

Living Shadow 163

Chapter 163 Relentless Training

Damon walked through the gates of a house in a quiet part of town as if he owned the place. He strolled past the front yard with uncharacteristic familiarity, while Lilith walked beside him, her expression unreadable.

He made his way to the door, opened it without hesitation, and walked straight through the living room and adjacent doors, finally arriving at the kitchen. Without pausing, he grabbed an apple from the fruit basket before pushing open the door to the large backyard.

As he stepped outside, his gaze fell upon a lone figure struggling under the weight of oversized, heavy armor. The person, clad in an enormous helmet with a thin visor, moved with difficulty—clearly, the armor wasn't meant for someone of her size. However, the grueling training was made even more punishing by the task she had been given: chasing hares while weighed down by the cumbersome suit.

The training area was enclosed, littered with large obstacles, wooden training dummies, and weapons racks lined with practice swords. Scorch marks marred the ground, remnants of previous sessions.

The armored figure panted heavily, sweat dripping from her body, but she pressed on, determined. Five hares darted across the enclosure, far too fast for someone in such restrictive gear, yet she refused to give up.

Damon watched her with a small smile. A raven suddenly took flight from one of the training dummies, landing gracefully on his shoulder. It cawed once, then paused as if taking in his scent.

"Caw... blood... caw... death... caw... caw..."

Damon's smile twitched.

'So Croft found out about my little kill spree after all...'

Before the raven could cause a scene, he produced a piece of dried jerky and offered it.

But Croft ignored it, hopping off his shoulder and landing next to his shadow.

"Caw... share... caw... share..."

Damon frowned.

As if expecting this, his shadow shifted slightly. Then, in a slow, unsettling movement, it raised a thumb—an eerie imitation of a human gesture. Moments later, the darkness rippled, and two small eyeballs emerged, rolling onto the ground beside Croft.

Damon stiffened. Even lifeless, he recognized them.

The dead fairy, Makia.

His eyes widened in shock. Lilith, standing nearby, narrowed her gaze and glanced at him.

He shook his head immediately. He hadn't known about this.

"Huh... how did you—"

He quickly looked up to check if Iris had noticed the bizarre exchange, but she remained entirely focused on her training, too absorbed in chasing the hares to acknowledge their presence.

Damon crouched down as Croft eagerly devoured the eyes.

"What the hell was that?"

His shadow only shrugged.

Damon shot it a glare. The inky form hesitated, then raised an arm and mimicked a silent coughing gesture before finally explaining.

Apparently, it had made a deal with Croft—to always save an eye or two after every 'meal.'

Damon bit his lip.

'These bastards have been scheming behind my back...'

Lilith shook her head, clearly amused by the whole thing.

Croft, now satisfied, flapped its wings contentedly. Damon sighed, deciding to let it go for now.

His shadow remained an enigma, a mystery he still hadn't fully unraveled. How it had managed to preserve Makia's eyes—or why it had even bothered—was a question for another time.

Right now, he had more pressing issues.

Damon took a bite of his apple, his gaze fixed on Iris as she struggled in the oversized armor. He had acquired that set from Anvil, along with several other useful items, all procured through Carls. As for the funds? Well, those had come from his gullible but sweet friend, Leona.

He sighed. In the end, Leona had won—she'd managed to buy her way into being his friend. Speaking of her, he needed to head back soon to cook her midnight snack.

Standing up, he smiled at Iris, who was still hard at work. The heavy clang of metal echoed each time she hit the ground, relentlessly chasing after the hares, only to fail time and time again.

"Iris, think fast."

He tossed the apple at her.

She reacted as soon as she heard her name, turning around—only for the apple to thunk against her helmet.

Damon chuckled.

"Hah. My apprentice, you were too slow... You need more suffering—I mean, training."

Iris yanked off the enormous helmet, her flushed face glaring at him.

"Damon, you bastard! You said suffering—I heard you!"

Damon coughed, covering his playful grin.

"Hmph. This is easy. Anyone can do it. Are you trying to shame your master?"

Iris groaned, falling back onto her butt. Her legs felt like they were about to give out, and every joint in her body ached.

"If it's so easy, why don't you do it?"

Damon snickered, crouching down with an exaggerated sigh.

"Ahh, the weak disgust me. I could do this when I was a baby. Iris, are you trying to drag my great reputation through the mud?"

He placed a hand on his chin, striking a mockingly thoughtful pose.

"Hmph. You may not know this, but I'm the number one student in my year. All the students love me. They even call me Hero Grey."

Iris shot him a deadpan look.

"You? A hero? Are you sure they aren't calling you Demon Grey instead?"

Damon clicked his tongue.

"Tsk. You think your words can hurt me?"

She smirked, a thin, challenging smile curling at her lips.

"In that case, prove it. Catch the rabbits."

Damon stroked his chin.

"Fine. But they're hares, you stupid apprentice."

Lilith, who had been quietly observing from the side, tilted her head slightly. She watched Damon with a surprised expression.

He was actually playing with someone.

His smile was genuine. He was teasing Iris in a way that showed actual warmth—an affection that was rare coming from him.

Damon was always so guarded. Even when he smiled, it never quite reached his eyes.

But now?

Now, she could sense it. Even in his dark eyes, there was a flicker of something real.

Iris, noticing Lilith for the first time, immediately struggled to get up. The armor clanged as she hastily straightened herself.

She attempted a curtsy, though it was clumsy at best.

"Good evening, Student Council President."

Lilith gave a small nod.

"Good evening, Iris."

Before anything else could be said, Damon stepped between them.

"Alright, girl, you're on. But if I win... I have a condition."

Iris was still flustered by Lilith's presence, so she simply nodded.

"Okay... What's your condition?"

Damon smirked.

"If I catch them within the time limit... you have to call me Master from now on."

She scoffed. "And what if you lose?"

"I'll give you a million zeni as your allowance this month."

Iris's eyes lit up.

"You're on."

Damon grinned.

Once again, his victory was guaranteed.

This was the perfect opportunity to distribute his stat points while showing off to his hot-headed apprentice.