

ShadowBound 64

Chapter 64: The Knight Council Meeting.

The Knights' Council had held a meeting.

The grand chamber was lit by a grand chandelier casting flickering light over a heavy oak table around which instructors and elite members of the order sat.

The air was thick with expectation as they discussed the progress of the academy's newest recruits.

One chair remained noticeably empty.

The murmurs around the table stilled when the doors swung open, and Galen strode in, his silver knight's cloak draped over his shoulder with a carelessness that did little to hide his reluctance.

As he entered, Galen scanned the room with a dry gaze, acknowledging no one in particular, before slumping into his seat with an exaggerated sigh.

"Ah, the great Galen Magna," Lady Saria smirked as she leaned back in her chair, the glint of humor not entirely hiding the edge in her tone. "Decided to grace us with your presence early for once?"

"Don't get used to it," Galen muttered, folding his arms and settling back into his chair with the look of a man who would rather be anywhere else. His fingers tapped restlessly against the arm of his seat.

Across the table was Sir Kaelen. He gave Galen a critical glance. "I suppose if you're going to take part in these meetings," he said dryly, "you could at least feign a hint of interest. "

"Oh, I am interested," Galen replied lazily, flashing her a smirk that bordered on insolence. "In getting this over with so I can get back to my sleep."

"Enough," came a commanding voice from the head of the table. Sir Varyn, stood with a level gaze that quieted the room.

"We're here to assess the progress of our newest candidates, not to indulge in bickering. Galen, as reluctant as you might be to join these discussions, we expect an honest evaluation of your two students."

Galen tilted his head, giving a shrug. "They're progressing." His tone was purposefully vague.

Varyn's eyebrow arched. "That's hardly a report."

Galen sighed, rolling his eyes subtly. "Fine. They're... promising. And if you want more details, I'll get into it. One of them has a handle on flames and a sharp edge to his attitude—Asher, I believe. The other," he paused, his gaze flickering slightly as he recalled Liam's deadpan responses, "has a different sort of skill. A quiet resilience. If they don't kill each other first, they might actually get somewhere."

Kaelen scoffed. "So, in other words, they're still unrefined, undisciplined—"

"Determined," Galen interrupted, his voice firm for the first time, an edge of respect creeping into his tone.

"They're not polished yet, but they've got the fire. Which, I'm sure you all know, is worth more than raw talent."

There was a pause, and Saria chuckled. "Well, Galen, it's surprising to see you take to students at all. Though it's clear you're not exactly eager for the role."

Galen leaned back, his arms folded. "Believe me, I'm not here to babysit. But, if they're going to last, they'll have to learn what it takes. My way."

Sir Varyn nodded thoughtfully, glancing around at the other instructors. "Very well. We'll continue to watch their progress. And, Galen, despite your... unique approach, I trust you'll report back with more details next time."

Galen gave a casual salute, his expression droll. "As you wish, Sir Varyn."

The meeting continued on, with other instructors sharing updates on their students, but Galen's mind had already drifted.

To him, the room's politics were nothing but a waste of time, distractions from the real training where strength and skill were actually forged.

He stifled a yawn, staring at the flickering chandelier above, waiting for the meeting to finally end so he could return to what mattered.

After what felt like eternity, the meet was finally over.

Galen opened the heavy doors of the grand chamber and shut them behind him, as he strolled down the corridor, finally free from the endless discussions of progress reports and assessments.

His mind already drifted back to his bed, the sensation of rest and sleep, a place where things made sense in the best possible way—for him.

But his thoughts were interrupted by a voice that was both familiar and sultry.

"Well, well," Mystica purred, leaning against a pillar with a playful glint in her purple eyes.

Her nightshade-black gown clung to her form as usual, as she crossed her arms, watching him with amusement.

"Look who actually showed up to a meeting. Are we turning over a new leaf, Galen?"

He sighed, casting her a lazy glance. "Funny. If I didn't know better, I'd think you're keeping tabs on me, Mystica."

She feigned innocence, a hand over her heart. "Me? Keeping tabs on you? You must think quite highly of yourself."

They started down the hallway side by side, Mystica's light teasing coming as easily as the flow of her gown around her.

As they walked, she slipped in remark after remark, finding every little opening to poke fun at his aloof attitude and disdain for the formalities of knighthood.

Galen deflected each one with his usual, indifferent grace, his replies short and unbothered, his gaze drifting further ahead as if trying to find an exit from this conversation.

But Mystica wasn't one to give up so easily.

"Oh, come on," she chided, stepping into his path to block his way. "Is that all the reaction I get? You know, it's rather tragic, Galen. I thought the academy's most sought-after knight would be a bit more... responsive."

Galen's eyebrow quirked, and he tilted his head slightly, looking at her with faint, unexpected interest. "Responsive? You really don't know when to quit, do you?"

He stepped forward, closing the gap between them. In one smooth, languid movement, he leaned in, his hand coming to rest against the wall beside her head, trapping her between the cold stone and his presence.

Mystica's playful facade wavered for the first time. Her heart raced, the rhythmic pounding loud enough to betray her surprise. Yet, a mischievous smile still lingered on her lips, her gaze meeting his with equal intensity.

"Well," she whispered, her voice breathier than she intended, "looks like someone finally woke up."

Galen's gaze held hers, his intense red eyes reflecting a warmth that was rare, almost foreign, to his usual indifference.

"For someone who talks so much," he murmured, his voice a low, steady rumble, "you seem awfully quiet now."

Mystica's smirk faltered just slightly, a faint flush blooming on her cheeks, though she held her ground. "Oh, please. You're going to have to do better than that."

Without breaking eye contact, Galen leaned a fraction closer, his breath brushing against her cheek, his eyes narrowing ever so slightly as he gauged her reaction. "Is that a challenge?"

The pulse in her throat betrayed her cool demeanor, yet Mystica's smile remained. "Only if you're up for it," she replied, her voice soft, teasing, yet now carrying a note of vulnerability that hadn't been there before.

They stayed locked in that moment, a quiet tension building between them.

After a beat, Galen slowly pulled back, a knowing smile ghosting over his lips. "I'll leave you to think on that," he murmured, turning away before she could react.

Mystica watched him go, her heart still racing, a soft pink blush tinging her cheeks. For once, words escaped her.