

## Living Shadow 190

### Chapter 190 Emilia Highgon

The voice carried authority, stopping Yuka just short of drawing his sword while Damon had already begun to cover his arm with Shadow Armor.

Both fighters stepped back, keeping their guards up against each other. Damon knew that if the situation were reversed, he wouldn't have stopped—he would've struck without hesitation. But alas...

He shifted his attention toward the source of the voice.

Standing apart from the crowd was a young woman.

Her long black hair cascaded in elegant ringlets, and she wore the uniform of the Imperial Academy—a pristine white coat with gold accents, a matching skirt flowing around her legs. A brooch gleamed on her chest, signifying her status, and in her hands, she held a small stack of papers.

Damon's gaze flicked toward Lilith, who merely spared the girl a glance.

"It has been too long, Lady Emilia Highgon," she murmured.

Emilia.

Her violet eyes locked onto Lilith Astranova.

"I did not expect to meet the student council president of Aether Academy here in Valerion... It has been too long, Lady Astranova."

Lilith offered a thin smile.

"It has indeed. Now that you're here, I suppose it is time for us to leave."

She stepped toward Damon, her expression unreadable.

Emilia narrowed her eyes.

"I'm afraid I cannot allow that. Your junior here unfairly assaulted my fellow students. Therefore—"

Lilith laughed softly, cutting her off.

"Assaulted? Is that what you call four students attacking an elderly woman? The Imperial Academy has no shame. My junior here is someone who cannot tolerate evil. How could he stand by and let such injustices pass?"

A murmur rippled through the crowd.

"That's true... I saw them beating up an old woman."

"I heard her grandson only bumped into them and apologized, but they still assaulted him..."

"How cruel... Are these supposed to be the future heroes of the Goddess' races?"

Emilia's lips twitched. Damn it. Lilith Astranova had seized the moral high ground.

Her gaze flicked toward the fae from earlier, the one Damon had beaten.

"And what of the second group? What if they did no evil?"

Lilith gasped theatrically.

"Did you not hear what they said to my junior? They acted as if they owned the capital, spouting treasonous words. And look at my poor junior—he fought one versus fifteen."

Damon sighed.

"It's okay, Lilith. Dealing with honorless people is fine. I was merely doing what every Imperial citizen should strive to do for our great empire."

A hushed silence fell over the crowd.

Then, with a solemn expression, Damon placed a hand over his chest and saluted.

"As a citizen of the great and mighty Valtheron Empire, it is only fitting..."

"Hail, Great Valtheron!"

The entire crowd instinctively performed the national salute—including Emilia.

She gritted her teeth.

She was being played.

If she refused to salute, it would be unpatriotic. But by doing so, it was as if she was admitting her fellow students were in the wrong.

Her jaw clenched.

She couldn't beat Lilith Astranova—the number one second-year.

She couldn't beat Renata Malcrist—the number two.

She had been made student council president not just for her own talents but because the Imperial Academy needed someone to compete with Aether Academy. That was why a second-year was also president over there.

Her gaze shifted toward Yuka, his nose still bleeding as he gripped his sword.

"Are you okay?"

He nodded.

"I'm fine... He's strong. Almost at first-class advancement. Tricky too. But I don't know him."

Emilia gave a small nod.

"Naturally, you wouldn't."

She turned to Damon.

She needed to turn this humiliating defeat into something less disgraceful. If she couldn't make her students look competent, she had to make Damon seem too competent instead.

"You are Damon Grey, aren't you? Aether Academy's golden genius?"

Damon blinked.

He had never heard anyone call him that.

Yuka glanced at her, confused.

"You know him, President?"

Emilia nodded.

"I do. He is a prodigy... who joined the academy under the endorsement of the legendary Seras Blade."

She made sure her voice carried.

Yuka's eyes widened.

The other students still sprawled on the ground gasped.

The crowd erupted into murmurs.

"Seras Blade? You mean the Seras?"

"What other Seras do you know?"

"How is he her disciple?"

"That would explain a lot."

"No wonder he was so strong..."

Lilith smiled. Emilia was quite clever to make such a counter, but it still played into their favor by boosting their reputation. She had no complaints.

Yuka, still gripping his sword, narrowed his eyes.

"How come I've never heard of him?"

Emilia seized the opportunity to hype Damon up even more.

"You wouldn't have. He joined shortly before the quarter-semester evaluation with a golden ticket from Seras herself. And to give other students a head start, he intentionally failed his evaluation."

That last part was a complete fabrication, but she needed a strong narrative.

Yuka's eyes widened.

"But why...?"

She turned toward Damon.

"It was so he could prove how much stronger he was when the mid-semester evaluation came. Just a few days ago, he completely and single-handedly decimated all his peers, destroying part of the Evil Forest in the process."

The crowd collectively sucked in a breath. This guy was insane. No wonder he had overwhelmed the imperial students. If even Aether Academy students couldn't beat him, what chance did anyone else have?

"That's insane..."

"No wonder he won so easily."

"A monster..."

Damon watched with mild surprise. He had never seen anyone praise him so thoroughly before.

'I think I like her.'

But Emilia wasn't done. She couldn't just glorify a rival academy student—she had to balance the scales.

"He's also the biggest troublemaker," she continued, forcing a thin smile on her face.

"He gets into fights every day, bullies the weak, and brutalizes even his own friends. He has no mercy, and even his professors can't control him. He's arrogant and does as he pleases. All the other first-years are afraid of him—he always sends students to the healers. And just recently, an upstanding professor was suspended because of his schemes... With monikers like 'Demon Grey,' 'The Scourge,' and 'Problem Child'—he's nothing but a menace."

Damon's eye twitched. This girl really knew how to spin a story.

'I don't like her anymore.'

Lilith smiled thinly.

"I think you've said enough. How dare you try to spread false rumors about my kind and upright junior?"

Damon puffed his chest out, putting on his most noble and righteous tone.

"Worry not, Senior Lilith. Good people are insulted every day. I see no reason to bicker in the streets—it is unfitting for one of noble birth to lower themselves to the level of the uneducated. Let us depart. My righteous actions will speak for me. I will not be dishonored."

With that, he walked away, carrying himself like a forlorn hero wrongfully accused.

Lilith shot Emilia a glare before turning and striding after him. As they left, thin smiles played on their lips. The crowd, once skeptical, now cast Damon looks of sympathy—as if he were a valiant soul falsely accused, despite saving an old lady.

With his head held high, Damon turned on his heel, his coat billowing slightly behind him. Whispers filled the air as students exchanged glances—was he truly the villain Emilia claimed, or a noble warrior wronged by the system?