

Living Shadow 58

Chapter 58 Unwelcomed Attention

Explore new worlds at empire

Evangeline Brightwater glanced at Damon, her curiosity piqued by the black blindfold obscuring his eyes. She couldn't understand why he was wearing it, but it added to his mysterious aura. His demeanor remained as cold and detached as ever, though she got the distinct impression he had sensed her presence long before she spoke.

The subtle reaction stirred a strange sense of déjà vu in her. Turning to Sylvia Moonveil, who stood quietly by her side, she searched for an explanation. The elven girl merely shrugged, offering no insight.

Evangeline bit her lip, suppressing a sigh. Damon Grey was as standoffish as always, though it surprised her to see him seated with Leona Valefier. She recalled the beastkin loudly proclaiming to the entire class that Damon was her best friend.

"There aren't any free tables left, so this is the only option," Evangeline said, her tone light but resolute.

"I hope you don't mind."

Without waiting for permission, she sat down and pulled Sylvia into the seat beside her.

Damon sighed, his irritation evident.

"Actually, I do mind," he said flatly. "But clearly my words won't stop you."

Evangeline bit her lip again at his bluntness.

Leona, ever cheerful, smiled at the newcomers.

"Actually, I'm fine with it. The more, the merrier! Strong people should all stick together."

Damon let out another sigh, his patience waning.

"Then I should leave. After all, I'm the academy's weakest student."

Leona shook her head firmly, her golden eyes sparkling with determination.

"No, you're the strongest! And my bestie!"

If Damon's eyes weren't covered by the blindfold, he would have shot her a glare that could freeze the sun.

'What is wrong with this girl?' he thought in frustration.

'I've told her a hundred times that I'm not... Whatever. I'm only here for the money.'

Evangeline, sensing the awkward tension, tried to steer the conversation toward something neutral.

"I didn't know the two of you were friends," she said, glancing between Damon and Leona.

"We are not friends," Damon replied coldly, his tone leaving no room for argument.

Leona, undeterred, giggled softly.

"That's right—we're best friends!"

Damon exhaled sharply.

'I should just keep my mouth shut. There's no reasoning with this stupid beastkin.'

Breakfast arrived shortly after, brought in by the maids. Given Leona's presence, they wheeled in several food trolleys laden with dishes. However, the abundance of food wasn't just for her—they had clearly taken note of Damon's voracious appetite as well.

'That's the maids of the war halls for you...always observant.'

Despite the lavish spread, Damon wasn't particularly hungry. His shadow had been fed earlier, leaving him feeling oddly full. He ate in silence, letting the rhythmic clinking of cutlery and muted chatter fill the void.

Evangeline, on the other hand, seemed intent on breaking the quiet. She directed most of her questions at Leona, focusing on her relationship with Damon. Leona, ever eager to talk about her "bestie," launched into an enthusiastic recounting of their adventures.

Sylvia Moonveil, seated beside Evangeline, was much like Damon. She remained mostly silent, only occasionally glancing up to show she was paying attention. Damon, however, frowned as he listened to the exchange.

Evangeline's steady prying was far from subtle. She wasn't as cunning as he was, but her persistence was wearing thin. Leona, oblivious to the probing nature of the questions, was all too excited to share.

"And then we went to a tavern," Leona said brightly, "but the student council president hunted us down! My bestie took her down—no problem!"

Sylvia, who had been quiet until then, perked up at the mention of the student council president. Her piercing gaze shifted to Damon.

"Is that true?" she asked, her tone neutral but laced with curiosity.

"You really escaped from Lilith Astranova?"

Damon could feel her scrutiny through the shadows he used to see. Ignoring her would be easy, but a memory surfaced—Sylvia had once shared her knowledge of medicine and poison with him, and it had proven invaluable.

'I may need her expertise again in the future,' he thought. 'Perhaps I should try to be friendly.'

"It wasn't a big deal," he said finally. "Just a simple trick, that's all. I got lucky."

He shot a glare at Leona, though it went unnoticed thanks to his blindfold.

Leona, oblivious to his displeasure, shoved more food into her mouth.

"No, it wasn't! It was—"

"Shut up," Damon muttered coldly, cutting her off.

Leona scrunched up her face and pouted but obediently fell silent, her beast ears drooping slightly. The table returned to relative quiet, though Damon's thoughts simmered beneath the surface.

Evangeline and Sylvia exchanged a look, both equally surprised. They had never seen the wild and unpredictable beastkin, Leona Valefier, actually obey someone. Her usual boisterous and carefree attitude seemed to melt away in the presence of Damon Grey.

Damon sighed deeply, his frustration barely concealed. Today was already proving to be an unusual day. Somehow, the academy's so-called weakest student found himself seated with the strongest and most prominent girls in his class.

'What a terrible happenstance,' he thought bitterly, glancing at Leona.

"Just eat so I can leave," he muttered. "I don't have all day."

Leona nodded cheerfully, flashing him a smile before diving into her food.

Evangeline studied him for a moment, her curiosity getting the better of her.

"If I may, why are you wearing that blindfold? Can you even see?"

Damon ignored her completely, focusing instead on finishing his food. He hated the attention the three girls brought to their table, their presence drawing countless stares from the surrounding students. A gloomy loner like him had no desire to be the center of such unwelcome interest.

Evangeline bit her lip, feeling the sting of his dismissal. She was trying to be polite, but his cold attitude made the atmosphere awkward.

Sylvia noticed her friend's discomfort and decided to step in.

"She's right. Can you even see with that on?"

Damon paused for a moment, considering ignoring Sylvia as well, but quickly dismissed the idea. Her knowledge had proven valuable in the past, and he might need her expertise again.

"No, I cannot," he replied bluntly. "My eyes can't see anything with this on."

Leona's ears perked up, her golden eyes gleaming with curiosity.

"Is this some kind of training? How does it work?"

Damon didn't reply, maintaining his silence as he pushed his plate away.

Leona, undeterred, grinned mischievously. She reached into her pocket and pulled out her pager.

"I want to buy your niceness and friendliness. My offer—ten thousand."

Damon's eyes narrowed behind the blindfold. This girl really had him figured out. She knew he wouldn't turn down easy money, even if it meant entertaining her antics.

'What haven't I done for money?' he thought bitterly.

'I've begged, I've stolen... Selling a little pride is nothing.'

Sylvia and Evangeline frowned in unison, misunderstanding his silence. They must have assumed he was offended by Leona's brash offer.

Before they could speak, Damon surprised them by smiling faintly—a rare and unsettling sight. The smile was faint and gloomy, but it was unmistakably there.

"Deal," he said, his voice carrying an edge of amusement.

Both girls blinked in disbelief, their eyes widening. Damon had smiled.

Raising his head slightly in Leona's direction, he continued,

"This blindfold is—"

He stopped abruptly, his posture stiffening. His shadow perception alerted him to someone standing behind him, their presence cold and invasive.

The silence broke as an arrogant, self-assured voice rang out.

"It seems there aren't any free seats for the first years. May I sit here, Lady Brightwater?"

The speaker didn't wait for a response, casually sliding into the seat opposite Damon.

Damon's aura darkened immediately, a chill radiating from him as he sensed the intruder through his shadows.

Xander Ravenscroft.