

Living Shadow 65

Chapter 65 Potentially Unique Class

Professor Chrome stood at the front of the classroom, his kind features softening the stern white of his beard. Perched on his nose were glasses that glinted faintly in the dim light, while his usual white robe flowed around him, giving him an almost ethereal presence.

Damon watched him through the shadows cast in the room, his perception allowing him to see the gentle aura the man exuded.

Chrome's demeanor was a rarity among the professors. Unlike the others, who openly looked down on Damon for being the weakest student, Chrome had always treated him with respect. To Damon, this was made even more remarkable by the fact that Chrome, like him, was a commoner.

The professor began the class by recounting the discussion from the previous session. He spoke of philosophies and theories, praising the students' engagement and intellectual curiosity.

Damon let the words wash over him, barely registering them. He hadn't been in the last class, so he had no idea what they had discussed. His mind was too preoccupied with his plans.

As he sat there, his thoughts churned.

'Who do I kill next?' he mused, his blindfolded eyes facing forward.

'And who do I frame this time?'

The inclusion of Lilith Astranova in the investigation troubled him. It was clear that she wouldn't believe Tobias was guilty of killing Isaac.

'Which means she'll keep digging, looking for evidence about what really happened to Isaac.'

Damon smiled faintly, his fingers tapping lightly against the desk.

'She's probably trying to clear Tobias. That's perfect. If no one expects him to be the next target, then Tobias becomes the ideal scapegoat again.'

He glanced downward at the shadow cast beneath him, which had been behaving like an ordinary shadow since he left his dorm.

'I don't need to sneak into the judgment halls where Tobias is under house arrest. I just need to lure him out.'

Damon's plan began to crystallize as he tapped the desk rhythmically.

'I still have two days before Anvil finishes making my weapons. My shadow energy is at 200 now, so I can last a little longer without feeding it... but I've got at most four days left.'

His heart steeled itself against hesitation.

'Within these four days, I'll need a plan to lure out Tobias and kill him before Lilith uncovers the truth.'

A faint flutter caught his attention, though he didn't turn his head. Something hopped onto his desk.

Without needing to look, Damon knew it was the raven Sylvia had made him adopt as a pet. The bird sat there silently, its beady eyes glinting with intelligence. It had been unusually quiet since the class began, as if aware of its surroundings.

Damon's gaze flicked toward it briefly.

'This bird... It might actually come in handy. I just thought of a feasible but dangerous plan.'

While Damon silently plotted, the professor had stopped talking, his gaze now directed at him. Unaware of the now-silent classroom, Damon remained lost in his thoughts.

A sharp nudge from Sylvia's elbow jolted him.

Startled, Damon looked up, his calm expression masking the irritation bubbling within.

Xander's scoff was loud enough to catch his attention, though the noble didn't bother speaking. The mocking smirk on Xander's face said it all.

Damon turned to Sylvia, his brow furrowing. She muttered something under her breath, subtly gesturing toward her eyes.

Realization dawned. The professor must have called him out for wearing a blindfold in class.

Without standing, Damon turned his head toward Professor Chrome, his voice steady and composed.

"I apologize for any distraction I've caused."

Chrome shook his head, his tone as gentle as his aura.

"That's quite alright. Young people often have much on their minds."

Professor Chrome stroked his beard thoughtfully, his gaze resting on Damon.

"I was curious as to why you would wear a blindfold to class... I hope I didn't make you disinterested in learning."

Damon shook his head with a calm expression.

"Not at all, Professor. While I may be wearing a blindfold, I assure you my vision has never been better."

Chrome's eyebrows rose in mild surprise, and he chuckled softly.

"Hohohoh... I see. In that case, care to tell me what's written on the board?"

Without turning his head, Damon tapped into his shadow perception, effortlessly gleaning the contents of the board. His voice was steady, devoid of hesitation.

"My philosophy."

Chrome nodded in satisfaction.

"I see. It seems you can see after all. Very well."

Picking up an old, worn book from his desk, Chrome continued.

"In our last class, we discussed individual philosophies. It seems you were absent, so before we proceed, why don't you share your philosophy with the class?"

Damon scanned the silent room, feeling the weight of the students' attention on him. His absence over the past two days had clearly not gone unnoticed.

"I have no philosophy, Professor," he said flatly.

Chrome shook his head, his expression kind yet firm.

"Everyone has a philosophy—a principle they live by, something that shapes their lives. It plays an important role in their magic and even influences the type of class they awaken, from the first to the seventh class advancement."

He gestured toward a student nearby.

"Evangeline, who is seated with you, has a philosophy shaped by strength and justice. That will most likely influence the class she awakens."

Turning his gaze back to Damon, Chrome's eyes gleamed with curiosity.

"So, what is your philosophy, Damon? This is important for your future. Of course, this is just my personal curiosity... but let me offer you an incentive. If your philosophy is interesting enough, I'll grant you full credits for all my classes, not just this one. I'll even overlook your absences from the past two days."

Damon bit his lip, torn between silence and opportunity. Being on academic probation, he needed every credit he could get. The stakes were too high to ignore.

He put on a thoughtful expression, sifting through his memories for an answer. Something that shaped his life. His thoughts drifted to an epitaph he had stumbled upon years ago in the woods. Those words had been his springboard, his acceptance of life's cruel realities.

Finally, Damon sighed.

"It's meaningless..."

Chrome frowned slightly.

"That's disappointing. I'll have to deduct half your credits for refusing to answer."

But Damon wasn't finished. The word lingered in his mind as he relived the harrowing moments of his life. His parents, dead in a senseless war. His relatives, betraying him. His village, casting him out. He and his sister had starved, scraping by in a world that seemed designed to crush them.

Damon clenched his fists under the desk. He remembered nearly ending his life, running from death for a place to survive, and watching adults, one after another, reveal their selfish motives. Just when he found hope, it shattered—his sister fell ill with a chronic, incurable disease.

Life was meaningless. Hopeless. Cruel.

And yet...

Even in that abyss, Damon had refused to surrender. The despair didn't consume him. Instead, it forged him.

His voice was cold and tired, a sound that shouldn't have belonged to someone so young.

"Life is not a gift but a curse. We are dealt hands we never asked for, forced to play roles we never agreed to. Those who concede early fade quietly, but those who stand, bloodied and battered, rewrite the rules. I don't kneel to designs I didn't create. My life is my own, my pain my teacher, and my will the only god I answer to. Even as I face my end, covered in blood and tears, I will spit in the face of the goddess of fate. The goddess can have me... when she's earned me."

His words hung in the air, heavy and unrelenting. He clenched his fist, his shadow writhing faintly beneath the desk.

The room erupted into murmurs.

"Did he just disparage the goddess?"

"That's blasphemy!"

"Has he lost his mind?"

"The temple inquisition will take him for this!"

Outside the classroom, Lilith Astranova, the student council president, froze in place. She had been walking past the room but stopped, her wide eyes fixed on Damon through the door's narrow window.

"What arrogance... what madness," she muttered. "Is he insane?"

Inside, Professor Chrome's reaction was unexpected. He chuckled softly, then broke into a hearty laugh, stroking his beard with genuine amusement.

"What an interesting philosophy," he said, his eyes gleaming with approval.

"Without a doubt, your first class advancement will awaken to something unique—something unlike any other. That, I am sure of."

The murmurs grew louder, students exchanging shocked glances, but Damon blinked, caught off guard by the professor's high appraisal.

For a moment, his cold resolve faltered, replaced by the faintest flicker of surprise.