

Living Shadow 77

Chapter 77 Only Pure Intentions

Damon threw Leona an icy glare, but she didn't budge, gripping his pager tightly with both hands.

Her golden eyes glistened with determination as she met his glare.

"Stay put, or I'll break this," she said, her voice steady despite the emotions swirling behind it.

Damon narrowed his eyes. "Are you threatening me?"

Leona shook her head firmly. "No... I wouldn't threaten a friend. I'm telling you to calm down."

Her words were resolute, but Damon could see her concern. She'd noticed how much he cared about the pager. Over the past two days, it had buzzed frequently, and she had a hunch that whatever had shaken him so deeply was tied to it.

Damon reluctantly reclined back on the bed, his muscles still tense.

Leona sighed in relief, finally handing him the pager.

This time, he didn't try to get up. Instead, he took a deep breath, willing himself to settle. She was right—he was losing his composure, and it wasn't helping.

With a trembling hand, Damon unlocked the pager and scrolled through the messages. His eyes darted over the notifications. The calls and messages from Carl were expected, but one stood out: a message from the Healing Institute.

As he read, his breath hitched.

The message wasn't as dire as he'd feared. It was a billing notice for his sister's medication and other necessities she required. She was fine. The institute had merely sent the update as a routine notification.

Damon gasped softly, the tension leaving his body in a rush. Relief washed over him, and he lowered his head into his hands.

'I almost lost it over nothing...' he thought. But deep down, he knew why he had panicked. Losing Luna would destroy him. She was the only family he had left, and the thought of anything happening to her was unbearable.

Leona remained silent, watching him intently. Her expression was unreadable, but her presence was grounding.

After a few moments of quiet, Damon raised his head and glanced sideways at her. She sat with her head slightly lowered, her ears twitching faintly.

She had been right—he needed to calm down. Still, he wasn't sure what to make of her. This infuriatingly persistent beastkin girl was an enigma. Why did she care so much about someone like him?

His gaze softened slightly. "Thank you."

Leona's response came in a calm but pointed tone. "That's racist."

Damon blinked, confused. "What?"

She narrowed her eyes at him. "Calling me a furry. That's racist."

His eyes widened. He hadn't meant it that way—he'd just been frustrated and lashed out.

Looking away, he muttered, "My apologies... I didn't intend to offend."

Leona's expression softened as she shook her head. "It's fine. I forgive you."

She bit her lip, her voice lowering.

"I thought you were going to die. The healers barely managed to save you both. Why did you have to push yourself that far?"

Damon said nothing, his jaw tightening.

Leona's golden eyes searched his face.

"Was winning really that important? Or was it just about the money? No amount of money is worth risking your life like that."

Her words cut deep, but Damon didn't let it show. Instead, he glared at her, his voice sharp and cold.

"Shut up. You think you've got me all figured out, don't you? Well, guess what—you don't. And yes, that much money is worth dying for. I don't expect you to understand."

Leona bit her lip, her expression clouding.

"I see," she murmured. "I understand..."

Her voice was quiet, but the hurt lingered in her golden eyes.

She looked out the window, her voice calm as she changed the topic.

"It's been two days, you know. Xander Ravenscroft woke up yesterday. He was out for about a day and a half. He came here earlier to pay your prize. You were unconscious, so I gave him your pager number so he could make the payment."

She glanced at Damon. "I hope that's okay with you."

Damon didn't respond immediately, his gaze distant.

"I don't care, as long as he's paid."

She nodded.

"Evangeline and Sylvia came to visit too. In fact, they only left about... hmm, two or three hours ago."

Damon said nothing, pulling up his war bank account on his pager. Sure enough, Xander Ravenscroft had transferred 500,000 zeni to him.

A wave of relief washed over him—just when he needed it the most.

"Evangeline and Sylvia made you a healing ointment. Here."

Leona passed him a small box emitting a soft, rosy scent.

"Hm? What's this?" Damon asked, his voice tinged with disinterest.

Leona pushed it into his arms. "It's supposed to help with the soreness."

Damon sighed. "Sure, whatever."

Leona smiled, glad he accepted it. She had half-expected him to turn it down out of suspicion.

"Oh! Right," she added,

"I got you a new pair of uniforms from your dorm room. I asked the head maid to let me in, so she came with me to get them. They're in there."

She pointed to the drawer by the bedside. It was only then Damon realized he wasn't wearing his uniform but a plain robe. He blinked, looking around.

"Where is it?"

Leona tilted her head, puzzled.

"What? Do you mean your dagger? It's with your uniform. I also sent the old one to admin so they can get it fixed or replaced."

Damon pulled the drawer open and retrieved the dagger. It was the same one he had gotten while working for Quick Hand—a memento he still hadn't let go of.

He stared at it briefly before shaking his head, forcing back the memories that threatened to surface.

"I see... Why did you stay here?" he asked after a pause.

Leona smiled warmly. "Because I'm your friend."

Damon didn't reply, his stomach twisting at the word.

'I think if I hear that one more time, I'm going to puke,' he thought, glancing at her sideways.

"Thank you for everything, but I'm fine now. I didn't need you to be here. I've been—"

Before he could finish, his stomach growled audibly.

Leona clasped her hands together, suppressing a giggle.

"Ah! Sorry, I didn't know when you'd wake up. Hold on, let me get you some food."

She hurried out of the room, and a few minutes later, returned with a tray of food.

When she pushed the door open, the room was empty. The white robe he had been wearing lay discarded on the bed. Damon Grey—and Croft—were nowhere to be found.

The window was wide open, the soft night breeze wafting in, making the curtains flutter gently.

Leona stopped in her tracks, staring at the empty space.

"He's gone... He just left, huh?"

She placed the tray on the bed and approached the window, her shoulders trembling. Her golden eyes glinted with unshed tears as she bit her lip, forcing down the lump rising in her throat.

"I... I really am... just trying to be your... friend," she whispered, her voice breaking as a tear rolled down her cheek.