

## **Living Shadow 192**

### Chapter 192 Intelligent Reformer

He sighed, feeling a mild irritation settle in his chest.

"What does that have to do with demons?"

His voice was laced with skepticism. He hadn't forgotten—he wouldn't forget—that he was an orphan of the Demon Wars. It was demons that had taken everything from him. His parents had died because of them.

His sister hated them even more.

Lilith met his gaze.

"How many people like you do you think exist?" Her voice was soft, but her eyes were sharp.

"Damon, you don't hate demons. You're not someone who blindly follows the crowd."

He narrowed his eyes.

"But if you are," she continued, "let's assume your parents were killed by a human. Would you hate all of humanity? Or if an elf had done it, would you want to slaughter all of elvenkind? It's the same thing. These aren't monsters... they're people."

His expression turned cold.

He sighed. "Whatever. I don't even care about that."

"You don't because you know demons aren't the true culprits," she pressed.

"The ones who made you an orphan were the people who conscripted your parents for war. I don't need to dig deep to figure that out. How many others were forced into battle?"

She clenched her fists. "All of this is because of the war."

Damon remained calm. If Lilith was flipping out, he had to stay level-headed.

"You make it sound like war is all bad," he said evenly.

"Our world was built on war. Conflict drives innovation. Medicine, technology, strategy—progress itself has been fueled by war."

Lilith's gaze turned icy.

"At what price?" Her voice was sharp, nearly trembling.

"The ones who profit from war get richer, while the weak and poor die for them. Countless orphans, lives erased, dreams crushed. War only breeds more war—it's a sick cycle."

She took a breath, her emerald eyes burning with emotion.

"And the ones who benefit the most," she said bitterly, "are the temple. Every war fills their coffers with wealth, their ranks with influence. They thrive on conflict."

Tears welled in her eyes, but her voice didn't waver. It was as if she were venting something she had buried deep inside for years.

"This world of ours... it isn't natural. The temple knows something. There's so much hidden from us—the ancient ruins, the temple's secrets, the goddess, the unknown god... There's a deeper connection, and I will find it."

Damon shook his head.

"That's just our nature," he muttered.

"People need conflict. It's wired into us. There's a part of us that craves drama, that creates chaos just to feel alive. Nothing irritates the soul more than stagnation."

Humans weren't like animals, who found an ideal condition and stayed there. Humans couldn't. Wouldn't.

"This is what's called the death drive—the restless need to self-sabotage, to make war. It's the part of you that wants to lie, cheat, steal, because it makes life more interesting. That urge to explore the unknown? It's the same urge that makes people destroy. It's the price of freedom."

He exhaled, rubbing his temple.

"Lilith, you can't change this. It's the nature of free will. Give people peace, and the warlike man will turn on himself."

But he wasn't blind. There was something personal in her tone, a raw edge in her words. She wasn't just chasing some lofty ideal—this was personal.

"Something tells me there's a personal reason buried in all that self-righteous bullshit."

Lilith lowered her head.

"...There is."

Her voice was quiet, but filled with conviction.

"I want revenge."

Damon stepped forward, closing the distance between them. Slowly, he placed his hand over hers, his grip firm yet steady. He tilted her chin up, forcing her to meet his gaze.

"We're going to die horrible deaths."

Lilith's breath hitched. But it wasn't his words that struck her—it was the way he said we. He had chosen to walk this road to ruin alongside her.

"If we fail..."

Tears welled in her eyes.

"We won't," she whispered. "And if we do... at least we go down together."

Damon chuckled softly. Without another word, he tugged at her hand and began walking.

"We have half an hour before Lady Margan arrives. Let's go wait for her."

Lilith smiled, gripping his hand a little tighter.

As they walked, she glanced around at the city streets before speaking again, a thoughtful expression crossing her face.

"Have you heard of the philosophy behind the old rickety fence?"

Damon stroked his chin, thinking for a moment.

"I think I've read about it," he said.

"It's a philosophy that poses a question—what if you saw an old fence in the middle of the road that didn't seem to serve any purpose? A good Samaritan might knock it down, thinking they're making the path easier for others. But the philosophy argues that before removing something, you should understand why it was built in the first place. Without that knowledge, tearing it down might have unintended consequences."

Lilith nodded.

"Exactly. An intelligent reformer does their research before dismantling something. Take the temple, for example. It has existed for thousands of years, serving a purpose—even if we don't fully understand it. Even if I had the power now, I wouldn't destroy it arbitrarily."

Her eyes gleamed with conviction.

"That's why we will create something to replace it."

Damon exhaled. "That's why you want to build an organization."

She nodded again.

"Look at it from every angle—who benefits from it? Why was it created? Who or what does it stop?"

Damon folded his arms, mulling over her words.

"I see... so what you're saying is—unless you fully understand something, you shouldn't destroy it."

Lilith turned to him, her expression unwavering.

"I want to learn the temple's secrets. I want to uncover what's hidden in the ancient ruins. I want to know why they fell. I need to know. And when I do... when I finally understand..."

Her grip on his hand tightened.

"I'll erase them."

Damon glanced down at their interlocked hands but made no move to pull away. Once again, he was reminded of the sheer weight of Lilith Astranova's ambitions. And from the looks of it, even demons were welcome in her grand design.... And that made her even more dangerous.

For now, he chose not to pry into her past. She had already shown so much vulnerability—more than enough for him to trust that this wasn't some elaborate scheme.

In the end, despite how extraordinary she was, despite the way she spoke of reshaping the world—Damon was reminded of one simple truth.

Lilith Astranova was still human.

And because of that, she was flawed.

Just like him.