

Living Shadow 160

Chapter 160 Eternal Rivals

The shop was exquisite, with lavish décor and marble flooring. It had high ceilings and fancy chandeliers, exuding an air of wealth and refinement.

In one of the rooms, a young man with a gloomy expression stood in place, wearing garments made from high-level fabric that would cost more than just a few zeni.

The material was grey, with a black jacket adorned with an expensive brooch on the side of his chest. His black hair framed his face, giving him the appearance of a rich noble young master.

Damon glanced at the seamstress, who was fitting his clothes. This was the fifth set Lilith had selected and bought for him.

Naturally, he appreciated free stuff as much as the next person—it wasn't like he was the one paying for it.

Though, just to confirm...

"Hey, you're not buying all these expensive clothes with my money, right?"

He was referring to the 12 million they had gotten from killing Makia and the other members of Quick Hand.

Lilith smiled.

"Oh? How did you know? What kind of man would let a woman pay for him? Someone as proud as you, I know, would never—"

Damon narrowed his eyes.

"I'll stop you right there. I pride myself on having no pride, and so what if a woman pays for me?"

He glanced at the clothes.

"Ma'am, how much are these?"

The seamstress smiled lightly.

"Oh, my lord, these aren't expensive—only fifty thousand zeni."

Damon almost choked on his spit.

"Fifty—I am not your lord! Get this off me!"

Lilith shook her head, smiling.

"Relax. I'm paying for it."

Damon paused, then looked at the seamstress.

"Can I get some higher-quality cufflinks? As for this brooch... get me one with black serpim. All on her, of course."

Lilith looked at him. He really had no shame.

He glanced at her.

"What? I like good stuff too, especially on someone else's dime."

The seamstress returned with a brooch adorned with a black-reddish jewel.

"Why are you getting me all decked up, anyway? I think my academy uniform is presentable enough."

She smiled.

"Hmm. Yes... but an academy uniform can't go everywhere. You don't plan to wear that to a ball or any social gatherings, do you? Networking isn't just important to nobles—it's for everyone."

He grimaced.

"You're not planning to take me to one of those fancy gatherings, are you? I wouldn't fit in with the high-class and rich people. That place is a den of two-faced nobles and wealthy merchants, all with their own sly intents."

She scoffed.

"A two-faced liar like you would fit right in. I don't have to worry about your etiquette—it seems you already know a lot. I don't remember you registering for any such class, though."

Damon paused, holding the back of his palms with a distant smile.

"Yeah... my mother was especially hard on my sister and me for that. Even though she was nonchalant about everything else... 'Be civil,' she'd say, or something."

His expression turned distant as he recalled her golden hair and grey eyes. She was like the midday sun—beautiful, but harsh sometimes.

Lilith nodded.

"We aren't going to a gathering just yet. This is for tomorrow."

Damon stepped away from the seamstress, who had finished his fitting. Looking every bit like a handsome young master of a noble house, he and Lilith made for a picturesque sight.

"Tomorrow? What's tomorrow?"

She nodded, walking over to a chair with a tea set and sitting down.

"Tomorrow, we are going to the capital."

He raised an eyebrow.

"Valerion? Why are we going there? Isn't that a few kilometers away? I don't think the academy would be fine with us going that far."

She nodded.

"Yes, but we are going there on academy business."

He raised an eyebrow.

"Academy business? Then why aren't we wearing uniforms?"

She picked up her tea as he sat down.

"It's obvious, isn't it? We are doing so to avoid trouble."

Damon raised an eyebrow.

"Who would want to cause trouble with Aether Academy? We have some degree of diplomatic immunity—normal law enforcement won't even touch us. At least, not easily."

Lilith nodded.

"Yes, but what about the other students?"

Damon came to a realization.

"You don't mean... ahhh, that would be annoying."

She agreed. "It would be, especially since the imperial capital is their territory."

Damon chuckled.

"Haven't the imperial academy students lost to us in every tournament? Especially the one where the academies decide the slots for who gets to enter the world dungeon and send the most candidates?"

He snapped his fingers.

"What's it called again?"

"The War Games."

Damon nodded. "Right. Can't believe anyone would put the words 'war' and 'games' together."

She sipped her tea.

He continued.

"We don't really care about the imperial academy. They're not even considered our rivals or equals. The real contest has always been with the students of Eldoria Academy or the ones from the Magic Academy in Aeronia."

She sighed.

"That's true. We're number one, pulling in talent from everywhere. That's why the imperial crown created the imperial academy—to compete and obtain the best talents. But students in the imperial academy are segregated based on noble lineage, with only commoners being allowed to join in the past decade."

He scoffed. "So, it's the same everywhere. Big deal."

She shook her head. "In our academy, it's a cruel meritocracy. Take yourself as an example—a commoner in the War Halls. The professors don't really discriminate against you based on your birth but on your strength. And after slapping them in the face as of late, I think you won that merit."

She sighed. "On the other hand, the royal academy is a bit different. Lineage is more well-regarded. And it's younger than our academy—it wasn't founded by a great sage, and it doesn't attract talent from

other continents. Mostly homebred talents. And being so close to us, they live under our shadow, constantly getting compared to us. They don't have the diplomatic immunity or the great fame we do."

"So naturally, they see us as eternal rivals. They'll do anything to win against us."

She smiled coldly. "But they never will."

Damon got chills when she said that.

"Okay, that explains why we aren't wearing uniforms... but why are we going to the capital exactly?"

She looked at him calmly, a bit of teasing in her eyes.

"We're going to pick up the mother of your good friend, Tobias Margan."

Damon's eyes narrowed. Tobias—the guy he killed.