

Living Shadow 105

Chapter 105 Fed Not Full

Damon's lungs burned, his muscles screamed in protest, and the crushing weight of the water pressed against his mind, threatening to pull him into unconsciousness. Yet, despite the odds, he wasn't about to let himself lose—not here, not now.

He snapped his eyes open, glaring at the watery prison. Clenching his jaw, he thrust his dagger into the edge of the barrier, and as soon as the blade disrupted the water's integrity, he acted. Using the opening, he fired the arrowhead hook of his omnidirectional gear. The sharp hook tore through the water and struck a nearby tree.

With a sudden pull, Damon yanked himself free of the barrier, gasping as he collapsed to his knees, coughing violently and spitting out water. His body trembled from the exertion, but he didn't have time to recover.

Tobias wasn't going to let him escape so easily. The water barrier swirled ominously, reforming and lunging toward Damon like a tidal wave, aiming to engulf him once more.

Without even looking, Damon reached into his jacket and flung three white crystals into the air. The moment the crystals made contact with the water, they exploded into freezing shards, solidifying the liquid into jagged ice.

The sudden shift in terrain caused Damon to roll to the side, narrowly avoiding the frozen shards. In one fluid motion, he grabbed another crystal and hurled it toward Tobias.

Tobias raised a water barrier instinctively, but the crystal detonated on impact, turning the barrier into an icy shell. The explosion left glistening frost spreading over the surrounding ground.

"Explosive ice crystals?" Tobias scoffed, his voice tinged with disdain. "How pathetic. Can't even use your own magic."

Damon ignored the jab, rising shakily to his feet. His lips moved in a silent command.

"[5x to Speed]."

A surge of energy coursed through Damon's body, amplifying his speed fivefold. In a blur, he dashed into the forest, leaving Tobias behind.

Tobias's expression twisted in anger. He had been so close to capturing Damon, and now the slippery rat was running again.

"You think you can run? Get back here, Grey!"

With a sweep of his hand, Tobias summoned water beneath his feet, forming a smooth, flowing slide.

"[Water Movement]."

The makeshift slide propelled Tobias forward at incredible speed, allowing him to give chase.

Damon bit his lip, his face remaining calm thanks to the dulling effects of Remorseless. He had no intention of stopping, not until this fight was over.

This was why he hadn't used [5x] from the start. Even with the boost, he wasn't going to beat Tobias in a fair fight.

'But I never planned to fight fair.'

Using the omnidirectional gear strapped to his right arm, Damon maneuvered through the forest with uncanny precision, narrowly dodging jets of water magic fired by Tobias. His movements were erratic—hopping, rolling, and darting in unpredictable patterns.

As Tobias closed the distance, Damon turned suddenly, hurling his last explosive ice crystal. The resulting blast created a wall of frost where Tobias blocked it with water magic, leaving slick, icy patches in his path.

"How pathetic can you be?" Tobias growled, his voice dripping with contempt.

"Relying on those useless trinkets instead of your own magic. No wonder you're nothing but a failure."

Damon didn't reply. His focus remained sharp as he raced through the forest, heading straight for the barrier surrounding the academy.

Tobias smirked as realization dawned.

"Run, Grey! Keep running! The academy barrier won't save you. Any monster you encounter out there will rip you apart. Better to turn yourself in now and spare yourself the misery!"

Damon didn't falter. The words were a distraction, a desperate attempt to break his resolve. He tightened his grip on the dagger in his left hand, his mind racing.

This was far from over.

Damon continued running, his movements precise and deliberate. Pivoting off a tree, he came to a stop just a few meters before the barrier.

Tobias, watching from behind, misinterpreted Damon's hesitation as fear. A smug grin spread across his face, and he doubled his speed, water swirling at his feet to propel him faster toward Damon.

Damon turned around calmly, his cold gaze locking onto Tobias.

As Tobias surged forward, the world spun violently. The sharp, metallic scent of blood filled the air, mingling with the moisture of his magic. In an instant, he was on the ground, staring up at Damon, confusion etched across his face.

Pain hit him like a tidal wave, sharp and relentless. His eyes widened as he raised his hand—or tried to.

"What... what just happened?"

His breath caught when he realized he no longer had a hand to raise. His arm was severed, lying limp on the blood-soaked ground alongside his legs and other pieces of his body. Panic set in as his mind struggled to process the horrifying sight of his dismembered limbs.

Instinctively, his gaze snapped to Damon, who crouched down, a cold smile playing on his lips.

"Gotta love that merfolk vitality," Damon said, his tone dripping with mockery.

"You've been sliced to pieces, yet you're still awake."

Damon leaned in closer, his voice soft but menacing.

"I've heard that a severed head can stay conscious for a few moments. I wonder how long a severed torso can last."

Tobias tried to speak, but the words caught in his throat as his strength drained away.

"How..."

It was the last word he managed to utter before the life faded from his eyes, his body bleeding out in a crimson pool.

Damon let out a quiet chuckle, rising to his feet. "How else?"

He glanced at the trees around him, tracing the faint, nearly invisible glint of thin wires strung between the branches—webs spun from a fourth-rank crystal spider. The webs were razor-sharp, capable of slicing through flesh effortlessly.

Those were the wires of the omnidirectional gear

"That's why I only used one hand," Damon muttered.

Every movement, every action had been part of his trap, designed to lure Tobias into running headfirst into his demise.

As Tobias's body lay motionless, a notification flashed before Damon's eyes:

[You have slain Tobias Margan.]

Damon sank to his knees, exhaustion finally catching up to him. His plan had worked, but it had taken everything he had.

He cast a glance at the remains of Tobias. "Devour him," he ordered.

His shadow rippled unnaturally, spreading out like an inky darkness. Just as it began to move toward the dismembered body, a sudden flutter of wings caught Damon's attention.

Croft, the raven, swooped down, landing on Tobias's corpse. The bird pecked at the remains, tearing out an eye and carrying it to a nearby branch.

"You bastard," Damon growled, glaring at the bird.

"You followed me all this way just for human flesh? He's my prey."

Croft tilted its head, cawing mockingly. "Caw! Caw! Help... help!"

Damon sighed in exasperation. "Fine. I suppose you did help."

His gaze softened, turning melancholic as he stared at the bloodied remains.

"If you behave, there'll be many more to come," he murmured.

"Because my path has just begun. My living shadow will devour everything that stands in my way."

He clenched his fists tightly. "Not even Renata will be able to stop me. No one will."

The shadow crept forward like a growing pool of darkness, swallowing Tobias's remains completely.

[You have acquired the skill: Water Celebration.]

[You have gained 5 attribute points.]

[Your shadow is fed.]

Damon's brow furrowed at the last notification.

"Fed, but not full..." he muttered. "Is this another change in the system?"

As he pondered, a low, guttural growl rumbled from behind him. Damon froze. Slowly, he turned, his breath catching in his throat.

Beyond the barrier, red eyes glowed ominously in the darkness. Long, skeletal claws scraped against the ground, and its gaunt, horrifying frame seemed to radiate malice.

Even with Remorseless dulling his fear, Damon felt his knees buckle, his heart pounding in his chest.

There it stood—a creature of nightmares.

"Wendigo," he whispered, the word barely escaping his lips.