

Living Shadow 46

Chapter 46 Remorseless

The shadow devoured Carmen. His body was consumed whole, and for a brief, harrowing moment, Damon hesitated to return to his human form.

A deafening growl erupted from him, a primal roar that echoed far and wide. It was a sound imbued with raw emotion—rage, sorrow, and helplessness all intertwined. Then, like water cascading from a broken dam, the shadows retreated from his form, revealing the trembling figure beneath.

The voice of the system rang out, cold and indifferent.

[You have slain Carmen Vale.]

[You have received 5 attribute points.]

[You have acquired the skill Remorseless.]

[Your shadow is full.]

Damon fell to his knees, clutching his chest as pain shot through him. Tears streamed down his face, hot and relentless. He had opened up to Carmen Vale, shared his story, his pain, and his vulnerability. And in the end, he had devoured him.

What hurt more than anything was the memory of Carmen's final moments. The man hadn't raised his weapon, hadn't fought back, even as death loomed. His parting words and gentle smile were alien to Damon—he didn't understand kindness, had never truly known it.

As a scream of anguish began to build in his throat, a sudden coldness spread through his heart, like ice freezing over turbulent waters. His mind, though heavy with grief, became unnaturally calm.

He whispered to himself, "Oh... I see. It must be the effect of my new skill."

Standing slowly, Damon realized the hunger that had driven him earlier was gone. His gaze shifted to the hunting bow that had belonged to Carmen Vale, now lying discarded on the ground.

"Kindness isn't reciprocal," Damon muttered, his tone void of emotion.

"Because people like me exist... people who repay kindness with malice."

Though his voice was steady, tears still streamed from his eyes. He bent to pick up the bow, cradling it in his hands.

"Even so... thank you. Thank you for showing me kindness and for reminding me that hesitation is weakness. I promise—I will survive, no matter what."

His grip on the bow tightened.

"If I can... I'll try to show kindness. But it will always come second to survival."

Wiping his tears away, Damon glanced at the bloodstained ground.

"I can't give you a proper burial... it would leave too much evidence. I'm sorry."

Placing a hand over his chest, he whispered,

"I hope you rest eternal... within me."

The strange coldness lingered, his new skill suppressing the chaos of his emotions, forcing his mind into a sharp, analytical state. He worked quickly, erasing any traces of his presence.

Returning to the snake's carcass, he froze, remembering how Carmen had risked his life to save Damon from the death mamba's bite. A pang of guilt struck him, momentarily breaking through the icy calm.

"Sorry," he whispered, clenching his fist.

It took him minutes to cover his tracks. He climbed a tree to scan the area, ensuring no evidence was left behind. Satisfied, he broke a few branches in the opposite direction to mislead any trackers. He fired Carmen's arrows at scattered angles, creating the illusion of a struggle, and then he left.

When Damon reached a safe distance, the coldness in his chest dissipated, and his calmness gave way to a torrent of grief. The weight of what he had done crushed him, his tears flowing freely once more.

In his hand, he held a single arrow. It was a foolish, illogical act to keep it, and the voice of his skill warned him of the danger. Yet, Damon ignored it. His heart, heavy with sorrow, overpowered the calculated logic imposed by [Remorseless.]

He climbed a hill overlooking Athor's Sanctuary, where a lone tree stood sentinel. There, he dug a small hole and buried the arrow.

"This is illogical," Damon murmured, his voice trembling. "But..."

He found a flat stone nearby and etched a crude epitaph onto its surface with his dagger. The words were jagged but deliberate, embodying the life Carmen had lived.

"Kindness is reciprocal."

The act brought an inexplicable weight off his chest. It was a burial in name only, a symbolic gesture that risked exposing him, but he didn't care. Logic had no place in this moment.

Standing, Damon opened his system panel, transferring all his newly earned attribute points into mana, bringing it to a total of 40. He glanced at the skill he had acquired.

Remorseless.

He didn't need to test it. He had already felt its effects. It was passive, a skill that turned his emotions into tools for survival—a curse and a gift intertwined.

[Skill: Remorseless]

[Description]

"No hesitation in action, no pause for regret."

Hope is an illusion, and kindness is a lie. To walk by this principle is to forsake hesitation and regret.

[Effect]

Remorseless enhances mental clarity and tactical awareness during high-stress situations. When in combat, it grants heightened focus, enabling precise analysis of the battlefield. This boost improves

reaction speed, decision-making, and the ability to anticipate enemy movements. The skill activates upon entering combat or facing a critical threat.

[Type]

Passive.

[Cooldown:]

0 seconds

Damon read the system's description in silence, the words etched into his mind. They struck him like a blade, cutting through his lingering doubts. The philosophy of Remorseless rejected everything Carmen Vale had embodied. It reminded Damon, painfully, that Carmen's death had been the result of his hesitation.

"To walk the path of Remorseless," Damon whispered, his voice barely audible.

"I must forsake hesitation and regret."

He cast a glance at his shadow. The dark figure that had consumed Carmen now loomed silently beside him, its usually playful demeanor subdued. There was something different about it now—a weight, as if it too felt guilt for what had transpired.

"If I abandon hesitation... if I embrace Remorseless..." Damon's voice grew steadier, his tone resolute.

"Will I survive? Will I become stronger? Will I be able to save my sister? Will I finally be free from living in fear?"

For a moment, the shadow seemed still, its surface rippling like disturbed water. Then, slowly, it nodded, its movement deliberate and solemn.

Damon's expression hardened. He clenched his fists, feeling the resolve solidify within him.

"Very well. I understand. I will no longer hesitate."

Reaching into his uniform, Damon retrieved a pager. Its faint light illuminated his face as he pressed the buttons with purpose. He dialed a number, waiting for the faint static before speaking in a low, controlled voice.

"It's me. Meet me three kilometers northwest of the town. I'm going to need some tools."

He ended the call without waiting for a response.

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Damon stood there for a moment longer, his shadow looming at his side. The air around him felt heavier, charged with the weight of his newfound determination.

He didn't mourn or linger. Instead, he turned and began walking, each step carrying him further from his old self and closer to the remorseless path he had chosen.