

Living Shadow 151

Chapter 151 Sacrifice

[Sacrifice]

[Description]

The Children of Aetherus gave all they possessed—and even what they could not—to enigmatic Visitors from beyond their world. They sought knowledge, power, and truths hidden from their mortal grasp. Yet, no matter how much they surrendered, it was never enough. Their once-thriving world was left barren and broken, their sacrifices devoured, leaving them with nothing but despair and unfulfilled longing.

Permanent sacrifices for temporary promises.

This cursed legacy lingers still, feeding on the ambitions of those desperate enough to give everything for a fleeting taste of the unattainable.

[Effect]

You may permanently sacrifice any stat point to empower your shadow, keeping its insatiable hunger at bay. The shadow remains fed with each offering, but what is given cannot be reclaimed.

[Type]

Active

[Cooldown]

None.

Damon narrowed his eyes at the skill description, scanning the text carefully. The system had a habit of dropping cryptic fragments of ancient knowledge, pieces of a forgotten time woven into the mechanics of the world's existence. How relevant this particular history would be to him, he didn't know—but knowing was always better than ignorance.

'You can never tell when it might become useful...'

Yet beyond the lore, what truly caught his attention was the effect. Poetic, just the way the system liked it. Deliberately vague, much like how it demanded "souls and flesh" without specifying whose. It never told him outright to devour people, only implying it. At least, he didn't need to track down an appraiser to decipher his own abilities.

The skill's function, however, was simple—perhaps deceptively so. Damon felt both exhilaration and irritation as he grasped its full implications.

In essence, Sacrifice allowed him to permanently give up a portion of his stats to momentarily empower his shadow and suppress its endless hunger. It was a trade. A choice. Give up a piece of himself to retain control.

He resisted the urge to click his tongue, especially with Lilith Astranova watching him. She still wore that same thin smile, observing him like a researcher watching an experiment unfold.

Testing was the only way to confirm the details.

He opened his system panel, his eyes drifting toward his highest stat—Mana.

[Mana: 124/124]

He hesitated, biting his lip. A brief pause. Then, finally, the thought.

'Sacrifice one mana to shadow.'

Almost instantly, he felt it. A minuscule yet undeniable shift within him—a piece of his mana pool, gone, as if something had chewed off a tiny portion of his existence. A cold tingle crept into his veins in return, a thread of shadow energy weaving itself through his body.

Glancing at his system screen, he noted the results. His overall shadow energy pool hadn't grown, but his mana had permanently decreased by one point. The only way to regain what he lost was through additional attribute points.

'It truly is a sacrifice...'

Damon mulled over the implications. Giving up his strength to keep his shadow in check. On the surface, it sounded like a terrible trade. Yet, the more he thought about it, the more the positives began to outweigh the negatives.

For one, he no longer needed to feed on people if he didn't want to. Instead, he could consume mana stones, monsters, or anything that granted him raw stat points—then sacrifice those instead.

That was a relief.

With this skill, he no longer had to worry about losing control to his shadow... unless he allowed it. Even in his most desperate moments, he could buy himself time by feeding his stats to the hunger.

More than that—it meant he could now use his Ravenous Form as a legitimate combat option. If things went south, he had an emergency failsafe. Risky? Yes. But now he had a way to balance the cost.

However...

'There's still one last issue...'

He opened his system panel, scanning the familiar display.

[HP: 50/50]

[Mana: 123/123]

[Strength: 29]

[Agility: 17]

[Speed: 35]

[Endurance: 10]

[Class: —]

[Shadow: 107]

[Shadow Hunger Levels: 3%]

[Shadow Level: 3]

[Condition: Shadow is Fed]

[Attributes: Umbra]

[Skills:]

[5x] [Remorseless] [Shadow Perception] [Water Celebration] [Sacrifice]

[Locked]

The lost mana point almost made him cry tears of blood, but he forced himself to suppress the anguish, swallowing the frustration as he moved on to check his new level-up requirements.

What he saw made him close his eyes, a mild sense of despair settling over him.

The system was supposed to be a gift from a god, yet with every new condition, it felt more like a curse—a gift from a demon rather than a god. Otherwise, why would his level-up requirement be this?

Level-Up Requirements:

Souls Consumed: [0/7]

He needed to kill seven people.

His gaze flickered upward, meeting Lilith's knowing stare. A thought crossed his mind.

'This would have been a problem before... but not with her help. She most likely wants me to get as strong as possible... her assistance would make this easier.'

Yet a shiver ran down his spine as he considered the implications. What would the future requirements be? Would the system demand he slaughter an entire city someday?

And if it did—would he do it?

How far was he willing to go?

A memory surfaced—a distant image of a man with dark hair, standing with his back to him. His father.

Would his father even recognize him now?

Would he be able to look him in the eyes, knowing the kind of person he had become?

How far would he fall?

He let out a slow, weary sigh.

He had already given up so much—his pride, his honor, his morals, his dreams, his ideals... even his very life.

What more would he have to sacrifice?

How much more would he give, just for a sliver of happiness?

He wasn't asking for much. Just a chance—a small, fragile chance to hold onto something, to carve out a future where he and his sister could live.

Was that so selfish?

Was it so wrong to want to survive?

Yet it felt like it was always him against the world.

For the first time in a long while, he felt like crying.

But he didn't.

Because Lilith Astranova was watching, and it would be embarrassing.

So instead, he smiled. A sharp, knowing grin.

"Looks like I'm only going to need seven meals to reach the next phase of my power..." His voice was light, almost teasing. "How well can you cook?"

Lilith smiled in return, her fingers tracing the rim of her wine glass as the hum of the lavish dining hall surrounded them. The faint voices of the other students barely seemed to register to her.

Her gentle smile did not reach her cold, calculating green eyes.

"As many as it takes..." she murmured, her voice like silk laced with poison.

"I'll give you a feast."