

ShadowBound 49

Chapter 49: Last Information

Mystica sauntered to the pulpit, her dark gown flowing behind her like a shadow with a life of its own.

Her radiant purple eyes sparkled under the dim lights as she flashed the crowd a playful smile, all the tension Galen had left behind dissolving in her wake.

"Well then," she began with a voice as smooth as silk, "I suppose I'll take it from here. Let's lighten the mood a little, shall we?"

The students, who had been stiff and whispering nervously just moments before, found themselves unintentionally leaning in, captivated by her charm.

Mystica's gaze playfully flitted to Sheila. "And Princess Sheila," she said with a teasing lilt, "do try to avoid arguing with Sir Galen in the future, hmm? Trust me, darling—sparring with him is like wrestling a storm. You'll only end up soaked and miserable."

Her wink softened the sting of the advice, though Sheila flushed with both frustration and embarrassment.

Dylan, seated in his chair comfortably, watched Mystica like a starving man eyeing a feast. His emerald-green eyes lingered far too long on the elegant slit of her gown, where her leg peeked through with every step.

In his mind, Mystica wasn't delivering an orientation—she was floating across a dreamscape, bathed in moonlight, whispering sultry secrets only for him.

"If I was a knight, she'd be my dark sorceress..." Dylan thought with a smirk, mentally envisioning the two of them atop a grand tower.

In his daydream, Mystica's lips curved into a mischievous smile just for him, her gown slipping from her shoulders—

A sharp jab from Liam's elbow pulled him violently back to reality. "He told me to do it." Liam said referring to Asher.

"Focus, you idiot," Asher muttered, his blue eyes gleaming with suppressed annoyance. "She's giving out class information. Not that your perverted brain would care."

Dylan grinned shamelessly. "Can you blame me? Look at her. I swear she's doing it on purpose, man."

Asher rolled his eyes. "You're hopeless."

Up on the platform, Mystica glanced at Dylan as if she knew exactly where his thoughts had wandered. Her grin grew just a fraction wider.

"Now, where was I? Ah, yes—your uniforms!" she said, clapping her hands lightly.

"They're ready and waiting for you in your rooms. When you return, your assigned staff will hand them over. Wear them with pride, darlings—every knight-to-be needs to look the part, after all."

She leaned slightly over the podium, her voice still sweet but tinged with subtle seriousness.

"And when you put on your uniform, you'll notice a set of numbers embroidered on the shoulder. These numbers—your ranks—aren't just decorative. They'll change as you improve or... well, disappoint. Stay sharp, my dears. There's no room for complacency at the Dark Knight Academy."

Her words caused a stir among the students, some glancing nervously at their peers, others sitting straighter in determination.

Dylan was about to slide back into another fantasy—this time featuring Mystica awarding him extra credit for being such an exceptional student—when Mystica's next sentence caught his attention.

"Next, let's talk about your class assignments." She smiled, clearly enjoying the sense of anticipation building in the room.

"You'll be divided into four classes—A, B, C, and D. Each class will have 25 students, based on your current rank. So, those of you who've been paying attention should already know where you stand."

The students exchanged glances, some smug, others resigned. Dylan leaned back in his chair with a lazy grin. "Class A, baby," he whispered to himself. "Right where I belong."

Asher, seated a seat away from him, gave him a sideways glance. "You're ranked ninth, dumbass. You barely made it into the top ten."

Dylan shrugged, unbothered. "Still counts."

Mystica tapped a finger against her lips thoughtfully. "Hmm... I feel like I'm forgetting something."

She turned to the other knights seated on the platform, her eyes twinkling with mischief. "Any reminders, gentlemen?"

None of them responded, though a few shifted uncomfortably under her gaze.

"No?" Mystica grinned. "Well, in that case, I suppose this concludes your orientation."

She spread her arms in a graceful arc, her voice turning soft and seductive, like a lullaby that made every student feel both enchanted and on edge.

"Welcome, my darlings, to the Dark Knight Academy. Do your best to survive... and perhaps even thrive."

With a playful flourish, she blew a kiss to the crowd. Several students flushed, and Dylan nearly fell out of his chair.

Mystica gave a small laugh, as if she knew the effect she had. "Good luck, my little knights-to-be. You'll need it."

With that, she gave a slight bow, turned on her heel, and walked off the stage with the same effortless grace she'd arrived with, leaving the students both mesmerized and uneasy.

As the orientation ended, the knights were the first to leave, their polished armor clinking rhythmically.

One by one, the students followed, shuffling through the aisles with murmurs of excitement and tension still lingering in the air.

Dylan stretched his arms lazily, a perverted grin plastered on his face. "Damn, that was the best orientation I've ever attended. Can every meeting include Mystica?"

"You seriously need help," Asher muttered, shooting him a look of disbelief as they rose from their seats.

"Help? Nah, what I need is another glimpse of that dress," Dylan said with a wink, earning a disgusted groan from Asher.

They began making their way out of the hall, weaving through rows of chairs when Liam accidentally bumped into someone, shoulder brushing lightly against a student passing by.

"Sorry," Liam said flatly, not even bothering to glance at the person he had brushed.

"You disgusting peasant!"

The sharp insult cut through the air like a whip. Liam stopped mid-step, turning calmly to meet the gaze of none other than Chris Rature, the prince of the Tempest Kingdom.

His aristocratic features were twisted with contempt, his eyes gleaming with superiority.

"You dare hit me and walk away as if I'm not here?" Chris hissed, his voice laced with venom.

Liam's expression remained as neutral as ever. "I did apologize," he said evenly, his tone calm but unbothered, as if Chris were merely a minor inconvenience.

Chris's fury boiled over at Liam's indifference. His hands balled into fists at his sides, and his face flushed with rage. "You lowlife trash. Do you think a sorry is enough? You should be on your knees, begging for forgiveness."

Before Liam could respond, Asher's patience snapped. His intense blue eyes flared with heat as he stormed toward Chris, muscles tight with restrained fury. "You bastard of a prince," Asher growled. "Who are you calling trash?"

Chris's lips curled into a sneer, eyes narrowing in distaste. "Ah, so the watchdog thinks he can bite. Just because you made it into the top ten doesn't mean you're anything special. Don't let it get to your head."

Asher's fists tightened, his rage simmering just beneath the surface. "You better hope you can back those words, Rature. Otherwise, I'll show you exactly where you stand."

Sensing the tension escalating, Dylan stepped in with a grin, smoothly sliding between the two before things could spiral out of control.

"Whoa there, hothead!" Dylan said, placing a hand on Asher's chest to keep him at bay. "Let's not cause a scene. We just got here, and I'd really like to stay long enough to at least see the dining hall."

"Get out of my way, birdbrain," Asher growled, trying to shove Dylan aside.

Dylan stood his ground, his grin widening. "Relax, Ash. No need to unleash the beast just yet. The last thing we need is to be sent packing on day one. And besides—"

He leaned closer with a playful smirk, lowering his voice. "Do you really want to punch a guy whose hair looks like a poodle's after a thunderstorm?"

Asher huffed, torn between irritation and amusement, while Chris's face twisted in disdain. "How dare you mock me!" Chris spat. "I'll make sure you regret this."

"You really think I care?" Asher shot back, but Dylan gave him a light shove to steer him away.

Chris stepped forward, his fury bubbling over. "Just wait. I'll show you all why I didn't need to waste my time with that stupid trial like you did."

Dylan flashed a cheeky grin, still keeping himself firmly between Asher and Chris. "Oh yeah? And I'll show you why I never bother learning the names of people I don't like. Spoiler alert: you're one of them."

Just as things were about to boil over, Sheila's cold, composed voice sliced through the tension.

"Settle down," Sheila commanded, her tone sharp enough to stop them all in their tracks. She stood near the entrance, arms crossed, her gaze icy. "You're still in Beacon Hall."

Chris sneered but shifted slightly under her intense gaze. "Tch. Royalty or not, Sheila, don't lecture me on power."

Sheila's expression remained unflinching. "Don't forget, Chris—abusing your authority won't get you far. And if you keep acting like this, it won't be long before someone teaches you a lesson."

Chris scoffed, crossing his arms. "Oh please. Aren't you the queen of hypocrisy? Acting all righteous when you're just as privileged as I am."

"Watch your mouth, Chris," Sheila warned, her eyes narrowing dangerously.

Chris gave her a mocking smile. "Or what? You'll show me why you're number one? Let's be serious—your spot is temporary. It won't be long before I take it from you."

For a moment, Sheila said nothing, but the weight of her glare was enough to make the air thick with tension. "Try it," she finally said, her voice low and dangerous. "I dare you."

Then, turning to Asher and Dylan, Sheila raised a brow. "And you two—arguing with royalty is a battle you can't win. Dylan, I expected better from you."

Dylan gave her a wide, cheeky grin and shot her a thumbs-up. "Sorry, Sheila. I'll be a good boy next time. Scout's honor."

Asher gave Dylan a confused look, clearly thrown off by his casual familiarity with Sheila. "Wait—you know her?"

"Oh, yeah," Dylan replied with a wink. "We go way back. Sheila was my first ever royal disappointment."

Sheila rolled her eyes but didn't hide the faint smirk tugging at the corner of her lips. "You're impossible."

Finally, her gaze landed on Liam, her expression turning colder. "And you," she said, irritation creeping into her voice.

"You should learn your place. Apologizing properly to someone above you isn't that hard, you know. Kneeling wouldn't kill you."

Liam met her gaze evenly, his face unreadable. "You really think I care about rank?" he said quietly, but with a sharp edge in his tone.

Sheila's eyes narrowed. "What did you just say?"

Liam sighed, as if the whole encounter was a waste of his time. "You're proving Galen's point," he said, his voice calm but cutting. "Royals like you care more about power than people."

Sheila's composure cracked, frustration flashing in her eyes. "Watch your mouth—"

But Liam cut her off before she could finish. "If you think I'll ever bow to someone like you, think again."

Without waiting for a response, Liam turned on his heel and started walking toward the exit, his expression as calm as ever. "I don't kneel to anyone."

Sheila stood frozen, her jaw tight with frustration.

"Hey, Liam! Wait up!" Dylan called, chuckling as he jogged after him. "Man, you're really bad at making friends."

Asher gave Chris one last glare before casually following after Dylan and Liam.

Left standing alone in the hall, Sheila clenched her fists at her sides, her icy composure shattered.

"I'll make sure you regret those words," she whispered under her breath.