

ShadowBound 139

Chapter 139: The Incident In The Class

"And that concludes today's lesson. Enjoy your afternoon training sessions," Mystica said cheerfully, her voice as light as a spring breeze. With a flick of her wrist, the massive tome floating in front of her slammed shut, guided by her air magic.

"Eh—Mystica?" Ariana raised her hand hesitantly just as Mystica turned to leave the classroom.

"Yes, darling? Is there something you need?" Mystica replied, her playful tone matching her usual demeanor.

Ariana hesitated briefly, then spoke. "Well, yesterday, Sir Magnus mentioned something about us having exams next month. Is that true?"

The room buzzed to life as murmurs spread among the students.

"Yes, he did!"

"I hope it was just a joke."

"None of the other instructors have said anything about exams before!"

Mystica sighed inwardly, her smile thinning. Magnus. Of course, he blurted it out. Such a troublesome man. I suppose it's best to clear this up now.

"Alright, settle down, my little darlings," Mystica said softly, but with a note of authority that silenced the chatter instantly.

With the students' full attention, she glided gracefully to the front of the class and perched elegantly on the desk. "Let's put these uncertainties to rest, shall we? First and foremost—yes, what Magnus told you is absolutely true. You will be having exams next month."

A ripple of disbelief swept through the room.

"But none of our instructors mentioned this before!" one student exclaimed.

"Yeah, why spring this on us now?" another added, voices rising again.

Mystica raised a single, manicured finger. The classroom fell silent almost instantly.

"The reason none of your instructors mentioned it before is simple," Mystica said, her mischievous smirk returning. "It's a test. The administration wanted to see how you'd handle sudden changes and unexpected challenges. And, my dears, let me tell you—many of you failed spectacularly just now."

The students looked at her in stunned silence, some exchanging nervous glances.

"Oh, don't look so surprised," Mystica continued, chuckling softly. "Your reactions—panic, whining, blaming others—were quite telling. As students aspiring to be knights, you should be able to handle sudden changes with composure. Instead, many of you acted like common rabble. Weaklings. Wannabes. Commoners."

Her words were sharp, cutting through the room like a blade. Some students bowed their heads in shame, while others clenched their fists, refusing to meet her gaze.

"For Class A, the elite of the academy, such behavior is downright embarrassing. I'd expect this from the lower classes, but from you? Oh, darlings, you've got a long way to go," she added with a shake of her head.

A tense silence filled the room, thick with the weight of her words. Then, a chuckle broke through, coming from the back of the class.

"For someone who's just a mage, you sure do lecture a lot about knights' dignity and expectations," Chris drawled, his legs propped lazily on his desk. His mocking smirk made it clear he wasn't taking Mystica seriously.

"Oh?" Mystica's eyebrows rose in mock surprise, her tone laced with amusement.

Chris leaned back further, his grin widening. "You have no right to tell us whether we're pathetic or not. That's for knights like Sir Galen or Sir Regulus to say. You're just a mage, after all. Maybe stick to criticizing your own apprentice—four-eyes over there," he added, jerking his chin toward Ariana without a hint of remorse.

The room froze, all eyes darting between Mystica and Chris. Ariana flinched, her cheeks burning with humiliation as she adjusted her glasses nervously.

Mystica's smile didn't falter, but the glint in her purple eyes darkened, turning dangerously sharp. She uncrossed her legs and stood, her heels clicking ominously against the floor as she walked toward Chris.

"Chris, darling," she began sweetly, her voice like velvet over steel. "You're absolutely right. I'm just a mage. And you're a proud little knight-in-training. So, tell me, how confident are you in that arrogance of yours?"

Chris's smirk faltered slightly, but he didn't back down. "Confident enough to know when someone's overstepping their boundaries."

Mystica's smile widened. "Perfect. Let's test that confidence, shall we? Stand up."

The class collectively held its breath, the tension rising like a storm about to break. Chris hesitated, realizing too late that he might have bitten off more than he could chew.

Across the room, near the window, Liam sat quietly, his posture relaxed as he watched the scene unfold. His expression remained neutral, only offering a brief side glance at Mystica and Chris.

'Is a teacher really about to duel a student? Seems unorthodox, but who am I to question it? They should just get it over with so Mystica can explain what this exam nonsense is about,' he thought, letting out a quiet sigh.

Meanwhile, just in front of Liam, Dylan observed the brewing tension with sparkling eyes and an exaggerated sigh of admiration. "Ah, my radiant queen, poised like the sun itself, prepares to humble the proud prince, to carve his arrogance as one would a delicate stone! Behold, a divine tragedy!" he said, his voice dripping with theatrical reverence.

"Would you shut it, idiot? I'd rather focus on watching the arrogant fool get the humiliation he deserves," Asher muttered, rolling his eyes at Dylan's antics.

Charlotte, reclining with a smirk, tilted her head as she eyed Chris with what could only be described as predatory interest. "Arrogant, yes... but undeniably cute," she purred, leaning forward with her chin propped on her hand, her gaze dripping with mischief.

Asher turned toward her, his face contorted with disgust. "Ugh. You're absolutely revolting."

Charlotte merely chuckled, unfazed. "Not as cute as you, though, bae," she cooed, her sultry tone aimed squarely at Liam.

Liam didn't even flinch, his focus unwavering. Either he hadn't heard her, or he simply didn't care enough to respond.

"Pathetic," Asher muttered under his breath, shaking his head as he turned back to the unfolding drama.

"Let's make this interesting, shall we?" Mystica said. "Here's the deal, darling. I'll give you a challenge. If you win, I'll never speak of your progress—or anyone else's—again. No critiques, no comments, nothing. But if you lose..." She trailed off, letting the weight of her words hang in the air.

Chris crossed his arms, leaning back in his chair. "And if I lose?"

Mystica's smirk widened. "If you lose, you'll apologize to Ariana. Sincerely. No sarcasm, no backhanded remarks. A proper apology."

The room went deathly silent, all eyes fixed on the standoff. Ariana looked mortified, but her gaze flicked nervously between Mystica and Chris, unsure of what to expect.

Chris laughed, his confidence unwavering. "That's it? Fine. Name the challenge."

Mystica raised her hand, and a soft glow of myst formed in her palm, coalescing into a simple, unassuming orb of pale light. It hovered just above her hand, no bigger than an apple.

"All you have to do," Mystica began, her tone as sweet as honey, "is hold this orb for ten seconds. That's it."

Chris snorted, his grin widening. "That's all? I expected something harder. Hand it over."

"Ah, ah, ah," Mystica said, pulling the orb back slightly. "A little warning first, darling. This isn't just any ordinary orb. It's infused with myst specifically calibrated to reflect the holder's mental and emotional state. The calmer, more composed you are, the lighter it will feel. But the moment you lose focus, even for a second..." She let the sentence hang, her smirk deepening.

Chris rolled his eyes and stood, brushing past his desk. "Please, how hard can it be? I'm ready."

Mystica handed him the orb, her expression unreadable. The moment it settled into Chris's palms, his confident smirk faltered.

"What the...?" he muttered, his arms trembling slightly as the orb seemed to grow heavier with each passing second.

"One," Mystica began, her voice smooth. "Two."

Chris's jaw clenched as he adjusted his grip, trying to maintain his composure. The orb felt like it was pulling him down, each second stretching into eternity.

"Three. Four. You're doing wonderfully, Chris," Mystica teased, her voice dripping with mock encouragement.

Chris's arms began to shake visibly. Beads of sweat formed on his forehead as his knees buckled slightly. "This... this is rigged!" he growled, struggling to keep the orb aloft.

"Five. Six," Mystica continued, unfazed. "Is that your calm, knightly dignity slipping, darling?"

By the seventh second, Chris's legs gave out, and the orb dropped from his hands, vanishing into a wisp of light before it hit the floor. He collapsed to his knees, panting heavily as the class erupted into murmurs.

Mystica crouched down to meet his gaze, her smirk never wavering. "Seven seconds, Chris. That's all you lasted. And here I thought you were confident enough to take on a mage."

Chris glared at her but said nothing, his pride visibly wounded.

Mystica rose gracefully, turning to address the class. "Let this be a lesson, my darlings. Strength isn't just about physical prowess. It's about composure, resilience, and respect. Now, Chris..."

She turned back to him, her eyes glinting with satisfaction. "I believe you owe Ariana an apology."b