

Chapter 31

Bookstore Café — The First Real Move

The café corner of the bookstore had grown a little busier, but still carried that soft, intimate hush that bookstores protect so well. A few small wooden tables sat scattered between the shelves, two deep leather armchairs positioned near the tall window where rain continued to trace slow silver paths down the glass. The lighting here was warmer — gentle amber from low hanging lamps that pooled across the tabletops and made every coffee cup glow like it held something precious. The soft hiss of the espresso machine behind the counter blended with the distant rustle of pages and the gentle piano music drifting through the space, creating a cocoon of calm where voices stayed low and moments stretched naturally.

Shammy sat opposite Jonas, tall frame relaxed yet commanding, silver-white hair catching the warm light in faint ionized gradients that shifted like distant lightning whenever she moved her head. Her coat was draped neatly over the back of her chair, electric blue eyes calm on the surface but carrying a quiet, atmospheric warmth and genuine curiosity beneath — the kind of presence that made the small table between them feel balanced, safe, and subtly charged all at once.

Jonas rested his elbows lightly on the table, leaning in comfortably close. His knee brushed hers under the table — a deliberate, warm contact that neither of them pulled away from.

Neither of them had rushed the conversation.

Which meant both of them were waiting.

Jonas broke the silence, voice low and fond as he studied her face.

“You know what the strange part of this is?”

Shammy waited, her long fingers resting lightly on the table near his, electric blue eyes soft and engaged.

“We skipped the awkward stage.”

Shammy tilted her head slightly, silver-white hair falling in a soft wave as she leaned a little closer, her knee pressing more deliberately against his under the table.

“Explain.”

Jonas gestured lightly between them, his hand brushing hers on the table before he laced their fingers loosely — warm palm to palm, thumb stroking one slow, gentle circle along her skin.

“Normally strangers start with small talk.”

Shammy nodded, letting her thumb stroke back against his in quiet response.

“Yes.”

Jonas smiled faintly, pulling her hand a fraction closer across the table.

“We jumped straight to psychological sparring.”

Shammy allowed the faintest trace of a real smile to touch her lips — calm, warm, and teasing — as

she leaned forward until their forearms rested comfortably together on the table.

“Yes.”

Jonas leaned back in his chair slightly, but kept their hands linked and their knees pressed warmly together.

“So now we’re at the interesting part.”

Shammy raised an eyebrow, her free hand rising to rest lightly on his forearm, fingers tracing a gentle path along his sleeve.

“Which part.”

Jonas met her eyes, voice low and intimate as he squeezed her hand gently.

“The point where someone makes an actual move.”

Shammy set her coffee down with deliberate care, the movement graceful and unhurried. Jonas noticed immediately, his thumb never stopping its slow strokes on her skin.

“Ah.”

Shammy spoke calmly, but her voice carried quiet atmospheric warmth as she leaned even closer, forehead nearly brushing his.

“You believe I will.”

Jonas shrugged slightly, but his hand stayed securely in hers, pulling her gently forward until their shoulders touched.

“You’ve been controlling the pace.”

Shammy considered that, her tall frame relaxed and warm against the contact, electric blue eyes soft and affectionate as she studied him.

“Not entirely.”

Jonas grinned, his free hand rising to brush a loose strand of silver-white hair from her cheek with careful fingers, thumb lingering gently on her skin.

“Fair.”

Shammy leaned back slightly in her chair, but kept their hands linked and bodies close, her own hand sliding up to rest lightly on the side of his neck.

“However...”

Jonas waited, thumb still stroking her skin.

“...you are correct.”

Jonas smiled wider, his hand sliding from her cheek to rest at her waist — warm, steady hold.

“I like being right.”

Shammy studied him carefully for a moment, silver-white hair glowing in the soft light as she leaned into his touch, electric blue eyes warm and teasing.

“Why did you notice me.”

Jonas blinked once.

That wasn't the move he expected.

He considered the question, his hand staying at her waist, thumb stroking gentle circles.

“You want the honest answer.”

“Yes.”

Jonas shrugged slightly, pulling her a little closer across the table until their foreheads nearly touched.

“Because you weren't behaving like someone browsing books.”

Shammy tilted her head, silver-white hair brushing his cheek as she stayed comfortably close.

“Explain.”

Jonas gestured lightly with his free hand, but kept the other securely at her waist.

“Everyone else moves randomly between shelves.”

He looked back at her, eyes warm.

“You moved deliberately.”

Shammy said nothing, but her hand slid up to rest on his shoulder, fingers curling gently into his coat as she held his gaze.

Jonas continued, voice low and fond.

“People who observe like that usually have a reason.”

Shammy nodded once, her tall frame warm against him.

“Yes.”

Jonas leaned forward slightly, forehead brushing hers.

“So what was the reason.”

Shammy met his gaze calmly, electric blue eyes soft and open.

“Curiosity.”

Jonas smiled, his arms sliding fully around her waist in a loose, warm embrace across the small table.

“That's a dangerous answer.”

Shammy's expression didn't change, but her fingers traced slow, affectionate patterns on his

shoulder.

“Yes.”

Jonas laughed quietly, holding her close.

“Well.”

He leaned back again, but kept her in his arms.

“You found something interesting then.”

Shammy considered him for a moment, then nodded once.

“Yes.”

Jonas raised an eyebrow, thumb stroking gently at her waist.

“Oh?”

Shammy spoke calmly, but her voice was softer now as she stayed comfortably held.

“You noticed.”

Jonas grinned, pulling her gently closer.

“That’s all it takes?”

Shammy shook her head slightly, silver-white hair falling softly as she leaned into his embrace.

“No.”

Jonas waited.

“You stayed.”

Jonas laughed, arms tightening warmly around her.

“Alright, that’s fair.”

For a moment the two of them simply looked at each other across the table, bodies close, warmth shared, the quiet café humming softly around them.

Then Shammy spoke again, voice low and teasing.

“You asked earlier what the next variable was.”

Jonas nodded, still holding her close.

“Yes.”

Shammy tilted her head slightly, electric blue eyes warm on his.

“This.”

Jonas raised an eyebrow.

“Oh?”

Shammy stood up smoothly, but kept one hand lightly on his shoulder, fingers brushing his neck in a gentle touch as she picked up her coat.

Jonas watched her carefully, eyes warm.

She looked down at him, voice calm but carrying quiet affection.

“Walk.”

Jonas blinked once.

Then laughed — warm, delighted.

“You’re escalating the environment.”

Shammy nodded, silver-white hair glowing in the light as she waited for him.

“Yes.”

Jonas stood as well, immediately stepping close beside her, his arm sliding around her waist again as they began to move together toward the exit.

“Well.”

He said lightly, pulling her gently closer.

“I suppose the experiment continues.”

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

“Yes.”

Jonas followed, 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 let out a delighted laugh, leaning forward with clear interest.

“Oh that was smooth.”

Konrad watched the pair leave the bookstore quietly.

“Yes.”

Below them Shammy and Jonas stepped out into the rain-soaked street, bodies walking comfortably close, Shammy’s tall frame leaning slightly into Jonas’s side with quiet warmth.

Mephisto clasped his hands behind his back.

“She moved the experiment outside.”

Konrad nodded once.

“Yes.”

Mephisto’s grin widened.

“Changing the board.”

Konrad remained calm.

“Yes.”

Mephisto glanced sideways.

“You know what that means.”

Konrad said nothing.

Mephisto’s eyes gleamed.

“The real game begins now.”

—

© 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:chapter31>

Last update: **15/03/2026 12:07**

