

## Living Shadow 40

### Chapter 40 Because I Want To Eat Them

Damon was woken up by the deep growl of his own stomach. His eyes remained shut, but the world around him came into sharp focus through his shadow. He didn't need to glance at the system notification to confirm it—his hunger had reached critical levels, somewhere around 85%. The sensory input was overwhelming.

He saw it all: the glowing outlines of souls moving through the dorm halls, students heading for their classes, and maids quietly tending to their duties. Each movement cast rippling shadows that his senses latched onto, flooding his mind with information. It was painful, like trying to drink from a firehose, but it was better than the last time.

Before, he could only clutch his head and scream as his brain begged for mercy. Now, he found himself adjusting, as if his body were forcing itself to adapt to the madness.

That calm shattered the moment he opened his eyes.

A kaleidoscope of overlapping images bombarded his vision—shadows and souls blending into a chaotic stream of light and dark.

"Ahrrrg..." Damon groaned, clutching his head as he rolled on the bed.

Cold sweat dripped down his face, and his breathing grew ragged. But slowly, painfully, he forced his mind to settle. Like eyes adjusting to the blinding light of the sun, he began to make sense of the chaos.

His body, however, told a different story. Dark circles framed his dilated pupils, and his pale, sweat-slicked skin made him look more corpse than human. His shadow twitched violently by the door, glitching and shifting erratically as if it were an animal ready to lunge.

Damon pushed himself upright, only to collapse onto the floor with a heavy thud. He leaned his head back against the edge of the bed, panting.

Despite the torment, a strange clarity cut through the noise. It was the same as before, only this time, Damon felt as if he were adapting to the chaos. Even so, the mental strain of perceiving the world through the shadows gnawed at him.

'This is only going to get worse if I step into a place with too many shadows...'

The forest, he realized, was both his salvation and his curse. It was the only place where he could hide from prying eyes when his hunger turned him into a monster. But it was also a place riddled with shadows, an endless supply of sensory overload.

He clenched his fists and turned his gaze to the system notification hovering in front of him.

[Shadow Hunger: 84%]

[Shadow is starved]

[STATS HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY BOOSTED]

He bit his lip, hard enough to taste blood.

'What do I do? Damn it, what can I do? I missed my chance yesterday...'

His hands trembled as he fought the rising panic. Hunger clawed at his insides like a beast demanding to be fed. Yet, despite the madness, Damon forced himself to stay seated, gripping the edge of the bed as if it were the only thing anchoring him to reality.

Damon rose from his bed, his body sluggish and his stomach gnawing at itself. He shuffled into the bathroom, the cold water from the shower washing over him, momentarily dulling the burning hunger that threatened to consume him.

His vision was still off—muted shades of black and white made it difficult to focus.

After the bath, he returned to his room, calling his shadow back to him. It detached from the door and slithered across the floor like a living thing before merging into his own. Instantly, the overwhelming sensory overload ebbed, leaving his mind quieter than it had been moments before.

He blinked, surprised.

"Huh... wait, what? You were the one causing that?"

The shadow didn't respond. Its form was erratic, flickering as though it had gone feral. Damon had seen it like this before, during the peak of his hunger. At times like these, it didn't behave with its usual intelligence or eerie camaraderie—it was pure instinct, driven only by its ravenous nature.

He exhaled deeply.

"Don't expand my perception like that, okay? Please."

The word please slipped out unbidden, a desperate hope that it might heed him. But he knew better. The shadow was merely biding its time, conserving energy until his hunger hit 90%. At that threshold, it wouldn't wait for permission—it would take over and pounce on the nearest prey.

A quick glance at the system confirmed his fears:

[Shadow Hunger: 84%]

That left him with just 6%—not much time.

Damon left his dorm, keeping his head low as he moved through the halls. Even with his vision monochrome, the glow of people's souls burned brightly in his mind. Every passing soul tempted his senses, but he kept himself focused on the day ahead.

His schedule was mercifully light—only theoretical classes today. No strenuous activity, no practical work.

Damon figured the significant stat boost he'd received from his shadow's predatory nature was the only reason he hadn't collapsed entirely.

It was a cruel trick of evolution: the stronger he grew, the better he'd be at hunting. But fighting burned energy, and energy was something he couldn't afford to waste.

He had a plan—to conserve himself by sleeping through the class. It was simple, but hunger complicated everything. The blackouts, the surges of aggression, the constant mental strain—all of it made him more volatile.

He slumped into a seat at the very back of the classroom, lowering his head onto the desk. His stomach growled incessantly, making it hard to relax.

The professor began the lecture, droning on about topics Damon barely registered. He kept his head down, staring at his flickering shadow on the floor.

"Don't do anything... don't do anything..." he muttered under his breath, repeating the words like a mantra.

As long as it behaved, he wouldn't be bombarded by the unbearable sensory input.

But then the shadow shifted, its head-like form turning toward a specific direction. Time passed, and Damon, unable to sleep, finally raised his head. He regretted it instantly.

The room was flooded with the glow of souls, but two lights stood out above all others.

The first was a golden blaze, blinding and radiant like the midday sun—Evangeline Brightwater. Her soul burned with such intensity that Damon almost winced.

The second was new to him: a gentle, silvery-white light, soft and serene like moonlight. Sylvia Moonveil, the elven girl, sat beside Evangeline.

His stomach growled audibly.

Damon couldn't take his eyes off them. The predatory instinct in him surged, his pupils dilating as his gaze locked onto the two brightest souls in the room.

From the front of the class, the professor's voice cut through the haze.

"DAMON, is there a reason you're staring at Evangeline and Sylvia with such intensity?"

The room fell silent. Every pair of eyes turned to Damon, including those of the two girls.

But Damon was lost in his reverie. He answered honestly, his voice dripping with hunger.

"Because I want to eat them."

The professor blinked, stunned, before bursting into laughter. The rest of the class followed suit, assuming it was a poorly timed joke.

Damon wasn't joking.

The noise shattered his trance, and he quickly lowered his head back to the desk, avoiding the stares of Evangeline and Sylvia.

'I need to leave... or I'll do something I'll regret.'

Without hesitation, Damon stood and began walking toward the door at the back of the classroom.

The professor called after him, frowning.

"Damon, where do you think you're going?"

He didn't stop or turn around. His voice was flat, carrying a weight of finality.

"Anywhere that isn't here."