

Living Shadow 22

Chapter 22 Potentially Glaring Evidence

The system panel revealed the skill tab, and as Damon carefully read through the details, he felt an involuntary thrill rise within him. The description of his newly acquired skill exceeded his expectations.

It was an active skill.

To ensure he wasn't imagining things in a desperate bid to distract himself from reality, Damon forced himself to calm down and reread the skill description, his eyes scanning the words with precision.

[Skill: 5x]

[Description:]

The warriors of the Sky Continent, Vuldren, embodied freedom and limitless growth, their achievements inspiring the concept of boundless potential reflected in this skill.

[Effect:]

5x amplifies a chosen stat by five times its base value for 5 minutes.

[Type:]

Active.

[Cooldown:]

10 minutes.

Damon couldn't help but feel impressed. The skill's potential was immense. He paused, considering the reference to Vuldren, the northeastern continent known for its flying cities, airships, and nomadic lifestyle. Their strong sense of independence and freedom was legendary, as was their worship of both the unknown god of the demons and the goddess of doom.

This duality had once branded Vuldren as heretical, though the temple had rescinded its judgment centuries ago.

"Parts of Vuldren have supposedly been taken over by demons recently..." Damon mused.

The truce between demons and the goddess's race made such rumors more intriguing than concerning, but he pushed the thought aside. What truly captivated him now was the skill's ability.

[5x amplifies a chosen stat by five times its base value for 5 minutes.]

He glanced at his stats again, his attention drawn to his mana. It had always been a source of shame—far too low to perform adequately in class. Even after adding the five attribute points earlier, raising his mana to 35, it still felt insignificant. But now, with this skill, everything seemed different.

"5x to mana," Damon muttered, eager to test the skill.

A sudden surge rippled through his body as mana swelled within him, flooding his system like a rushing tide. The intensity far surpassed the warmth he'd felt earlier. Empowered, he smiled, momentarily free of his fears and doubts.

[HP: 50/50]

[Mana: 175/175] [5x]

[Strength: 9]

[Agility: 12]

[Speed: 25]

[Endurance: 10]

[Class: —]

[Shadow: 100]

[Shadow Hunger Levels: 0%]

[Shadow Level: 1]

[Condition: Shadow is Full]

[Attributes: Umbra]

[Skills:]

[5x]

[Locked]

His mana had soared to an impressive 175. For the first time, Damon had a tangible amount of energy to wield—an advantage he had never experienced before.

The implications were not lost on him. The skill might not seem overwhelming now, but as his stats grew, multiplying any of them by five could make him an unstoppable force.

"If I keep increasing my mana, this skill alone could make me an enemy no one would dare to face."

His excitement bubbled over. Deciding to test his newfound strength, Damon recalled what he'd been taught in elemental class. He focused on his shadow attribute, channeling the energy into his hand. Slowly, a ball of shadow magic formed, pulsing with raw potential.

Damon's smile widened. His power, long dismissed as weak, finally had substance.

Pointing his hand toward a nearby tree, he unleashed the shadow ball. It shot forward, dark energy crackling as it struck the tree. With a loud crack, the tree split, part of it collapsing under the force.

Damon stared at the damage, his chest heaving with exhilaration. For the first time, he felt like he truly mattered in this world—a dangerous force in the making.

"This... this is only the beginning."

Damon smiled, his chest rising with exhilaration.

"Hahaha... it worked. I did it!" he exclaimed, fists clenched triumphantly.

He looked down at his shadow, a grin still plastered across his face.

"Did you see that? I did it! My power isn't useless anymore. I did it!"

The shadow beneath him seemed to respond, clapping its hands in a soundless gesture of celebration. For a moment, the animosity he had felt toward his shadow dissolved in the thrill of his newfound strength.

The guilt and anguish of killing Lark Bonaire were momentarily forgotten, buried beneath his euphoria.

Glancing at his mana, Damon frowned as realization struck. The single shadow ball he had unleashed had drained 50 mana points.

"No wonder I couldn't do this before... my normal mana pool could never handle it. That one attack cost more than my pitiful 30 mana could hold."

He clenched his fist, determination flaring in his eyes.

"But now... now I can get stronger. I can earn attribute points and increase my power even further."

With renewed vigor, Damon formed another shadow ball and then experimented with other techniques. However, his enthusiasm quickly drained his mana to zero, leaving him exhausted well before the five-minute duration of his skill expired.

Despite the fatigue, he couldn't sit still, his excitement undiminished. Damon eagerly awaited the cooldown period to end so he could explore the skill's potential in other stats.

After ten minutes passed, Damon rose and approached a nearby training dummy. He tried lifting it with one hand but failed miserably.

"Alright, let's see how this works with strength," he muttered.

Activating the skill [5x], he focused on his strength stat.

[Strength: 45] [5x]

A surge of raw power coursed through his body, his muscles responding with newfound vigor. Damon grabbed the dummy again, this time lifting it with little effort. The sheer strength amazed him.

"This is incredible..." he whispered, a smile tugging at his lips as he tested his enhanced strength with various exercises.

Once the cooldown reset again, Damon turned his attention to other stats. With every activation of [5x], his abilities soared to unimaginable levels.

When he boosted his speed, the effect was astonishing, his movements blurring as he darted around the training ground. However, his endurance couldn't keep pace with his newfound velocity, and he exhausted himself well before the five-minute timer expired.

Finally, Damon turned to his most unique stat: shadow energy. Already at 100, the boost pushed it to an overwhelming 500. Yet, to his frustration, he felt no noticeable difference.

"Why? What does it mean? Why can't I feel anything?" he wondered, but he shook his head. "It doesn't matter for now. I'll figure it out later."

By the time Damon finished his tests, the sun had set, and darkness blanketed the training ground. He returned to where his academy uniform hung, finding it dry and freshly mended. After slipping into the pristine clothing, he waited a little longer for the night to deepen. Then, he made his way back to the academy.

Damon's steps felt lighter as he approached the war walls, though a subtle unease lingered. The intense hunger he had felt that morning was gone, his shadow satiated from its grisly feast on Lark Bonaire. Yet, the memory of that act weighed on him, twisting his heart with unease no matter how hard he tried to suppress it.

Sneaking into his room undetected, Damon sighed in relief. He shrugged off his academy jacket, ready to collapse into bed. But as he placed the jacket on his chair, he froze.

His hand instinctively went to his chest.

The brooch was gone.

A chill ran down Damon's spine.

"If I left it at the scene of the crime..."

The thought was like ice in his veins.

"It would be glaring evidence."