

Living Shadow 111

Chapter 111 The Day I Became God

Damon returned to his room, accompanied by the shifting form of his shadow and the ever-watchful raven, Croft. As the door shut behind him, he let out a long, weary sigh. The sting of Leona Valefier and Sylvia Moonveil's scolding was still fresh in his mind. Both had vehemently opposed his reckless training, and to his dismay, Evangeline had joined in as well.

He smirked faintly at the memory. They care too much.

It had taken every ounce of his wit to slip away from their collective fury. He found their concern for his well-being both unsettling and ironic, especially with the mid-semester evaluations looming on the horizon.

"Naive," he muttered, collapsing onto his bed. His body ached, his fingers still stinging despite the healers expert care. He stared at the ceiling, thoughts churning.

"If they think what I'm doing now is dangerous, wait until they find out what I'm planning beyond the barrier..."

Pushing himself upright, Damon's expression darkened. His mind wandered to his shadow, the ever-present manifestation of his strange new power.

"Hey..." he began, his voice tinged with hesitation.

"Am I making the right choice? If I want to win, I have to crush them all."

The shadow's response was simple: it shook its head, then gave him a thumbs-up.

"Jeez. Thanks for nothing," Damon muttered, rolling his eyes.

He gazed at his shadow for a moment, his expression softening.

'Not like I ever had a choice, did I?' he thought bitterly.

The paths before him had always been dirty, unforgiving. He couldn't afford to let their kindness weaken his resolve. He bit his lip, recalling an old saying from a elven smuggler he'd once known in Valerion.

"There are no eternal friendships, only eternal benefits."

The words echoed in his mind, drawing his thoughts to the elf.

Before he could dwell on it further, a faint hum emanated from under his pillow.

"Lord God... Lord God, can you hear me?"

A sly grin spread across Damon's face. He reached beneath the pillow and retrieved the sound stone hidden there, the voice of Marcus Fayjoy trembling with anxiety on the other end.

Damon cleared his throat, adopting a grave, divine tone.

"My child, I hear you. I am all-seeing and all-knowing. Fear not—I shall protect you from the monsters lurking in the academy."

The absurdity of the situation almost made him laugh. Somehow, Marcus truly believed Damon was a god. As for how that came to be, Damon recalled it vividly—unsurprisingly, since it had only happened yesterday.

It had started with the cursed ore arrows Damon had hidden under Marcus's bed frame. The corrosive energy from the ore had steadily eroded Marcus's sanity, preying on his paranoia. Coupled with Marcus's lingering suspicions that Damon was a monster in disguise, the effects had taken root quickly, fraying his already unstable mind.

But Damon hadn't wanted a raving lunatic—he needed something controllable. Remembering Lilith's offhand comment about sound stones, he had purchased two through Carl's connections. Then, with Anvil's help, he had one of the stones shaped into the likeness of a religious totem.

That totem had been carefully placed in Marcus's room.

It was a simple but ingenious ruse.

The next evening, Marcus returned to his quarters looking half-deranged. Unaware of the trap laid for him, he lay on his bed. As the cursed ore gnawed at his mind, his nightmares worsened. He awoke screaming.

And Damon had been ready.

Marcus woke up drenched in sweat, his breathing erratic as he clutched his blanket like a lifeline.

"The monsters... they're everywhere... ahhh, it's too late for the academy. I must flee. No, they won't let me... heheh... they're watching me... ohhh, what do I do? Someone save me!"

His frantic whispers filled the dimly lit room. Every shadow in the corners of his mind seemed alive, every movement of the curtains a harbinger of doom. His thoughts spiraled. If Damon Grey had already been taken by a monster, what hope was there for the rest of the students?

"What do I do... Goddess, please save me..." he muttered, his voice trembling.

And then, a sound—a faint noise by the window.

"Fear not, Marcus... I am here..."

Marcus yelped, tumbling off the bed in a panic. His heart pounded as he scrambled to his feet, eyes darting toward the source of the voice.

"W-Who... who goes there? I... I am not afraid of you!" he stammered, his fear betraying his words.

The voice came again, calm and steady. "Fear not, Marcus... I am on your side."

Marcus blinked, his fear momentarily giving way to confusion. Slowly, hesitantly, he approached the source of the voice.

"W-Who... who are you?"

His gaze landed on a yellow stone carving resting on his bedside table. It bore a small crest adorned with a halo, faintly glowing in the dark.

"Marcus, fear not," the voice emanated from the stone. "I am your guardian. I have watched over you since birth."

Marcus's eyes widened. "Since birth? Are you... are you the Goddess?"

In his own room, Damon almost choked at the absurdity.

'This idiot can't even tell my voice is male,' he thought, barely suppressing a chuckle.

"Yes, Marcus," Damon replied, his voice steady. "I am God."

Marcus frowned, skeptical but intrigued. "God... not the Goddess? Lord God, is that why you sound like a man?"

Damon sighed internally. "Yes, Marcus. But fear not—I am on the side of the Goddess. I am here to protect you."

Marcus still hesitated, his paranoia warring with his fractured sense of reason. "No... I don't believe you..."

Damon's voice deepened, carrying an air of divine authority.

"Then let me show you my power, Marcus. Let me help you destroy the monsters—especially the one masquerading as Damon Grey."

Marcus froze, his breath hitching.

"D-Damon Grey... so you know! You know he's dead, and some monster from the Evil Forest is pretending to be him..."

The voice from the stone confirmed, "Yes, Marcus. I am aware. I am God, after all. I also know that Lark, Isaac, and Tobias are dead. Their bodies weren't found because they were devoured."

Marcus trembled, the grotesque images forming vividly in his mind. He fell to his knees, clutching the stone.

"Oh God... what do I do? Please, save me!"

The voice paused for dramatic effect, letting Marcus's fear fester.

"It's too late for the others, Marcus," Damon said finally.

"The friends you have left are no longer your friends. They are the monsters' thralls, masquerading as your allies. Rein Ambridge, Elmont Garnier, and Malcolm Tatarstan have all been taken. We must kill the vessels before it's too late."

Tears streamed down Marcus's face as he clung to the stone.

"God, please... you have to help me..."

Damon's voice grew softer, almost coaxing.

"From heaven, my power on Earth is limited. But I can assist you. First, we must destroy the vessel of Rein Ambridge."

Marcus nodded shakily but stopped, his face scrunching as if fighting off insanity.

"No... no, what if we're wrong? I can't kill my friends..."

In his room, Damon clicked his tongue in irritation.

'Of all times for him to have a shred of intelligence,' he thought. 'Fine. Time to give him a little show.'

"Very well, Marcus," Damon said smoothly.

"While my power here is limited, I can lend you enough to deal with the main host—the monster pretending to be Damon Grey."

Marcus's eyes lit with hope. "Lord God, how?"

A sly grin spread across Damon's face as he whispered into the stone.

"Tomorrow, during breakfast in the dining, touch him with this sacred stone. It holds my power. Watch as he screams in pain, revealing his true form. If you're lucky, you might even see the monster emerge."

Marcus clutched the stone tightly, nodding with newfound determination. He spent the rest of the night talking to Damon, fully convinced he was communing with a deity.

Meanwhile, in his own room, Damon sighed, exhaustion creeping in.

'Just how far gone is this idiot? He can't even recognize my voice...'