

ShadowBound 202

Chapter 202: Tactical Espionage Class

Liam and Charlotte, unfazed by the stares and whispers, made their way toward a pair of open seats. Liam would have preferred to sit elsewhere—preferably far away from Charlotte—but she had other plans. With a smug grin, she plopped down right beside him, making it clear she wasn't about to let him sit alone.

As they settled in, murmurs spread across the room, sharp and filled with barely concealed resentment.

"Why the hell is he sitting with her?" one of the boys muttered under his breath.

"Of all people... him?" another scoffed. "What does she even see in that guy?"

"She wouldn't even look at me when I tried talking to her," a third grumbled, voice dripping with jealousy.

The girls weren't any kinder.

"Of course she just waltzes in like she owns the place," one sneered.

"Does she not own a mirror? That outfit—ugh," another whispered, her tone thick with disdain.

"I swear, if she starts acting all flirty in this class too..." a final voice grumbled.

Charlotte, naturally, caught every word, but if anything, the negativity only seemed to fuel her amusement. She leaned closer to Liam, resting her elbow on the desk, chin in hand, and whispered, "They're so obsessed with me, it's kinda cute."

Liam ignored her.

Before the murmurs could escalate further, the sharp chime of the class bell rang through the air. The room fell silent, and as if on cue, the door swung open with a commanding presence.

Two figures stepped inside.

The first was a woman—tall, striking, and undeniably captivating. Midnight-green hair cascaded down her back in soft waves, framing her sharp, piercing green eyes that seemed to scan the room with amusement. Her dark, form-fitting attire clung to her elegantly, silver embroidery adding a refined, almost regal touch. A smirk played at her lips, playful yet laced with something undeniably dangerous.

Beside her stood a man, equally imposing but in an entirely different way. Broad-shouldered, dressed in all black, he carried an air of cold efficiency. His slicked-back silver hair revealed sharp, angular features, and his steel-gray eyes held no warmth—only calculation. Unlike his companion, he didn't smirk. He didn't need to. His presence alone was enough to silence any lingering whispers in the room.

The two instructors took their places at the front of the classroom, their gazes sweeping over the students.

The lady's emerald gaze flickered with amusement as she hopped onto the teacher's desk, her legs crossing elegantly while she leaned back slightly, making herself comfortable. Kaine, in contrast, stood rigid beside her, arms crossed, his expression as unreadable as stone.

Her eyes swept across the room, silently counting before she let out a low, amused hum. "Only twenty-one of you... interesting." Her tone carried a mixture of amusement and something darker. "The numbers keep dropping every time. I wonder how many of you will last until the end of the year."

A few students exchanged uneasy glances.

She smiled, slow and deliberate. "But don't worry, my darlings. I promise you'll enjoy this class. After all..." She tilted her head. "...we're going to have so much fun together."

She let the words hang in the air before leaning forward slightly, placing her hands on her knees. "My name is Seraphina Velora. You may address me as Professor Velora, but honestly, I don't care what you call me, as long as you keep up."

Her voice was calm, smooth—almost seductive—but there was something unsettling beneath it, something that made it hard to tell if she was smiling at them or toying with them.

Then, as if suddenly losing interest, she leaned back and plucked a cookie from a tray that hadn't been there a moment ago.

The man, unfazed by her theatrics, finally spoke, his deep voice cutting through the room. "Professor Veylan Kaine. I don't waste words, so listen carefully."

His steel-gray eyes swept across the room, devoid of warmth. "This class is unlike any other. It happens once per day. That means the twenty-one of you sitting here? You are the only first-year students receiving this training."

He let that sink in before continuing. "If you expect an easy grade or a chance to show off, leave now. I don't tolerate arrogance, incompetence, or unnecessary chatter. If you waste my time, I will make sure you regret it."

Seraphina, still perched on the desk, picked up another cookie, utterly unbothered.

Kaine ignored her and pressed on. "For the rest of the semester, you will be trained in fundamental aspects of Tactical Espionage and Diplomacy. This includes infiltration, deception, counter-intelligence, psychological warfare, and interrogation techniques. You will be tested in ways you are not prepared for. Some of you will fail. Some of you will break. That is the nature of this field."

His voice remained cold and even, making it all sound less like a warning and more like an inevitable fact.

Then, as he continued outlining the course structure, a voice cut in.

"Oh great, so we're basically learning how to be criminals."

The words came from a boy sitting toward the middle of the room, his tone laced with mockery. A few students chuckled under their breath, but the amusement died almost instantly when Kaine turned his head, his icy gaze locking onto the student.

The air in the room shifted, growing unbearably heavy.

Kaine took a slow, deliberate step forward. Then another.

The boy, who had been leaning back in his chair, stiffened as Kaine approached, his imposing figure casting a shadow over him.

The tension became suffocating, and Kaine's voice dropped into a near whisper, though it somehow carried through the silent room.

"You think this is a joke?" His tone was utterly devoid of emotion. "Let me make something clear to you, boy. If you ever find yourself in a situation where your life depends on the skills I teach, you won't be laughing. You'll be begging. And if you fail?"

He leaned in slightly, just enough to make the student shrink back.

"Then your corpse will serve as a reminder to everyone else about what happens to fools."

The room remained deathly silent.

Satisfied, Kaine straightened, turning away as if the interaction had never happened.

Seraphina, still nibbling on her cookie, smirked. "Oh, Veylan, darling, you really do have a way with words."

Kaine walked back to the front of the class, his measured steps echoing in the dead silence that followed his warning. Without turning to face them immediately, he continued.

"This class isn't just about learning psychological tactics. It's about survival. It's about eliminating threats before they eliminate you.

Unlike Knight Combat Training, where brute force and battlefield honor are emphasized, here you will learn something far more effective. Close-quarters combat on a level that can break even the most seasoned warrior. You will also learn how to utilize Myst in ways that most magic users never even consider."

A pause. Then he turned to face them fully.

"Now, tell me something—why does this class even exist? Demons are not known for their use of deception, espionage, or diplomacy. So why do we, as humanity's defenders, need to master such things?"

The question hung in the air, but no one dared to answer. Some students glanced at each other, as if searching for confirmation that they weren't the only ones unsure.

Kaine gave them only a few more seconds of silence before speaking again.

"Let me rephrase that. What is the first lesson every knight is taught to honor?"

This time, a student—one of the more confident ones—sat up straighter and answered without hesitation.

"Demons are threats. Not humans."

Kaine nodded, his expression unreadable. "Good. That means you've been paying attention in your other classes."

"Now throw that useless logic out the window."

A ripple of uncertainty spread through the class. Whispers rose as students exchanged uneasy glances. What he said made no sense. The foundations of their teachings—the principles they had built their understanding of the world upon—had just been dismissed as useless.

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Seraphina, who had been comfortably lounging on the desk with a lazy smirk, finally decided to intervene. She leaned forward slightly, placing her chin in her palm, eyes gleaming with amusement.

"Oh, my little darlings... I see the gears in your heads turning, but you're still stuck inside a very small box."

She casually took another bite of her cookie before continuing, her voice silky.

"You've been told that demons are your only enemy. That humanity stands united, a shining beacon of hope against the dark. But let's play a little game, shall we?"

She tilted her head, smirk deepening.

"Tell me... when was the last time a demon invaded a human kingdom without reason? Without provocation?"

The class remained silent.

"Never? Hmm, interesting." She feigned deep thought, tapping her chin. "Alright, next question. How many wars has humanity fought against itself?"

Again, silence.

Seraphina let out a soft chuckle, eyes twinkling with delight.

"Hundreds. Thousands, even. Humanity has killed more of its own kind than demons ever have. Kings slaughtered their rivals for power. Kingdoms burned for resources. Bloodlines were erased out of spite. And yet, you all sit here thinking your only enemy is a horned creature from the abyss."

She stretched lazily, letting her words settle in before delivering her final point.

"My dear students, the greatest lie ever taught to you is that humanity is united. It is not. It never has been. The truth is quite simple: humans are just as much your enemy as demons—if not more so. Because demons may want to kill you... but a human? A human will smile in your face while they slip a dagger between your ribs."