

Living Shadow 191

Chapter 191 Demon

The morning sun cast a soft lilac glow over the city, its light streaming through the glass panels of an elegant café. The rush of carriages on the road and the chatter of pedestrians outside did nothing to disturb the tranquil atmosphere within. The one-way glass allowed those inside to observe the bustling streets while remaining hidden from prying eyes.

By a large window, a young man and woman sat enjoying a peaceful breakfast. Though dressed in fine garments, it was their composed demeanor and noble mannerisms that truly set them apart.

"I suppose you did a good job yesterday," the young woman remarked, her vibrant red hair catching the morning light as she smiled.

Damon scoffed, stirring his tea lazily. "That didn't help my mana control at all."

She smiled knowingly. "It wasn't supposed to. My goal was to help you establish a new reputation, get in the good graces of our professors, and, most importantly, boost our academy's prestige."

Damon lifted his cup, inhaling the rich aroma of his tea.

"All that talk about not wearing uniforms to avoid trouble with the Imperial Academy..."

Lilith's gentle smile didn't quite reach her emerald eyes.

"I never said we couldn't find trouble with them—only that I didn't want them to find trouble with us."

Damon sighed. She was as cunning as ever, but he liked that about her. If she weren't, how else could she be plotting the downfall of the world's most powerful organization?

"That Yuka von Penrose was stronger than I expected," he admitted, setting his cup down.

"Even with Shadow Armor on my hands, he managed to cut me. If Emilia hadn't interfered, he might've landed a solid blow. That second move of mine was too ambitious."

Lilith took a delicate bite of her food.

"It was a clever move, forcing Emilia into damage control with the Imperial Salute. She had no choice but to shift the narrative instead of outright accusing us."

She set her utensils down.

"Lady Margan will arrive soon. We'll see if your plan works, Damon—and, more importantly, whether the one lurking in the shadows decides to act."

Damon nodded. Someone was moving behind the scenes, a loose end that needed to be tied up.

"I'll be on my best behavior," he assured her.

Lilith didn't respond. Instead, her gaze drifted toward the glass panel, her expression darkening. Damon followed her line of sight.

Out in the busy street, a noblewoman held the end of a chain. At the other end was a young girl, dressed in tattered rags and covered in dirt. Her black hair hung in messy strands, but what stood out most were the small, bat-like wings on her shoulders, barely noticeable beneath the grime.

Damon frowned. "A demon..."

She was one of the highest types of demons—ones that resembled elves or humans, with retractable wings and tails for females, while males bore horns along with their wings and tails. Unlike the monstrous demons used on the battlefield, these ones were little different from humans, save for the features they could easily hide.

They were called demon kin.

At first, Damon assumed Lilith was glaring at the demon girl. That would have been normal. Hatred for demons was as natural as breathing. Once, he had hated them too. But after everything, he had learned to despise something else more. Now, all he felt was mild distaste.

But then he realized—Lilith wasn't glaring at the girl. She was glaring at the noblewoman holding the chains.

That was unusual.

"Hey, why are you—"

She rose from her seat without looking back.

"Let's go."

Damon put down his breakfast and followed.

He didn't understand what Lilith was thinking, but siding with a demon in public was a surefire way to turn everyone against her. She wouldn't be that reckless... right?

Lilith strode toward the noblewoman and the demon girl, her steps firm and unwavering. Damon followed closely, his dagger hidden in his grasp. If Lilith attacked the noblewoman, he would strike the demon girl and pretend they were extremist goddess-race supremacists. It was the only way to avoid public backlash.

As they neared, he heard the soft cries of the little demon girl. Her fragile body was covered in fresh wounds, her skin bleeding from repeated strikes. Her dull blue eyes held a deadened look, as if suffering

was all she had ever known. Even so, she still whimpered from the pain. Her voice was like any other child's—innocent, helpless.

The woman wielding the whip raised it once more. The weapon's metal barbs gleamed under the sun as they tore through flesh.

Lilith approached... and walked right past the woman.

Damon blinked. What?

Then he heard a faint click.

The slave collar around the girl's neck loosened, its enchantment breaking in an instant. The girl flinched, but she didn't react beyond that. Her gaze lifted slightly, unfocused, as if they were just more passersby in a world that had long abandoned her.

Damon exhaled a silent sigh of relief.

Lilith led them down an empty road, far from the bustling crowd.

"That didn't help her," Damon muttered.

"And why the hell are you helping demons? They're our enemies."

Lilith glanced at him. "And what evil did that little girl commit?"

Damon frowned.... She continued..

"That's just what they tell us. To keep us fighting. To keep us killing each other. Didn't that elf say the same thing to you?"

He narrowed his eyes. "Then they're behind this, aren't they?"

She looked at him. "Do you know what our goddess truly is?"

Damon hesitated. "...The Goddess of Doom."

"Doom," Lilith murmured. "The end of all things. Everything that falls under doom is her domain—including war. Specifically, the Doom War. The war that will end the world."

Her fists clenched.

"Even before demons walked this land, this world was locked in perpetual conflict."

Her teeth ground together.

"Even now, in these past eight years of supposed 'truce,' the goddess races are still fighting among themselves. And the temple..." She took a deep breath.

"The temple is one of the reasons why."

She closed her eyes for a moment before opening them again, filled with quiet fury.

"The longest peace this world has ever known lasted thirteen hours. No longer. Before another war began—big or small."

Damon had never heard her sound so angry.

"I want to end it all," she whispered. "I want to end this era of endless, senseless war."