

ShadowBound 68

Chapter 68: No Hands

Asher crossed his arms, giving Liam a smirk as he cockily said, "A sparring match? Again? I'm tired of using this wannabe's face to wipe the floor."

Galen raised a brow, his smirk deepening. "Who said anything about sparring each other?"

Both Asher and Liam looked confused.

"Huh?" Asher blinked, glancing at Liam, who was just as thrown off.

Galen chuckled, his voice carrying a hint of amusement. "I've had you two sparring each other long enough. It's about time we raise the stakes a little."

"What's that supposed to mean?" Liam asked, his tone guarded.

"It means," Galen said, looking between the two with a glint of challenge in his eye, "today, you're going to fight me."

The boys stood there, stunned. Even Ariana and Dylan, who had been watching nearby, exchanged startled glances.

Ariana cleared her throat, nervous but gathering the courage to speak. "Um... Sir Galen, forgive me for saying so, but... don't you think that might be a little—"

"Dangerous?" Galen finished for her, his smirk not fading.

"Well, yes," Ariana admitted. "Even if it's two against one, the gap between you... isn't that a bit unfair?"

"Quit worrying, four-eyes," Asher interrupted, flashing a wide, reckless grin. "Whether he's the strongest or not, an opportunity like this doesn't come twice. Just do me a favor and sit back and enjoy the show."

Ariana blinked, a little taken aback by Asher's enthusiasm. She'd seen most students, even the most promising fighters, hesitate at the mere thought of facing Galen.

Not even groups of five would take on that challenge, yet here were these two, practically eager for it. Well, aside from Percy Granger, no one had ever dared to test Galen like this.

"Are you two insane?" she said, her voice almost pleading. "You have no idea what you're up against. Even together, you won't stand a chance."

"Hey, glasses." Liam's voice cut through her worry, cold and confident. "As buzz cut said, just sit back and watch instead of yapping."

Ariana could only stare, bewildered. 'What is wrong with these two?'

Galen looked over at her, a knowing smirk on his face. "See? They have no issue with it, Mystica's apprentice. So go sit down. Or, if you're so worried, maybe close your eyes."

Reluctantly, Ariana let out a sigh and joined Dylan in the seats to watch.

Dylan leaned over, nudging her. "Hey, no need to get worked up. I fought alongside these two flameheads during the enrollment trials. They're pretty tough."

Ariana crossed her arms, unconvinced but trying to calm herself. "Still, this is Galen we're talking about."

"Oh, I know," Dylan said with a mischievous grin, "which is why I also know they're definitely not going to win. But hey—this'll be fun to watch."

Ariana rolled her eyes, settling into her seat with a sigh. "If you say so."

Back on the training ground, Galen straightened, a predatory glint in his eyes. "So, ready to show me what you've learned, boys? And try not to hold back. You might actually make me break a sweat."

Galen paused, letting the tension settle, then spoke with a cool authority as he slipped off his long red coat and rolled up his sleeves, revealing the defined muscles beneath.

"Before we begin, there's a rule," he said, his tone carrying a hint of amusement.

Both Asher and Liam watched him closely as he slid his hands casually into his pockets. "I won't be using my hands," Galen announced.

"To win, all you have to do is touch me or land a clean hit. If either of you can manage that—or make me pull my hands out of my pockets—the match is yours. Understood?"

Asher scoffed, a grin spreading across his face. "Just touch you? This'll be over in seconds."

Beside him, Liam picked up his daggers, shifting into a ready stance, his gaze locked on Galen. Asher drew his sword, his confidence unwavering, ready to take on the challenge.

Galen looked them over, the corner of his mouth curving into a smirk. "Well, seems like you understand the rules. Shall we begin?"

Liam and Asher glanced at each other, a flicker of unspoken understanding passing between them.

Despite their differences, they shared one common goal: defeat Galen. With that, they charged forward, flames blazing and blades gleaming.

Asher was the first to strike, his blue flames flaring around him as he dashed forward, his sword slicing through the air.

Liam, close behind, slipped into the shadows of Asher's flames, daggers poised to find their mark. The two attacked in unison, their coordination surprisingly sharp, but Galen moved as though he had seen every step before they'd made it.

He swayed effortlessly, his body slipping just out of reach with each strike, his hands never leaving his pockets.

"Is that all?" Galen taunted, his tone light and mocking, not a single hint of strain in his voice.

Asher gritted his teeth, frustration igniting his determination. "Don't get cocky, old man!" He swung harder, unleashing a stream of blue fire aimed straight at Galen's feet. Galen stepped to the side, dodging with almost casual indifference.

Liam used Asher's attack as a cover, slipping into Galen's blind spot, both daggers darting forward in a flash of red flame.

But just as they were about to connect, Galen tilted his head, the daggers slicing through nothing but air as he seemed to almost glide out of reach.

From the sidelines, Ariana watched, her eyes wide with a mixture of awe and worry. "This is insane. I mean, they're good, but he's... he's not even breaking a sweat!"

Dylan leaned back, a smirk playing at his lips. "So that's what Galen can do huh? Those two don't stand a chance."

Ariana turned to him, her brows knitted with concern. "They could get hurt, though! Isn't it a little... harsh?"

"Trust me," Dylan said, his tone surprisingly serious for once.

"I believe Galen's teaching them something they need to know. Fighting him is like facing a storm—they'll learn more in five minutes with him than in hours of practice against anyone else."

Back on the training ground, Liam's frustration was beginning to show. Each time he thought he had closed the distance, Galen would evade, leaving Liam striking at empty space.

Asher wasn't faring any better, his fierce attacks deflected without Galen even using his hands.

Asher charged forward, his blue flames roaring as he closed in, his movements sharp and fast.

Liam followed, slipping to Galen's side, using Asher's attacks as a diversion to get in close. For a moment, it seemed like they had him cornered.

"Gotcha!" Asher grinned, lunging forward.

But Galen's smirk deepened, a glint of amusement in his eyes. In a split second, he spun on his heel, his leg flashing out. With a speed they hadn't anticipated, he delivered a sharp, clean kick to Asher's side, sending him skidding back.

Before Liam could even react, Galen's leg lashed out again, catching him in the chest and sending him stumbling backward. Both boys gasped, the impact knocking the air from their lungs.

"Is that the best you've got?" Galen's voice cut through the air, calm and infuriatingly unshaken.

Asher pushed himself to his feet, rubbing his side. "This... is impossible. He's barely even trying!"

Liam clenched his daggers, his gaze narrowed. "Looks like it's time we attack him for real."

Ariana watched them, biting her lip. "They're relentless, I'll give them that."

Dylan chuckled, crossing his arms. "Yeah, but Galen? He's not even using his hands. The real fight hasn't even started for him yet."