

Living Shadow 33

Chapter 33 Phantom Of The Past

Damon knew how to deal with these kinds of people—it was best to just ignore them. If that didn't work, he'd resort to the second option.

"Well, young man from the academy, what can I do for you? Looking for a place to party? Magic artifacts? Spellbooks that are easier to learn than what they teach at the academy?"

Damon didn't even glance at the man pestering him.

"I am Carls, the info broker..."

The voice was male, but Damon kept walking, ignoring him entirely. Yet, the man persisted, trailing close behind.

"In fact, I know a way to get magic crystals for cheap, potions of all kinds... I'm an information broker above all else."

Damon sighed and finally gave the man a sidelong glance.

The stranger was young, probably around twenty, with unkempt brown hair and a shifty look in his piercing blue eyes. Everything about him screamed "suspicious."

"Screw off." Damon's voice was cold, low, and final.

But Carls was undeterred.

"I happen to know many adventurers in this area and shopkeepers too. I'm your guy for anything..."

He leaned in closer, his voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper.

"Even in the underworld."

Damon's eyes narrowed sharply, the faintest flicker of interest betraying his otherwise stoic expression.

Carls grinned triumphantly.

"Finally caught your interest, huh? Heh, I knew from the moment I saw you that you and I are going to be friends. So, what do you say?"

Damon didn't reply, instead quickening his pace and weaving through the crowd. He needed to lose this guy, fast. After a few abrupt turns and slipping through a dense cluster of pedestrians, Damon finally managed to shake him off.

He exhaled in relief. "That guy is too shady."

Rounding a corner, Damon caught a familiar blur of black out of the corner of his eye. A slight smile tugged at his lips as he looked down.

"Welcome back."

His shadow slithered beneath him, silent and unresponsive. Damon sighed and turned around, in annoyance.

"You're really persistent."

Carls laughed, scratching the back of his head.

"Heh, really sorry about that. It's just... we never got to finish talking. I can show you all the best places for poisons and traps— that is your thing. Phantom... Damon Grey."

Damon's eyes turned cold. He recognized that moniker—a name he got in the the capital's backstreets during his younger days.

"Razor under your sleeve. Hidden pockets. The way you walk and use reflections to watch your surroundings... You're part of the underworld," Damon observed, his voice sharp and cutting.

"And it seems you know—or at least knew—me."

Carls smiled, unbothered by the accusation.

"And you're the Phantom. You were only active for a short time in the capital's backstreets, but you were the best pickpocket out there. But that's not all—you built traps and used poisons. A true icon to some of us backstreet kids. Word is you made a fair bit of Zeni and vanished. Who would've thought you'd end up at the academy?"

Damon's lips curled into a frosty smile.

"If you're here because of some grudge, then bring it on." He drew a dagger from his jacket with deliberate ease, the glint of its blade matching the icy chill in his eyes.

'If he attacks, I'll use [5x] and kill him. Then I'll feed him to my shadow.'

Carls raised his hands defensively. "Whoa, whoa! No grudges here! I just saw an old friend making it in life and thought I'd help out."

Damon didn't lower his guard. His eyes remained locked on Carls, unwavering.

"Then screw off."

Carls chuckled nervously.

Sure, no problem," Carls said with a shrug, his grin unwavering.

"But, just so you know, I'm familiar with all the patrol routes your school's student council uses. If you run into them, you'll be in trouble. To make it worse, they don't even wear their uniforms, so you won't know it's them until it's too late."

Damon's eyes narrowed, the gears in his mind turning.

'I don't trust him... but he might be useful. I just need to be cautious. Besides, he might have info on things I need.'

Pointing his finger at Carls, Damon's tone dropped to a cold threat.

"If you don't scam... I'll kill you."

Carls froze, his smile faltering for just a moment as he locked eyes with Damon's unyielding, dark gaze. But he quickly forced a grin.

"Sure, man... as you wish. If you need me, just call. I even saved up and got one of those fancy pagers nobles use for communication."

Reaching into his pocket, Carls pulled out a small card and casually tossed it toward Damon. The card spun through the air, but Damon sidestepped it, letting it drop to the ground without so much as touching it.

Carls smirked.

"Geez, no need to be so cautious. Then again, what can I expect from the Phantom himself?"

Damon's jaw tightened at the mention of the nickname—Phantom. It brought back memories of the capital's backstreets, a place he'd rather leave buried in the past. Those days had been a necessary evil, a time when Damon honed his skills in theft, traps, and poisons to ensure his sister had a roof over her head.

He clenched his fists, forcing himself to bury the lingering bitterness.

'I will survive, no matter what it takes.'

Damon's eyes flicked to the card on the ground. After a moment's hesitation, he crouched slightly, just enough to memorize the pager number without touching the card.

'Can't be too cautious... all sorts of magic exist in this world.'

Without another glance at Carls, Damon turned and walked out of the alley, blending seamlessly into the bustling crowd. He made a series of random turns, weaving through the mass of people until he was certain he wasn't being followed.

Eventually, he stopped in his tracks, his attention caught by a commotion in the distance. A first-year academy student was being dragged away by someone. Squinting to get a closer look, Damon's eyes locked on a small badge pinned to the person's chest—a student council insignia.

"Hmmm... shit," he muttered under his breath.

Quickly ducking into a nearby shop, Damon pretended to browse the shelves, his sharp eyes darting to the shop's reflective surfaces.

After a few minutes, he stepped back out onto the street, scanning his surroundings. Glancing down, he caught sight of his shadow stretching along the cobblestones at his feet.

"Before we go to Marcus and his group," Damon muttered to himself,

"let's get a change of clothes—or at the very least, a cloak. Yeah, a cloak is cheaper."

Damon wasn't just being stingy. His academy uniform wasn't something he could afford to lose or damage; replacements were prohibitively expensive, and the school wasn't exactly forgiving about such matters.