

Living Shadow 102

Chapter 102 Renata Malcrist

Lilith glared at Renata, her mind racing. She couldn't afford to let Renata develop any interest in Damon. That would complicate everything. Damon was already infuriatingly unpredictable—cautious one moment, reckless the next. Adding Renata into the mix, someone as cunning as Damon but infinitely crueler to those beneath her, would spell disaster.

Renata wasn't just a rival; she was Lilith's antithesis. They had known it from the very first day they met, an instant recognition of mutual disdain. It was almost like lovers discovering a soulmate, but in their case, it was fire meeting water—destined to clash.

Renata's violet eyes were locked on Damon, who stood silently behind Lilith. Despite the weight of Lilith's glare, Renata didn't so much as glance her way.

"Leave. Now, Renata," Lilith ordered, her tone sharp and unyielding.

Renata sighed dramatically, brushing a stray strand of hair from her face.

"You're not going to fight me here, are you? I'd really hate to destroy this entire neighborhood."

Her gaze drifted back to Damon, a playful smile tugging at her lips.

"He's quite the cutie. I can see why you were fooling around with him. He has all the makings of a perfect boy toy..."

She tilted her head, her eyes narrowing slightly as they lingered on Damon's blindfold.

"A shame he's blind."

Damon stood still, silent, his body tense as the air grew heavier with unspoken tension.

Renata's smile widened. "If you could see, you'd realize you're dealing with an ugly, two-faced bitch."

Damon's jaw tightened, his anger at Lilith momentarily eclipsed by his growing dislike for Renata. His voice was calm but laced with contempt.

"I don't need to see to know you're one yourself. I guess it takes one to know one."

His words weren't a defense of Lilith; they were a declaration of disdain for both of them.

Renata's laughter rang out, light and mocking. "Oh, my goddess, your boyfriend is so honest and cute. I think I like him."

Lilith's glare darkened. "You've had your fun. Leave now."

Renata chuckled softly, ignoring the command. Her eyes returned to Damon with an amused gleam.

"What's your name, cutie? I'm Renata Malcrist."

Damon's tone was curt and dismissive. "My name is none of your business."

Her smile didn't falter. "No need to be shy. I just want to steal you away from this bore."

Damon clicked his tongue in irritation. "I think we're done here. I'm going back to the academy."

He started to walk past Lilith, but she stopped him with a firm hand on his chest.

"What, Damon? You can't go back to the War Halls yet. I'm not done with you."

His cold glare met hers. "But I'm done with you."

Renata raised an eyebrow, her smirk returning as she glanced between them.

"Did you just get dumped, Lilith? Damon, huh? Damon... war halls..."

Her voice trailed off, and her playful demeanor shifted. Her eyes lost their amused luster, replaced by something colder—disdain bordering on disgust.

"Damon Grey," she said, her tone sharper now. "The golden ticket failure. The academy's weakest."

Damon's expression remained impassive. He'd heard that nickname countless times. It no longer stung—it was just another weight to carry.

Lilith stepped forward, her voice icy. "Watch your tongue, Renata."

Damon scoffed.

"Didn't know you were a fan, need an autograph."

Renata couldn't hide her surprise.

Why was someone like Lilith Astranova associating with the lowest trash in the academy?

"Did she really get smitten by his looks?" she mused aloud, her tone dripping with disdain.

Lilith's expression darkened, her narrowed eyes warning Renata to tread carefully.

The realization hit Renata like a spark—she'd been insulted by him. The weakest student in the academy, the absolute lowest of the low. Her anger flared, sharp and immediate.

"To think that you have the audacity to insult me, you low, weak, insignificant ant," Renata hissed, her voice venomous.

Her violet eyes glinted with malice as her peak second-class advancement aura began to crush down on Damon.

"Break your arms and legs, and I'll be merciful," she spat, her tone icy and uncompromising.

Damon's Remorseless skill activated instinctively, dulling the overwhelming sense of fear that threatened to take hold. Still, he didn't wish to completely suppress himself. He allowed his shadow to absorb the brunt of her oppressive aura, even though he knew it would drain his shadow energy.

The sensation was unbearable—like carrying the weight of the heavens on his back. His knees trembled, and his shoulders creaked under the strain. Blood leaked from the corner of his mouth as the weight threatened to crush him entirely.

Even with Remorseless active, his mortal heart was gripped with terror.

And yet, Damon refused to kneel. He stood firm, his body screaming in agony as seconds stretched into an eternity. He endured, unmoving, his resolve unshaken.

But he didn't have to endure for long.

Lilith raised her hand, her own aura flaring, and with a single wave, she canceled out Renata's pressure entirely.

Renata's expression twisted in displeasure. "Get out of my way, Astranova."

Lilith glared at her rival, her voice sharp as a blade.

"Picking on a first-year who hasn't even reached the first class advancement... You have no shame."

Damon stood silently, his face calm despite the cold sweat soaking his body. Every instinct told him that if he got caught between these two, he'd die before he even realized what was happening.

He made the logical choice.

Turning on his heel, Damon walked away, his fists clenched tightly at his sides. Each step felt heavier than the last, but he refused to look back.

As he moved further from the confrontation, the sound of astral winds roaring and the ground rumbling reached his ears. The sheer power behind it was terrifying, but Damon didn't stop or even glance over his shoulder.

Instead, he clenched his fists harder. His stomach growled faintly—a reminder of how much shadow energy that defiance had cost him. And yet, he hadn't knelt. He couldn't.

Something deep within him told him that if he knelt before Renata Malcrist today, he'd never be able to rise again.

It wasn't logical, but it was the only choice.

With his shadow's hunger gnawing at him, he realized he could no longer wait for tomorrow night. His plans had to move forward. He had no choice but to kill Tobias Margan tonight—especially while Lilith was busy dealing with Renata.

The timeline would be tight. Between the time it would take to return to the academy, set traps, and bait Tobias, he had roughly three hours to execute his plan. But he couldn't afford to wait any longer.

Renata had reminded him of an undeniable truth.

The world belonged to the strong. The weak were nothing more than prey.

"I will get stronger," Damon muttered under his breath, his voice cold and resolute. "I will return the favor, Renata Malcrist."

One soul at a time. One prey at a time.