

## Living Shadow 66

### Chapter 66 Blasphemous Philosophy

Damon wasn't the only one surprised by Professor Chrome's high appraisal. For the people of Aetherus, class advancement was not just a measure of power—it was a defining milestone in life. Every individual had the potential to awaken up to seven classes, and with each class advancement, their rank and power increased exponentially.

The first class advancement was pivotal. It determined the foundation of an individual's growth and could be any class: Mage, Knight, Assassin, Healer, and many others. These were the more common classes, shared by countless individuals across the world. However, there was a rare phenomenon known as a Unique Class, where an individual awakened to a class that was entirely their own.

The factors that influenced class advancement were numerous: philosophy, birth, lineage, ambition, faith, desires, emotions, and even the unpredictable hand of fate. Of these, one's philosophy and mindset were among the most critical. It was for this reason that Professor Chrome had given Damon such a high appraisal.

With a philosophy as radical and defiant as Damon's, his first class advancement would almost certainly be unique—assuming he ever awakened to a class at all. Class awakening was no easy feat; it was a trial of will, determination, fortitude and talent, often beyond the reach of the weak.

Meanwhile, the classroom buzzed with murmurs.

"The temple inquisition will definitely come for him with that mindset..."

"Who does he think he is to say such things about the goddess?"

Professor Chrome raised his hand, silencing the noise with a calm yet firm tone.

"That is enough, everyone. I do not think his words are blasphemous at all. He did not insult the goddess. After all, in the Book of Fate, the goddess herself said, and I quote:

'To love fate is to defy fate. Only then can you be your truest self.'"

The room fell silent for a moment as the weight of those words settled over the students.

Sylvia, seated beside Damon, nodded in agreement.

"Yes, that's true. The goddess only acknowledges those who strive to make their own path. So, I don't think it's blasphemous at all."

Evangeline added, her voice steady.

"I don't think the temple will concern itself with something so trivial."

Xander, however, scoffed from his seat.

"If the temple took this wretch now, it'd be better for all of us in the goddess races. But I suppose you're right," he said with a venomous smirk.

Despite his insult, the class seemed to lean toward agreement with the top three students. The murmurs softened, indicating that most were inclined to accept their reasoning.

Damon sneered faintly, his lips curling in disdain.

He honestly didn't give a damn what they thought. Where was the goddess when he was suffering? While it was true that he invoked her name often, it wasn't out of faith. It was nothing more than a habit his mother, Ranar Grey, had ingrained in him as a child—a hollow ritual that held no meaning anymore.

Professor Chrome regarded Damon with a spark of intrigue in his eyes.

"Why don't we analyze Damon's philosophy? Perhaps we can guess what class he might awaken to," he suggested.

The room fell into a tense silence, save for Marcus, who, despite his grief over losing Lark and Isaac, couldn't resist sneering.

"Assuming this trash even has the talent to reach the first class advancement..."

Professor Chrome smiled faintly, undeterred by the hostility.

"Do not underestimate human potential," he replied before turning to the board.

He wrote down Damon's earlier words with slow, deliberate strokes.

"Now then... who wants to interpret young Damon's philosophy?"

Damon shifted uncomfortably in his seat, feeling awkward about being the center of attention. Still, he sighed, resigned to the situation. Chrome was likely going to follow through with the full credits he'd promised, so Damon decided to endure it.

Two hands shot up simultaneously—Sylvia's and Evangeline's. Chrome nodded toward Sylvia, who rose hesitantly.

Her gaze flickered briefly to Damon, who sat beside her wearing his usual blindfold and maintaining a calm, almost serene expression.

"Erm... his philosophy is, uh... a little crazy," she began, her voice unsure.

"And it sounds so sad. The first part, he, uh, sees life as a curse forced upon us since no one asked to be born... He rejects the meaning of life altogether..."

She bit her lip nervously, stealing another glance at Damon, whose demeanor hadn't shifted in the slightest.

"He desires freedom through rejecting conformity," she continued.

"He rejects roles and designs imposed by fate, society, or even the goddess... which, um, sounds almost blasphemous."

Xander's voice cut through her explanation with a sharp sneer.

"That doesn't sound blasphemous—it is blasphemous. Don't try to cover for him."

Sylvia fell silent for a moment, her expression tight as she glanced toward Chrome for reassurance.

"That's... all I have to say," she muttered before quickly sitting down.

Chrome turned his attention to Evangeline.

"Do you have something to add?"

Evangeline hesitated, her sun-marked eyes lingering on Damon before she spoke.

"I'll continue where she left off," she said softly.

"Damon isn't... bothered by pain. He sees it as a learning opportunity—something to push his growth. His pain becomes his ally, shaping his will and identity."

Her voice wavered slightly, and she sat down abruptly, unwilling to continue. The more she analyzed it, the more twisted Damon's philosophy seemed to her.

Xander leaned forward, his expression scornful.

"Let me give my honest opinion. Someone who refuses to conform has no rules. What wouldn't he do? The act of 'spitting in the face of the goddess of fate' represents ultimate defiance. If he can spit on the goddess, then what do the rules of man mean to him? Morality, kindness, love, honor... How is he any different from a wild beast? Or a monster? A sinner."

Chrome shook his head, his expression calm yet firm.

"Understandable... but his philosophy only rejects rules he didn't make. If he creates rules that restrict himself to only kindness and righteousness, does that not make him a saint rather than a sinner?"

Xander, I hope you realize that human rules are transient. What was considered righteous a thousand years ago might be viewed as evil now. Take human sacrifices, for example. Once, they were seen as the ultimate righteousness. Now, they are regarded as barbaric."

Turning back to Damon, Chrome continued.

"His philosophy is neither cruel nor evil. I would argue it is kind. If I were to name it, I would call it radical individualism—where the will of one takes precedence over the beliefs of many."

Behind his blindfold, Damon's eyes widened in slight surprise. Someone was defending him. That was... new. He wasn't used to anyone standing up for him, and the unexpected support stirred something faint in him—a flicker of warmth.

His mind drifted briefly to the kind hunter, Carmen, who had once offered him a glimmer of genuine compassion.

'Maybe, just maybe, genuine kindness is real,' he thought.

But he quickly shook his head, dismissing the notion as foolish.

'As if.'