

Living Shadow 41

Chapter 41 Shadow Vs The Fourth Rank

"Stop right there, young man... class is still ongoing."

The professor's firm voice echoed through the classroom, stopping some of the murmurs as Damon marched toward the door.

Damon didn't even flinch, his steps resolute. His hunger was unbearable, gnawing at him like a parasite. He wasn't just leaving to escape the professor's lecture—he was escaping himself.

If his shadow's hunger reached 90%, he wouldn't just be a problem for the professor; he'd be a threat to everyone in the room. And he wasn't naïve. The same professor who now ordered him to stop would undoubtedly move to kill him if he transformed into a monster.

The door was tantalizingly close, but just as he reached out to push it open, it slammed shut on its own. Damon's stomach sank.

"Did you not hear me? Class is still ongoing. Or at the very least, explain yourself—or else..."

The words hung in the air like a threat.

"Or else what?"

Damon turned his head slightly, his face half-shadowed. His hunger made him reckless, amplifying his aggression. It was like being drunk—his judgment clouded, his patience nonexistent.

"What are you going to do, Professor? Attack me? Sure, go ahead!"

The venom in his voice startled the class. Murmurs rippled through the students.

"Has he gone crazy?"

"He must be drunk or something."

"That bastard really wants to die."

"What do you expect from a commoner? No manners, no discipline."

The professor raised a hand, silencing the growing chatter with an air of authority. His displeasure was evident as he stared at Damon.

Professor Alfred was known for his calm demeanor, but now there was a glint of disdain in his eyes. He had once held some hope for Damon when he first enrolled but had long since deemed him a disappointment.

"Quiet down, everyone," he said. His voice was controlled, but his words dripped with condescension.

"I won't stop you, Damon. It would be unbecoming of me, a professor, to fight a student—especially one as weak as you."

Damon's fists clenched, his nails digging into his palms. The insult stung more than it should have.

The professor smirked slightly, continuing,

"So, I'll let your peers remind you of your place. Perhaps this will teach you some humility. Next time, pay attention in class so you don't end up as a glorified disappointment."

Damon turned fully, his vision narrowing as his anger surged. For a moment, he considered lunging at the professor, consequences be damned. But before he could act, Alfred glanced toward Evangeline Brightwater.

"Evangeline, take him down."

Evangeline hesitated, biting her lip.

"I... I don't think I can beat him, but—"

Before she could finish, Leona Valefier's voice cut through like a crack of thunder.

"I'll do it!"

Without waiting for approval, Leona leapt from her seat, her black and white hair flaring behind her like a streak of lightning. Sparks danced along her fingertips as she summoned her Strom magic, the air crackling with raw energy. With a roar, she charged at Damon, her attack exploding toward him with the sound of a thunderclap.

The class collectively held their breath.

Professor Alfred closed his eyes, already convinced the fight was over. To him, Damon didn't stand a chance.

But Damon's body moved on instinct, heightened by the maddening hunger of his shadow. He sidestepped the attack with uncanny precision, the bolt of lightning grazing past him. Without pause, he countered, a swift strike that sent Leona skidding back across the floor.

The class erupted into shocked murmurs.

"Did he... just dodge that?"

"No way! That has to be a fluke."

"Leona must've held back—there's no other explanation."

Xander Ravenscroft, seated alone without his usual entourage of lackeys, observed the scene with a thoughtful expression.

Resting his chin on his hand, he mused aloud,

"Leona Valefier must've held back. She didn't want to accidentally kill him."

The class nodded in agreement, taking Xander's analysis as gospel. But one student didn't share their certainty.

Evangeline Brightwater sat silently, her golden gaze fixed on Damon. Unlike the others, she didn't think Leona had held back. She was convinced of something few dared to admit: Damon wasn't weak. He never had been.

Leona, sprawled on the floor, glared at Damon with a mix of shock and excitement. She hadn't held back at all, and that was what scared her. After the events of the previous night, she had suspected Damon wasn't as powerless as his reputation suggested. Now, she was certain of it.

Damon's shadow vibrated at his feet, erratic and alive, feeding his maddening rage and hunger. He stood there, chest heaving, staring down Leona and the rest of the class, his every movement tinged with barely restrained violence.

For the first time, the students realized Damon might not be the weakest after all—and that unnerved them.

Damon wasn't fully himself. His shadow had taken partial control, its hunger gnawing at his mind and fraying his thoughts with deep, primal aggression.

He'd dodged most of Leona's attacks by instinct, sensing the way her lightning distorted the shadows around it. But not all her attacks were lightning. The water and sound-based spells she mixed in barely registered with him, slipping past his heightened senses.

Leona smirked, her golden eyes brimming with excitement.

"I've wanted to fight you since yesterday. Finally, I get my chance."

Damon growled lowly, a barely audible sound that was more animal than human.

Leona, a beastkin with sharp instincts, took it as acceptance. Without hesitation, she summoned crackling orbs of lightning.

"[Storm Call]."

The spheres of energy launched toward Damon, roaring as they surged through the air.

From the sidelines, Professor Alfred frowned. A hint of worry crossed his face as he reached for a healing potion. If Damon was severely injured, he could intervene, but if he died, that was that. Deaths at Aether Academy weren't uncommon, though they rarely happened during class.

Damon moved with terrifying precision, dodging each bolt as they shattered desks and charred the back rows. Fortunately, no student had been foolish enough to remain there.

He closed the distance rapidly, evading her magic as a torrent of water surged toward him.

"[Water Creation]."

The spell grazed his arm, drawing blood and a feral growl from him. Damon's anger flared, sharper and hotter. Bright, elemental attacks like lightning were easy to evade, but water didn't distort the shadows as much, giving him a harder time sensing them before hand.

His focus narrowed, and his fury boiled over. He muttered coldly,

"[5x] to [Mana]."

A surge of raw power coursed through him, boosting his already heightened stats.

The class, particularly Xander Ravenscroft and Professor Alfred, stared in shock. Damon wasn't just surviving; he was holding his ground against Leona Valefier, a prodigy of the wild continent Lothria.

Damon reached her in a heartbeat. Leona didn't back away—hand-to-hand combat was her forte. Her claws extended, and her mana surged as she threw a punch. Damon, half-consumed by his shadow's hunger, raised his elbow to block. Sparks flew on impact, numbing his arm with searing pain.

The pain only fueled his fury. With a snarl, he retaliated, aiming a punch at her. Leona dodged, but Damon opened his hand mid-strike, turning it into a grab. His fingers clamped around her head, and with a predatory growl, he hurled her to the side.

Leona stumbled, hitting the ground with a thud as gasps rippled through the class.

"No way! Did he just push Leona Valefier?"

"How did he even do that?"

"A human overpowering a beastkin in physical combat? Without a single class advancement?"

Xander narrowed his eyes, analyzing every move.

"Body enhancement and reinforcement magic," he muttered to himself. "That's the only explanation."

Damon didn't hear the murmurs. His focus was singular. He charged at Leona, who shifted to a defensive stance. Her technique was flawless, but fighting Damon was like battling a wild beast. He fought with raw instincts, his every move fueled by the primal desire to kill and devour.

Leona could feel his killing intent—it was suffocating.

She leapt backward, landing near the classroom door. Her lips curved into a thin smile, excitement glowing in her golden eyes. Lightning gathered around her as she prepared a devastating spell.

"[Thunder Clap]."

A storm of crackling destruction engulfed the room, swallowing Damon whole in its furious energy.

Professor Alfred moved, ready to intervene, but hesitated as a figure emerged from the cloud. Damon burst through the storm, his uniform scorched and his body bruised, but his predatory smile remained. In his hand, a sphere of raw, destructive shadow mana pulsed with terrifying power.

He was inches from Leona in an instant, aiming the orb straight at her face.

Leona's eyes widened in fear. She could see it clearly—death in his cold, unwavering gaze. Damon's shadow had no hesitation, no mercy.

But in that final moment, a flicker of humanity broke through the haze. Damon shifted his hand slightly, and the shadow orb veered past her, obliterating the door behind her in a deafening explosion.

The room fell silent, the class too stunned to react.

Damon stepped back, wobbling slightly. His head hung low as he muttered under his breath,

"Lucky..."

Without another word, he staggered out of the classroom, leaving the shattered remains of the door behind him.

Professor Alfred's face was a mix of shock and confusion. Xander Ravenscroft's expression, however, was darker.

'Since when did that commoner possess this kind of power?'

He needed to ask Marcus and his other lackeys after they finished serving their punishment.

Damon wandered through the halls, his hunger clawing at him once more. This time, it was stronger. He was lucky he'd regained control, but next time, he might not be so fortunate.