

## Living Shadow 199

### Chapter 199 Creep

Sylvia walked down the dormitory halls, the quiet of night settling around her. She had stayed at the library a little later than usual, but thankfully, the dorms weren't locked yet—she hadn't missed curfew.

Taking a more silent route back to her room, she moved through the dimly lit corridors. As she approached her door, she suddenly heard a sound.

She stopped.

Her body tensed, and she snapped her head around.

"Who's there?" she demanded. "Show yourself."

A cold chill crawled over her skin. The once familiar halls now felt narrower, as if something unseen was pressing in on her.

And yet, when she turned again, there was no one.

She hugged the book in her arms, forcing herself to move forward.

I must be losing it...

Shaking her head, she reached her door and unlocked it. The room was dark as she stepped inside. She sighed and quietly placed her book down before turning on the light—

—only for a voice to greet her.

"Why, hello there, Sylvia..."

Her heart lurched.

The large chair by her window—her usual study seat—slowly rotated to reveal a dark-haired young man lounging in it.

Damon.

His black eyes were empty, his expression unreadable, but his smile was too thin, as if it concealed something dangerous. The shadows around him stretched unnaturally, pooling beneath his chair like they had a mind of their own.

Sylvia stiffened.

"Y-You—ah... what... Damon? What are you doing in my room?"

The young man leaned back, that same sinister smile curving on his lips.

"I've come to take you."

Sylvia let out a slow breath, scanning her room.

'So that presence I felt earlier... it must've been him.'

Damon did have an unnervingly dark aura. She had panicked for nothing.

She bit her lip, feeling slightly embarrassed.

"Sorry for freaking out..."

Damon raised an eyebrow.

"...Aren't you going to ask how I got in?"

She shook her head.

"No need for that." She glared at him. "You can take the same way out."

Damon chuckled.

"That was a very un-Sylvia-like response. So, you are mad at me."

She shook her head again.

"Mad at you? No, not at all. Creeped out? Yes, very much."

She walked over to a shelf.

"Do you want some tea?"

Damon narrowed his eyes.

"I thought I creeped you out."

She sat down on her bed, avoiding eye contact.

"You creep everyone out."

"That's a low blow"

Silence stretched between them before she sighed.

"If you're here to apologize again, don't bother. I already told you—I'm not mad. I don't care about the evaluation. You obviously had your reasons, and you did what you had to do to win. I can't fault that, so just let it go."

Damon stood up and walked toward her.

"I didn't come here for that."

Sylvia looked up.

"...You didn't?"

Damon smirked.

"Nope." He stepped closer. "I came to kidnap you."

Sylvia's eyes widened.

"Wha—huh?! Don't even joke about that!"

Damon's smirk deepened.

"Who's joking?"

Before she could react, he grabbed her, pulling her into his arms in one swift motion.

Sylvia barely had time to scream before he leapt—out the window.

Her stomach dropped as they fell from the third floor, the wind rushing past her ears.

But just before they hit the ground, Damon's hand shot out, firing a sleek, transparent wire—his omnidirectional gear. The line snapped taut, breaking their fall as they glided to the ground.

Sylvia's breath came in quick, panicked gasps.

"H-How—Dare—"

Damon grabbed her hand.

"Shut up and come with me."

She blinked in shock as he pulled her through the quiet, moonlit academy grounds. Her protests died in her throat, curiosity slowly overtaking her initial fear.

Damon led her to a hidden section of the academy's underground waterways—a rarely used escape route.

The moment they slipped outside, Sylvia felt... different.

The cold, oppressive presence she had felt lingering around her before was gone.

She took in the night air as Damon pulled her behind a few trees. She wasn't afraid of him—he didn't seem to have any bad intentions.

Hidden behind the trees was a single-horse carriage.

Damon lifted her by the waist and placed her onto the seat before climbing in himself.

Sylvia stared at him, her curiosity completely taking over now.

"...Where—where are we going?"

Damon grabbed the reins and flashed her a grin.

"On a date."

Sylvia's gray eyes widened.

"...What?!"

The carriage took off, rolling smoothly down the road.

Before long, the grand lights of Athor's Sanctuary came into view, illuminating the night sky with its warm glow.

And as they left the academy behind, Sylvia realized something.

That dark chill she had felt earlier—the heavy shadow that had clung to her for days—

...It had stayed behind.

For the first time in a long while, she felt free.

Damon stopped the carriage beside a brown-haired young man with a sly glint in his blue eyes.

Sylvia eyed the stranger warily as Damon hopped off and offered her his hand. She hesitated briefly before accepting it, stepping down onto the cobblestone street.

"Thanks for the carriage, Carls," Damon said casually.

The young man—Carls—flashed a lazy grin.

"No biggie... I'll keep an eye out for you two lovebirds."

Sylvia's eyes widened, and a deep blush spread across her cheeks. L-Lovebirds?!

She stole a glance at Damon, but he didn't seem fazed at all.

'Just who is this guy?' she wondered, glancing between them.

Damon, however, had already shifted his attention back to her. His eyes flicked down to her hand, and before she could react, he took it.

Her breath hitched.

Her face grew even redder as she quickly averted her gaze, refusing to look at him.

Damon smirked. He pulled her closer, lowering his voice.

"Stay close," he murmured. "Athor's Sanctuary is full of crooks. More importantly, we can't let the Student Council spot you."

Sylvia frowned and looked up at him.

"Huh? If you knew we'd get in trouble, why did you bring me?"

Damon chuckled, offering her his other hand.

"You didn't resist," he said smoothly. "Which means you want to be here." His smirk widened. "Now, let me show you a good time, princess."

Sylvia bit her lip, torn between irritation and intrigue.

She hesitated for a moment.

Then, slowly, she placed her hand in his.