

## Living Shadow 169

### Chapter 169 Shift In Mindset

The spectacle Damon caused only reinforced his position as the new number one.

As the saying goes—kill the chicken to warn the monkey.

The effect remained. The first-years were all staring at him warily, their previous arrogance replaced with caution. Even Evangeline, who had been glaring at him moments ago, had a faint trace of hesitation in her golden eyes. Leona, on the other hand, looked impressed.

Normally, something like this would have at least piqued Sylvia's curiosity. But she didn't show much of a reaction at all.

Of course, his little display had drained some of his shadow energy.

As they exited the dorm building, Damon's irritation flared.

He had been trying to talk to her, but she kept brushing him off—like he wasn't even there.

Grinding his teeth, he reached out and grabbed her hand, forcing her to stop.

She didn't turn to look at him.

He could already feel Evangeline's aura pressing down on him, warning him to let go.

But he ignored her.

Instead, he pulled Sylvia back a little—causing Evangeline's glare to intensify.

Damon met it head-on, his patience wearing thin.

He had enough of this.

He hated beating around the bush more than necessary.

"Can we talk?"

Sylvia turned slightly, though she still avoided looking at him.

"Hmm. We can."

Damon's eyes flicked toward the others—especially Evangeline.

"Let's go."

Evangeline gave him one final look before turning on her heel, leaving with Xander and Leona.

The latter mouthed a good luck before disappearing down the path.

Damon didn't want other people sticking their noses in their drama, so he led Sylvia away—past the hedge wall toward a small fountain.

She offered no resistance.

But as they stopped, and he finally turned to face her—her expression was unreadable.

More reserved than usual.

Her eyes held a flicker of something—like she would rather be anywhere else.

Damon bit his lip, his brow twitching slightly.

"Look... I'm sorry, okay?"

Sylvia finally raised her head.

"What are you sorry for?"

Damon exhaled sharply, feeling the weight of his own words.

"I'm sorry about the evaluation... I didn't mean to hurt you like that."

He hadn't planned to stab her. That had been him losing control for a moment.

However—he had intended to betray her.

Sylvia studied him for a moment.

"Why are you sorry, though?"

His gaze narrowed slightly.

"For betraying you... I know you're mad at me, and I—"

She cut him off with a confused look.

"Why would I be mad at you about that? It was within the rules. The evaluation said anything and everything goes."

Her tone was level, matter-of-fact.

"And besides," she continued, looking away, "it was supposed to be an individual test. We were subtly encouraged to turn on each other."

Her fingers curled slightly at her sides.

"It was my fault for not realizing that sooner. How could I be mad about something like that?"

She let out a short breath.... glancing at the grass.

"Wouldn't that be... pathetic?"

Damon studied the elven girl in front of him.

Her gray eyes were still, emotionless—yet there was something there, hidden beneath her expression and mannerisms.

It wasn't anger.

It was doubt.

Like her confidence in herself had been shaken.

His lips pressed into a thin line.

"Then why are you acting like this? Why are you giving me the cold shoulder?"

Sylvia lowered her gaze to the ground.

"I'm not giving you the cold shoulder..."

Her hands clenched around the book she was holding.

"Besides... if I looked at things objectively, I've been treating everyone like that. So it's not you. I'm the problem."

She exhaled softly.

"I'm sorry... for making you feel that way."

Damon felt a pang of confusion.

She was apologizing—but not just for how she treated him.

There was something else in her words, something deeper.

And somehow, it made his heart ache.

His grip tightened.

He reached out and rested a hand on her shoulder.

"Why are you apologizing...? Look, I'm sorry."

Sylvia finally raised her head.

A small, forced smile tugged at her lips.

"Here. You can have this."

She pressed the book into his arms.

"It's a good read... although you might have some critiques for the author."

Damon caught the book before it could slip from his grasp.

She turned away with the same distant expression on her exquisite face.

"Let's go. We have class. Professor Kael has been suspended, so Professor Alfred is taking over."

Damon held the book, his fingers brushing over the worn cover.

But he couldn't shake the pain tightening in his chest.

That smile she gave him...

It was wrong.

He bit his lip.

All of this...

All of this was his fault.

His hand pressed against his chest... realization dawned on him.

'Oh, I see now...'

A self-deprecating smirk crossed his lips.

He had started to care—truly care—about these people.

At first, he wanted nothing to do with them.

He had found their presence irritating—had only tolerated it because he intended to use them for his own ends.

But now, seeing Sylvia wear such an expression, seeing her smile like that—he finally understood.

Perhaps that was why he hadn't even tried to fight back when Evangeline ambushed him.

'Hah... I really am a piece of shit, aren't I?'

But he didn't need Evangeline to pressure him into fixing things.

He was going to do it anyway.

He would undo or make right whatever he had broken.

This was his way of taking responsibility.

The human heart was a complex thing.

If his Remorseless skill was active right now, he would have probably found his actions illogical.

But there was no room for logic here.

He let out a slow breath and followed her, the morning sun casting a pale lilac glow over his dark eyes as he watched the forlorn figure of the white-haired elf walking ahead of him.

He sighed.

He didn't need to beat himself up over this.

Evangeline was going to do that for him anyway.