

## Living Shadow 139

### Chapter 139 Too Far Gone

He was so hungry. He was so angry. All he could think about was the need to devour, to consume, to sate the gnawing hunger clawing at his insides.

'I must kill him. I must eat him. I'm so hungry.'

Damon's thoughts spiraled, consumed by the primal instincts of the shadow festering within him. His gaze locked on Xander—the arrogant noble who had done nothing but get in his way, mocking him at every turn. A twisted grin spread across his face as his body moved like a blur, a half-deranged predator closing in on its prey.

Before Xander could react, Damon grabbed his arm with bone-crushing force. With a savage knee strike, he shattered it.

"ARGHH!" Xander screamed in agony, blood trickling down his lip as he gritted his teeth, trying desperately to resist.

But Damon gave him no reprieve. With a forceful kick to the chest, he sent Xander hurtling backward, crashing into the forest floor.

The air reeked of smoke, and the blazing heat of the spreading fire turned the surroundings into an unbearable inferno. Trees groaned and cracked, falling in fiery heaps as the chaos intensified.

Xander coughed violently, lowering himself to the ground, trying to draw in the precious little oxygen that remained. Before he could rise, Damon pointed his fingers at him in a gun-like gesture and unleashed a barrage of magic bullets. Each one struck true, piercing Xander's leg and drawing another anguished cry from him.

"ARGH!"

Damon advanced, his steps slow and deliberate, his eyes void of any humanity. He loomed over Xander like a predator savoring the fear of its prey. Without a word, he raised his foot and slammed it down onto Xander's wounds, eliciting another groan of pain.

Xander's teeth clenched, his face contorted in defiance.

"Is that all you've got... you mongrel..." he spat through the blood pooling in his mouth.

But Damon didn't respond. His cold, predatory stare bore into Xander, and for a fleeting moment, there was a glimmer of struggle in his eyes—a battle between the man and the shadow.

Xander seized the moment.

"[Wave]!"

A surge of gravity magic erupted from Xander, blasting Damon backward toward the flames.

Damon's body sailed through the air, the blazing trees rushing to meet him. But with a flick of his wrist, a thin, almost invisible wire shot out, hooking into the ground next to Xander. With a sharp tug, the wire yanked Damon back, pulling him away from the inferno and flinging him toward Xander.

Xander barely dodged to the side in time as Damon crashed into the ground.

"ARGHHH!"

The groan didn't come from Xander—it came from Damon. He slowly raised his head, his eyes glowing with an unnatural, predatory light.

"You should forfeit now... or I might accidentally kill you..." Damon's voice was cold, devoid of emotion.

But beneath the surface, there was a hint of struggle, as if he were fighting to maintain control over himself.

The shadow consuming him didn't care for mercy or competition. It only knew hunger. It only knew how to break its prey.

To Xander, however, there was no greater insult than being told to surrender. To be looked down upon by someone like Damon—someone he deemed beneath him—was unthinkable.

Despite his broken arm, the choking smoke, and the searing pain in his legs, Xander stood. His sweat-soaked body trembled, but his posture remained defiant, proud. A noble's pride would not allow him to fall so easily.

Damon's face twisted into a sneer. He didn't care for Xander's pride. It only made him hungrier. With brutal efficiency, he delivered an uppercut to Xander's jaw, followed by a savage kick to his already injured leg, shattering the kneecap.

What followed was a relentless flurry of violence. Damon's fists rained down like hammers, each blow more vicious than the last. He grabbed Xander's head and shoved his face into the flames.

Xander's screams echoed through the forest, piercing and agonized.

[Shadow Hunger: 87%]

Back by the river, where the professors stood, all of them winced at the sheer brutality unfolding before their eyes. It was as though Damon no longer saw Xander as a fellow human being, but rather as something to be broken, crushed, and utterly destroyed.

The violence was unnerving, relentless.

The students who watched from the sidelines paled, their expressions filled with horror. Damon's actions had taught them something none of the academy's lessons ever could—fear.

"Is he... trying to kill him?" one student murmured, voice trembling.

"He should just give up! It's not worth losing his life!" another whispered urgently.

"Why won't he just crush Xander's bracelet and end it already?"

But Damon didn't. He stood there, his movements precise yet filled with an almost sadistic edge.

"He's... he's a demon," a girl whispered, her voice barely audible.

"He enjoys this. He enjoys making others suffer..."

"Xander! Get up! Don't lose to him, please!" another voice rang out desperately, though it sounded more like a plea than encouragement.

Leona, watching from the sidelines, gritted her teeth, her nails digging into her palms as she trembled in frustration.

'Why are you two still fighting like this?'

The professors, meanwhile, were caught in a moral bind. Xander hadn't called for a forfeit, and technically, the evaluation wasn't over. But Damon... Damon could very well kill him at this rate, not with a single blow but with an accumulation of calculated, relentless damage.

Professor Emeraldal had seen enough. Her hands clenched into fists as she glared at the screen.

"That boy has always had a stubborn streak," she muttered angrily. "But now... now I'm convinced he's the devil."

She turned to the other professors, her voice sharp and filled with indignation.

"Why aren't we doing anything? We need to stop this now!"

Kael Blackthorne, his expression dark, narrowed his eyes at the unfolding battle. His fist was clenched tightly, his knuckles white. Deep down, he felt that the clash between Xander and Damon was his fault. And yet, he made no move to call it off.

When Emeraldal's fiery gaze fell on him, Kael's voice came, heavy with pain but resolute.

"No... we won't."

Emeraldal stared at him in disbelief, frustration boiling over.

"What?! Why not?! It's already over! Damon's won—he's proven his point! All he has to do is crush Xander's bracelet, but he's not doing it. He just wants to torture his opponent! That's... that's cruel. It's inhumane. That boy... that boy is a monster!"

Chrome, leaning against a tree, sighed heavily before speaking.

"While it's true Damon could crush Xander's bracelet, it can also be argued that Xander hasn't chosen to forfeit either. He has the option to surrender, yet he hasn't done so."

Emeralda's eyes welled with tears as she shook her head.

"You know he can't. He won't. The Ravenscroft house is a house of warriors. Xander would rather die out there than face the humiliation of surrender. He'd rather die than admit defeat..."

Her knees buckled as she fell to the ground, her voice cracking with desperation.

"I'm begging you! Stop them! End this now! I know the academy has its methods, and death isn't unusual here, but subjecting first-years to this kind of cruelty so early is just... unfair."

Kael clenched his jaw, the weight of her words pressing on him. He finally spoke, his voice firm but tinged with reluctance.

"I will not. This ends the moment Xander sustains a lethal wound or chooses to forfeit."

Emeralda glared at him, her eyes blazing with fury and despair.

But Kael continued, softer this time. "I can, however, remind them of their options..."

He pulled out a small artifact, a communication device. As his voice echoed through the forest, it carried an almost mournful tone.

"Xander, please keep in mind that this is an evaluation, not a battle to the death. You are free to forfeit at any time. And Damon—you've won. You've proven your point. You can crush Xander's bracelet to secure your victory."

But his words made no difference.

Damon was too far gone, his eyes glinting with the manic satisfaction of a predator who had cornered its prey.

Xander, too proud, too bound by his family's honor, ignored the pain and the humiliation. The burning forest, the screams of the fallen trees, and the searing agony of his wounds only dragged him deeper into his memories.

Memories of a time he could never forget.

Memories that forever changed how he saw commoners.

How could I lose... to a commoner?