

MY LIVING SHADOW SYSTEM DEVOURS TO MAKE ME STRONGER

Chapter 2 Philosophy Of The Weakest

'We are not asked to be born... we are forced to exist. Today was a horrible day, tomorrow will be worse. In the end, it will all come to pass. All things fade...'

These words had taken root in Damon Grey's heart, a silent mantra he had discovered etched into a broken stone slab, half-buried in the roots of an ancient tree. He had stumbled upon them during the darkest hours of his life, words that had appeared when he thought surrendering to despair would be easier than pressing forward.

Though the epitaph was fragmented, the part he could read had clung to him, and in those words, he had found his resolve to live rather than succumb.

The first line struck him as a brutal truth, "We are not asked to be born... The circumstances of his birth were beyond his control, a decision made by others, leaving him as little more than a pawn to fate. Noble or commoner, blessed or cursed—one's birth defined one's lot in life.

For Damon, it was a life marred by hardship and insignificance.

The second line mirrored his every waking moment, "Today was a horrible day... tomorrow will be worse.

Every day was a struggle, a cycle of suffering he had been born into as a poor, orphaned commoner, helpless against the injustices of those more powerful than him.

Yet, In the end, it will all come to pass... all things fade. This final line offered him a faint glimmer of solace. If everything was temporary, then so was his pain. His anguish, no matter how consuming, was not eternal. And somehow, that thought kept him alive, even if it was just an excuse to avoid surrender.

Clinging to these words, Damon found the strength to push forward, enduring each day with a flicker of hope. He had managed to scrape by, eventually making his way into the academy, yet here, surrounded by those who looked down on him, it seemed his despair only deepened.

His hardships did not vanish; they merely took on a different form, and his hope began to fray.

As he walked into the dense forest, hot tears traced down his face. He bit his lip until he tasted blood, barely feeling the sting, his mind locked onto that grim mantra like a twisted prayer to any god willing to listen, his heart simmering with resentment.

'I am not an insect...' he repeated under his breath, each step weighted by frustration and anger.

He reached a secluded clearing within the forest. The area, scattered with a training dummy and several basic weapons he'd taken from the academy grounds, had become his private sanctuary. Here, he trained alone, away from the prying eyes of his peers, who saw him as little more than a spectacle, someone to mock for his lack of strength.

Damon approached the weapons rack and picked up a wooden training sword, his vision blurred by tears. Moving towards the training dummy, he swung at it, each strike harder than the last, as if he could shatter his frustration through sheer force.

His hands grew raw, his skin breaking open, but he continued, until his sweat mixed with blood, until his arms ached, and until he could no longer lift the

weapon. Falling to his knees, he let the sun dip below the horizon, lost in thoughts of helplessness.

Just as he lingered there, the crunching sound of footsteps on dry leaves snapped him from his daze. Several shadows fell over him, cast by figures standing in a tight circle around him.

Before he could react, a boot swung forward, slamming into his stomach and sending him sprawling backward, gasping for breath.

He clutched his abdomen, struggling to recover as he looked up to see Marcus Fayjoy, flanked by his usual followers—Lark Bonaire, Isaac Regardi and a few others. They were lackeys of Xander Ravencroft, but today, it seemed Marcus was leading the charge.

'I hate nobles,' Damon thought bitterly, forcing himself back onto his feet.

"Well, look who's here—the academy's black sheep," Marcus sneered, his face twisted with disdain.

"Did you think you'd get away with bumping into Xander without apologizing?"

Damon's heart sank. He knew they were looking for any excuse to pick on him. Still, he held his ground, defiance sparking in his eyes despite the tremor in his voice.

"I already said sorry. What more do you want from me?"

Lark Bonaire stepped forward, a cruel smirk stretching across his green-haired head.

"Oh, he thinks he can talk back," he mocked.

"The academy's shame, looking down on us—his betters."

The circle tightened, Damon's gaze darting around for any chance of escape. But he had let his guard down too long, and they had surrounded him completely.

Lark was the first to strike, swinging a fist that crashed into the side of Damon's head, sending him stumbling toward Marcus.

Marcus took advantage, raising a hand and unleashing an ice blast at point-blank range, the freezing impact knocking Damon backward.

He collided with Isaac, who grinned maliciously as he drew back his hand, channeling earth magic. With a quick motion, Isaac thrust his palm forward, and a stone-covered fist smashed into Damon's chest, forcing the air from his lungs and throwing him to the ground.

Damon rolled instinctively, narrowly evading another icy blast as he scrambled to his knees, only for Lark to step forward, grinning as he delivered a vicious kick to Damon's ribs.

The group laughed, their mocking voices echoing as they pinned Damon down, his arms forced behind him. He tried to struggle, but he was hopelessly outmatched. Lark knelt before him, sneering as he punched him squarely in the face, a sharp crack filling the air as blood streamed from Damon's nose.

His vision blurred, his strength waning, but he clenched his teeth and held onto the final fragment of defiance left within him.

Marcus laughed from behind Damon, his voice dripping with mockery.

"Come on, Grey. Show us that shadow attribute magic of yours. Let's see if it's worth anything."

Lark sneered, then drove his fist into Damon's face, the force jolting him backward. Damon fell hard, slipping from the other boys' grips as they chuckled, watching him crumble to the ground.

Lark stepped forward, his lips curled in a smirk, and raised his leg, preparing to kick Damon square in the head. But Damon moved just in time, ducking low, and with a surge of desperation, he buried his fist in Lark's crotch.

Lark's face went pale, his smirk disappearing as he collapsed to his knees, agony etched across his features.

Damon staggered to his feet, his breath ragged, and without a second thought, he turned and dashed into the forest, the dimming light of the setting sun casting long shadows behind him.

For a brief moment, Marcus was stunned, watching Lark writhe in pain on the ground. But his surprise quickly morphed into fury.

"Get up!" he snapped at the others, his eyes blazing with anger.

"After him! Don't let him get away!"

The group scrambled, rallying to Marcus's command, their footsteps echoing through the forest as they surged after Damon, their shouts cutting through the dusk.