

Living Shadow 116

Chapter 116 Evil Forest Wendigo

Damon didn't dare look back as he sprinted toward the river, his heart pounding like a drum in his chest. With [5x] Speed Boost, his legs carried him at five times his normal pace, his surroundings blurring as he tore through the forest. The Remorseless skill sharpened his mind, analyzing every possible option with cold, brutal efficiency.

The first option: fight.

It wasn't even worth considering. Every scenario he envisioned ended the same way—his death. The Wendigo was faster, stronger, and more vicious, a predator that outclassed him in every conceivable way. Even if he fired arrows at it, the outcome would remain unchanged.

Of all the grim possibilities, running was the only choice that offered even a slim chance of survival. And even that seemed unlikely.

'I haven't died before. I'm not dying now.' Damon bit his lip, suppressing the rising fear that threatened to overtake him.

His survival hinged on making every second count, and he had one advantage left the Omnidirectional Gear.

But even with it factored into his escape, the odds weren't in his favor. His calculations were bleak—he'd barely make it, if at all.

The forest blurred around him as he tore through the underbrush, his breathing labored but controlled. Behind him, the Wendigo closed the gap with terrifying speed. Its claws gouged deep grooves into the blackened soil, its guttural growl echoing through the forest like a death knell.

Damon didn't need to look back. Shadow Perception gave him a clear sense of how close it was—less than seven meters behind him now. Its oppressive aura bore down on him, a palpable reminder that this was no ordinary predator.

As he broke through the treeline, the river came into view. The clearing was a brief reprieve from the suffocating darkness of the Evil Forest, but Damon knew better than to hope. The Wendigo was right behind him, so close he could feel its murderous intent pressing down on him like a physical weight.

It struck.

The beast's long claws slashed through the air, aiming to cleave Damon in half. But the attack missed by inches.

Damon fired the hook of his Omnidirectional Gear toward a sturdy tree across the river. The mechanism roared to life, yanking him through the air and out of the creature's reach. He hit the ground hard on the other side, tumbling through branches and shrubs before skidding to a stop. Pain shot through his body, a dull ache spreading across his head and limbs.

Groaning, he forced himself upright. There was no time to dwell on the pain. He staggered forward, resuming his desperate flight.

The Wendigo didn't hesitate. It leapt onto a jagged rock in the middle of the river with an effortless grace, then sprang forward again. In two bounds, it had crossed the river, landing silently on the opposite bank.

Damon's heart sank as the monster closed the distance once more, its speed relentless. He fired the hook of his gear at another tree and swung through the dense forest canopy, using his momentum to stay ahead.

The Wendigo raised its head, following his movements with unblinking, predatory eyes. It surged forward, matching his pace with terrifying ease.

Damon gritted his teeth, his jaw tight with determination.

'Almost there... just a little more and I'll cross the barrier...'

Damon swung through the forest as fast as his gear would carry him, his breath ragged and his heart pounding. Ahead, the faint distortion of the academy's barrier came into view—a beacon of hope in the oppressive darkness. Relief surged through him, but it was short-lived.

The trees near the barrier were sparse, offering few anchors for his Omnidirectional Gear. Damon gritted his teeth, having anticipated this problem earlier. Worse, the Wendigo seemed to realize his objective, altering its course to intercept him before he could cross to safety.

'Damn it. I'm out of options.'

With no other choice, he fired his hooks high into the last tree ahead of the barrier, propelling himself over the treeline. The motion sent him hurtling toward the barrier at breakneck speed.

"I haven't mastered this yet," Damon muttered, his voice strained, "but I have to try."

As he shot through the air, the Wendigo closed in with terrifying speed. The beast leaped, claws gleaming in the dim light, and swiped at him mid-air.

Pain exploded through Damon's back as the Wendigo's claws tore through his flesh, sending him spinning out of control. Blood sprayed like a crimson mist, and he crashed hard onto the forest floor just beyond the barrier. His body skidded to a halt, leaving a trail of blood in his wake.

Everything went still.

[Ding!]

[HP: 1/50]

Damon could barely move, his vision swimming as blood poured from his shredded back. The Wendigo stalked forward, its growl low and menacing, but stopped short. It couldn't cross the barrier.

Damon coughed violently, blood bubbling from his lips.

"I... I'm not... gonna die here..."

With trembling fingers, he reached into his jacket, fumbling for a potion. His other arm hung uselessly at his side, broken from the impact. Gripping the vial with all his remaining strength, he brought it to his mouth, biting down to shatter the glass. Shards tore into his gums, and blood mixed with the potion, but he swallowed it all.

Warmth spread through his body as the potion's magic took effect, sealing his wounds and knitting torn flesh back together. He could feel the life returning to him, but slowly—too slowly.

The Wendigo snarled, its glowing eyes locked on him with unbridled hatred, but it could do nothing. Damon lay just beyond the creature's reach.

After two agonizing minutes, he managed to stand, though his legs wobbled beneath him. His HP had crawled back up to a measly [20/50]. His vision was still hazy from the blood loss, but his anger burned clear and bright.

He glared at the Wendigo with a mixture of rage and indignation.

"That potion... cost me 100 thousand zeni..." His voice was hoarse, his breathing heavy, but the venom in his tone was unmistakable.

The Wendigo growled in response, its body tense, daring him to step beyond the barrier. Damon narrowed his eyes, his fury bubbling over.

"You'll pay for this, with interest" he hissed.

"An eye for an eye... You'll regret the day you took something precious from me."

The creature's low snarl seemed to mock his threat, but Damon didn't flinch. He had no intention of fighting it now—he knew he couldn't win. But he also knew where its den was, and more importantly, he remembered something critical: the cache of offspring he had sensed earlier but left untouched.

'I didn't attack them before because I didn't want to provoke it,' he thought darkly. 'But now? Now it's personal.'

Damon clenched his fists, the gears in his mind already turning. He would finish setting his traps and return to that den. He would kill its young, one by one, and use the opportunity to test how his Shadow Hunger reacted to consuming monster flesh.

An eye for an eye. A potion for a life.

Revenge was an ancient law, and for a noble man, even ten years wasn't too late.

"I'll make sure you know that I was the one who did it..."

