

Living Shadow 166

Chapter 166 Raising Ones Killer

A luxurious carriage rolled smoothly out of Athor's Sanctuary, leaving behind the bustling town and the lone statue of the goddess. The rhythmic clatter of hooves filled the air, but inside the lavish carriage, the atmosphere was far from peaceful.

Lilith sat across from Damon, her gaze fixed on him.

His expression was unreadable—impassive as ever.

But after what he had put Iris through...

It was no surprise.

Teaching her the Magic Bullet spell had been brutal.

The first shot hadn't blown off her fingers—thanks to Damon's precise guidance—but her skin had turned an angry red, trembling from the recoil. Yet before she could even catch her breath, Damon had ordered her to fire another.

And she had.

Everything had been going well—until her focus slipped.

One mistake.

A single moment of distraction—

And her fingers were gone.

Lilith could still remember the miserable shriek that tore from the girl's throat.

Damon had stood over her, his face cold, unyielding, as Iris clutched her burning stump—tears of agony welling in her eyes. His voice had been merciless.

"Get up."

Lilith had rushed to her side, uncorking a high-level healing potion in seconds. It had taken five of them—five expensive, powerful potions—before Iris's fingers slowly regenerated.

And still—

Damon hadn't let her stop.

Iris had seemed on the verge of giving up.

But she hadn't.

They had kept going.

Despite Damon's cold demeanor, Lilith had noticed—

The subtle way his fist clenched.

The minute tremble in his fingers.

He was worried.

He did care.

Their training had continued, and through sheer suffering, Iris had learned.

She stopped losing her fingers.

She adjusted the distance between her fingertips and the magic bullet, mastering the technique.

But she hadn't accounted for the recoil.

Her shoulder had snapped out of place.

Another time, she had broken her elbow—completely shattering the ball-and-socket joint.

It had been gruesome.

And yet—

Despite her inhuman teacher.

Despite the agonizing training.

The girl had never faltered.

As if driven by a fury unseen.

Lilith exhaled, shaking her head slightly.

"That girl..." she murmured, eyes narrowing.

"...is dangerous."

The luxurious carriage rolled steadily along the worn cobblestone path.

Damon sat in silence, gazing absently out the window, his mind elsewhere.

Lilith studied him, her fingers lightly tapping against the armrest. Eventually, she spoke.

"That girl... she's dangerous."

Damon blinked, breaking from his thoughts, and turned to her.

"Why? She's just some brat who hasn't even reached her first class advancement."

Lilith exhaled. "That's true—for now. But she's driven. She has a twisted conviction."

Damon leaned back against the plush seat, folding his arms.

"She's out for revenge. You need that kind of resolve if you're going to kill your enemies—especially when you're weak. If you're not willing to suffer, then what's the point?"

Lilith narrowed her eyes.

"Revenge against who? The nobles who ousted her family? The ones backing them? Or you—the one who killed her father?"

Damon's jaw tightened, his lips pressing into a thin line. He didn't want to talk about her father. So he didn't. Instead, he changed the subject.

"The ones backing them," he muttered.

Lilith sighed, unimpressed. "A Templar from the Temple, maybe. I'm not sure. And stop trying to change the topic."

Her voice grew sharper.

"Why are you making someone who's going to try to kill you someday stronger? Are you mad?"

Damon looked away. "You wouldn't understand."

Lilith scoffed, her annoyance clear.

"You're creating your own executioner, Damon. That girl won't let go of a grudge. The day she finds out the truth—" her eyes locked onto his, unwavering "—is the day she becomes your greatest enemy. She will never forgive. She will never forget. She will never accept you as her master."

Damon's gaze turned cold.

"Shut up. I don't need you to tell me what I already know."

His fingers curled into a fist.

"I've been training her long enough to understand her. Even so—I'll take that risk. I'll make her as strong as I possibly can. I'll teach her everything I know. Even if one day, she does become my enemy."

Lilith studied him carefully. His voice was firm, but it couldn't mask his turmoil.

"You see this as a way to atone, don't you?" Her tone softened—only slightly.

"There are other ways, Damon. You could just give her that twelve million zeni and tell her to go somewhere far away, live a good life. With that much money, she'd be set for life."

Damon ran a hand through his hair, his voice breaking ever so slightly.

"I can't do that. I won't do that. I just... I just..." He squeezed his eyes shut.

"Why is it always like this for me? Why do I always have to make the difficult choices...?"

After a long silence, he lifted his head.

"But I'm not going to abandon Iris. And if the day comes when she does become my enemy—"

Lilith cut in, her voice quiet but pointed.

"Will you kill her?" She paused. "Can you kill her?"

Damon lowered his head. "I... I..."

Lilith sighed.

"Alright then. If that day comes—let me kill her."

Damon's head snapped up instantly, his gaze sharp, a chill settling in the air. His eyes darkened, laced with an unmistakable killing intent.

"If you kill her—I will kill you."

Lilith met his glare without flinching, then exhaled in resignation.

"Very well," she murmured. "This is your choice. All I can do is accept it."

But in her heart, she knew—

Damon's affection and guilt toward Iris Vale ran deep.

If anyone harmed that girl—Damon would go to the ends of the world to destroy them.

Yet, at the same time—

He himself was one of the enemies Iris sought to kill.

The day she discovered the truth—

Would she even consider that he was the one who trained her? Who helped her?

Or would she see him as nothing more than a monster—the murderer of her kind father?

Lilith leaned back, her lips pressing into a thin line.

"You might want to see the mental health quatermaster," she muttered dryly.

Damon let out a sharp breath, leaning his head against the window.

"I don't believe in therapy. I don't see the point in telling some stranger my problems, hoping to get cured."

Lilith smirked slightly. "The first step—"

He cut her off with a sigh.

"I know what you're about to say. 'A burden is half-solved when shared.' But I'd rather keep my burdens to myself. No one's going to help me carry them anyway."

Lilith's smirk faded.

"I will."

Damon glanced at her.

"As long as you help me carry mine."

For the first time in a long while, a small chuckle escaped him.

"What's the scheme this time?"

Lilith pulled out her pager.

"No scheme."

Damon raised an eyebrow, waiting.

She continued, her fingers typing swiftly.

"I'll send the twelve million from earlier to your war bank account. Since it's coming from my account, it's clean money—no need to worry about money laundering or raising suspicion."

His pager buzzed.

Damon checked the notification. His lips curled slightly.

"Isn't receiving twelve million from a noble lady a bit suspicious?"

Lilith smiled mischievously.

"You could always tell them you're my paramour."