

## Living Shadow 196

### Chapter 196 Holding A Minor Grudge

While Damon mulled over his own problems, Lilith continued filling Lady Margan in on the current situation. However, she made no mention of Tobias's death—or the deaths of any of his friends. Instead, she only spoke of how the noble families of these young men would soon arrive at the academy.

In the meantime, Lady Margan would reside in a special section of the academy, one prepared specifically for distinguished guests.

Damon had never set foot in that area before.

Hell, he hadn't even explored all the student areas.

But he had seen a map of the academy—and naturally, it was massive.

The guest residence was located not far from the academy's coliseum and tournament grounds. The entire area had been built to accommodate noble guests who arrived whenever Aether Academy hosted a grand event—a festival, a tournament like the War Games, or both.

A separate gate was built there, leading directly outside, so visiting nobles wouldn't have to mingle with students at the main entrance. That gate only opened during major events.

But since this wasn't such a time, they had no choice but to take the usual entrance.

Lady Margan wore her usual tired, weary expression as Lilith spoke, her mind clearly elsewhere.

Damon smirked internally.

He was certain Lilith was pushing her toward him.

By whatever means necessary, Lilith wanted Lady Margan to see him as an ally—or at the very least, as someone she could use as an insider.

They soon arrived at the guest residence.

The white mansion loomed before them, its grand entrance exuding an air of noble refinement.

In the distance, Damon caught sight of the academy's tall spires. Further beyond, a large stone monolith stood in eerie silence. He recognized it immediately—the path leading to the Underground Labyrinth, the academy's dungeon.

But now was not the time to dwell on that.

Damon turned his attention back to the mansion.

The carriage doors were opened by a knight stationed outside, and Damon stepped out first, offering his hand to Lady Margan as she descended from the carriage.

Lilith followed, her expression unreadable, as they made their way to the mansion doors.

A group of maids stood in perfect formation, dressed in crisp formal uniforms, waiting for them.

As they entered, the maids greeted them gracefully, while a group of manservants assisted Lady Margan's followers in getting settled.

Damon moved to escort Lady Margan upstairs, but Lilith stopped him mid-step.

Once again, she spoke with poised elegance.

"I must apologize for the small welcoming party... The others are occupied meeting the family representatives. The Regardis, the Ambridges, the Fayjoys, the Garniers, and finally, the Tatarstans—all will be sending their representatives soon."

Lilith's gaze flickered toward Lady Margan.

"The meeting will be held a day after the last representative arrives. In the meantime, you may familiarize yourself with the academy at your leisure."

Lady Margan's expression hardened.

All these noble families were gathering—

Yet the academy had told them nothing.

They had only been informed that their children were dead.

Under normal circumstances, the academy would simply send a cause of death report and return the remains to the family.

But this time was different.

Why?

Because they were freshmen.

They hadn't been in any dangerous exams or dungeons.

They had all died within the academy—

Under mysterious circumstances.

And now, the nobles were being invited rather than notified.

Meaning...

The academy didn't want anyone outside to know what would be discussed.

Which could only mean one thing—

This was something the Aether Academy wanted buried.

Lady Margan's thoughts raced.

'Does this concern the Valtheron Imperial Family? ...Or the Temple?'

Only those two powers could make the academy this cautious.

Her sharp eyes snapped back to Lilith.

"Very well, Lady Astranova."

Damon released Lady Margan's hand and gave her a slow, respectful bow, stepping aside to stand beside Lilith.

Lilith smiled.

"Lady Margan, I hope your stay at the academy is pleasant. Should you feel the need, we would be happy to give you a tour once you are well rested. You may choose whoever you like as your guide. We would be happy to accommodate."

A subtle push.

Lilith was forcing Lady Margan into a position where she would have to choose Damon.

And sure enough—

Lady Margan's lips curled into a faint smile.

Her gaze lingered on Damon.

"I will take you up on that offer."

Lilith nodded, satisfied.

"Farewell for now, Lady Margan."

Damon held her gaze for a long moment before finally speaking.

"We shall meet again soon, my lady."

Lilith turned on her heel, and Damon followed—

But not before casting one last, lingering glance back at Lady Margan.

As they left, Lilith opted not to take a carriage back to their residence. Instead, she sauntered toward one of the distant spires. Damon followed, knowing there was a teleportation circle there that would take them back to the academy's main building. The teleportation circles were scattered all around the academy—after all, with a place that large, it was only natural that such conveniences would be created.

Lilith glared at him, her expression cold.

"Lady Margan is so beautiful, isn't she?"

He shrugged, knowing exactly what she was getting at.

"I don't know. If my mother were alive, she'd be about that age right now."

Lilith scoffed.

"I wouldn't know anything about that. After all, she's far more beautiful than me..."

Damon gave her a deadpan expression.

"You're really holding a grudge over something so small?"

Lilith smiled coldly.

"A grudge? No. Seeking payback? Yes. Yes, I will... This is your chance to get on my good side, and that window is closing fast."

Damon sighed, his voice tired.

"Wow, Lilith, you are the prettiest in the world. No woman compares. I can't take my eyes off you..."

She glanced at him, rolling her eyes.

"I sense no sincerity there. My grudge deepens."

He sighed.

"Ahh, fine... I love your hair. I love how you smell like gardenias. I love your emerald green eyes that hide how vicious you are..."

She sneered.

"I see how you slipped in an insult there... You really can't let go of that ego of yours. My payback will be swift."

He sighed again. "Woman, what more do you want? I tried my best..."

"Your best wasn't good enough."

"Don't girls like honest guys?"

She chuckled coldly.

"Says the man who just lied to Lady Margan."

He shrugged. "Touché."

She stopped.

"The rest of the noble families will be here soon. The good thing is, the academy has no clue you're involved. On the day Tobias died, you had an alibi—you were with me in town. As long as no one saw when you returned to kill Tobias, I can be your alibi."

He nodded. "Okay, what about Renata? She was there too, in town."

She nodded.

"Our only problem is the person who saw you."

He nodded again, narrowing his eyes.

"Yeah... I have a clue."

She glanced at him as she walked.

"Who?"

He narrowed his gaze further.

"It's one of the professors."

She looked toward the distant spires and sighed.

"That does very little to narrow it down... but if it comes down to it, I think I have the means to kill one of them."