

Living Shadow 90

Chapter 90 The Lion And The Jackals

Damon and Leona both ate with voracious appetites—Leona because of her beastkin nature and Damon due to the insatiable demands of his shadow. The dining hall was filled with the rhythmic clatter of cutlery and the occasional satisfied hum from Leona, who couldn't stop sneaking glances at Damon. He, however, remained focused on his plate, eating in silence.

As he forked another bite of food, Damon furrowed his brow, his senses alerting him to two approaching shadows from the direction of the elevator.

'It's still early. Why are they awake?'

The elevator doors opened to reveal Evangeline and Sylvia, who quickly made their way over. Without so much as asking for permission, Evangeline seated herself at the table, clearly having learned from previous encounters with Damon. Sylvia followed, offering a warm smile as she settled into her chair.

"Good morning. You two seem inseparable as always," Sylvia remarked, her gaze flitting between Damon and Leona.

Damon didn't look up as he responded curtly, "I could say the same about the both of you."

Evangeline smirked, nodding toward a maid who added more food to the table.

"Hello, Damon. I'm glad to see that two days in the infirmary didn't dampen your... er, honest disposition."

Damon turned his sharp gaze toward her.

"I hate mincing words. Just say I'm a jerk like you really think. No need to act like a noble lady."

Sylvia chuckled softly, shaking her head. "You really don't change, do you? I suppose that's fine."

Evangeline sighed, leaning back in her chair, while Damon picked up his teacup and brought it to his lips.

"I'm not even going to ask why you're sitting here," he muttered.

Evangeline replied smoothly,

"Actually, this time it's because we wanted to check on you. Leona told us you woke up, and by the time we got there, you were gone."

Sylvia set down her fork, her expression firm.

"The least you could've done was tell Leona you were leaving. That was insensitive, especially after she spent two days by your side."

Evangeline nodded in agreement. "Her mood was rock bottom."

Damon glanced sideways at Leona, who was stuffing her face with food, her demeanor completely carefree.

"Her mood seems fine to me."

Evangeline turned to Leona for an explanation. Leona gulped down her food and chased it with a glass of juice, sighing contentedly.

"Ahhh... we made up. We're besties, after all," she said with a cheerful grin.

Sylvia and Evangeline both turned to Damon with incredulous looks.

He tilted his head defensively. "What?"

Sylvia shook her head, a sly smile on her lips.

"I underestimated you. Someone's a smooth operator."

Evangeline's sun-marked eyes narrowed as she smiled.

"I half expected him to say he didn't care. I suppose he really does see her as a friend. Looks like he's finally dropped the lone wolf act."

Damon opened his mouth to retort, but before he could, another voice cut through the conversation.

"The wretch just wants her money, and he's willing to play nice for a while. It's plain for all to see."

The male voice drew everyone's attention. Sylvia smiled as Xander Ravenscroft approached the table.

"Hello, Xander. It's nice to see you've finally decided to join us."

Xander took a seat right next to Damon, his piercing blue eyes carrying a disdainful scowl.

"Of course. As long as you ladies are around him, I will be here as well."

Turning to Damon, Xander's tone sharpened.

"Damon."

Damon, who had been about to make a sarcastic comment, froze. His eyes widened slightly beneath his blindfold. This was the first time since arriving at the academy that Xander Ravenscroft had ever addressed him by name or even looked at him with any semblance of acknowledgment. Normally, Xander wouldn't even spare him a glance, referring to him as "commoner" or "insect" if he spoke to him at all.

Yet Damon masked his surprise quickly, his voice cold as he responded.

"Xander."

The girls stopped eating, their attention fixed on the two boys seated next to each other. They half-expected another heated argument to erupt, one that might culminate in a duel. However, to their surprise, neither spoke a word.

Damon kept his focus on his plate, deciding to avoid unnecessary conflict. If Xander was willing to behave, he would do the same—for now.

'I'll save the trouble for another day.'

Damon's feelings toward Xander Ravenscroft hadn't softened; he still didn't like him. Yet, he couldn't deny that Xander was different from Marcus and his gang. Unlike them, Xander had never physically or

verbally attacked him. In fact, if Marcus and the others tried to torment Damon in front of Xander, he would stop them.

At first, Damon had assumed Xander's actions were purely out of self-interest, perhaps to maintain control over his "followers." But the truth was far simpler: Xander Ravenscroft was a lion surrounded by jackals who borrowed his name to assert dominance.

Xander hadn't recruited them, nor did he encourage their behavior. They had gravitated to him because of his noble lineage and natural charisma.

'But I'm still going to make life difficult for him,' Damon thought, a smirk tugging at his lips.

'Consider it repayment for cleaning up your pack of jackals.'

His resolve to eliminate Marcus's group remained firm.

Breakfast passed uneventfully, the quiet interrupted only by the gradual arrival of other students who filled the dining hall. When Damon finished eating, he stood, prompting Leona to follow immediately. This surprised the others, who hesitated before rising to join them.

As the group moved toward the main hall that led out of the dormitory, Damon's senses picked up another familiar shadow moving toward the dining area.

A young man with blue hair and tired, bloodshot blue eyes entered. His usually immaculate appearance was disheveled, with dark circles under his eyes betraying his sleepless nights.

Marcus.

The boy's face lit up briefly when he spotted Xander, but his expression froze the moment his eyes landed on Damon. His entire body stiffened, his eyes widening in unmistakable fear. His hands trembled, and it was as if he were staring at a monster.

Xander noticed Marcus's state and quickly approached, placing a reassuring hand on his shoulder.

"Marcus, are you okay? You're staring off again. I know the deaths of Lark and Isaac are still bothering you, but you need to know that I'm here for you."

The words seemed to snap Marcus out of his daze, though he continued to shoot fearful glances at Damon, as if expecting him to pounce.

Damon observed the exchange with confusion. Why was Marcus, the same boy who had always sought to bully him, suddenly so terrified? Whatever the reason, Damon intended to find out. It was a risk, but he decided it was worth it.

Xander guided Marcus to a nearby chair, speaking in soothing tones.

Damon tilted his head slightly, signaling his shadow to follow Marcus and uncover the truth. The shadow moved fluidly, attaching itself to Marcus's own shadow without anyone noticing.

At least, no one but Sylvia. Her eyes widened as she glanced at Damon.

"Wha... what... where did his shadow—"

She hadn't noticed when his shadow moved but she noted its sudden absence.

Damon suppressed a smirk, maintaining his composure. He needed to be cautious. His shadow couldn't stray beyond a two-kilometer range without draining his energy. Moreover, he had to ensure no one else noticed its absence.