.

“No.”

—

Above the City

Mephisto leaned forward with clear interest, coat shifting like shadow.

“Oh now this is different.”

Konrad watched quietly.

“Yes.”

Below them Shammy and Jonas moved toward the bookstore café, bodies walking comfortably close, the quiet tension between them clear even from above.

Mephisto gestured toward the scene.

“He noticed her immediately.”

“Yes.”

Mephisto’s grin widened, eyes gleaming.

“And instead of backing away...”

He chuckled softly.

“...he stepped into the experiment.”

Konrad nodded once.

“Yes.”

Mephisto clasped his hands behind his back.

“Well then.”

His eyes gleamed with anticipation.

“Let’s see how the quiet one escalates.”

—

© 2025-2026. "World of Ace, Mai and Shammy" and all original characters, settings, story elements, and concepts are the intellectual property of the author. All rights reserved.

Non-commercial fan works are allowed with attribution.

Commercial use, redistribution, or adaptation requires explicit permission from the author.

Contact: editor at publication-x.com

From:

<https://datavault.ws/> - **DataVault**

Permanent link:

<https://datavault.ws/doku.php/canon:ace27:chapter29>

Last update: **15/03/2026 12:04**

