

Living Shadow 49

Chapter 49 My Money....

After obtaining the ores, their next stop was a blacksmith's shop. Carls swore by the goddess herself that the man was skilled, even if he wasn't well-known, and assured Damon that the smith was tight-lipped about his clients. Damon wouldn't have to worry about word getting out.

The shop was tucked away in a quiet corner of town, hidden behind a labyrinth of winding alleys. Carls led the way, navigating the twisting paths with ease until they arrived.

Damon stepped into the dimly lit workshop, the bag on his shoulder feeling heavier than usual. It contained his academy uniform and the rocks he'd purchased from the ore shop. He still wasn't sure if the rocks were worth anything or if his shadow had simply chosen at random. But given how animated the shadow had been about the first rock, Damon allowed himself a shred of hope.

The shop was silent except for the rhythmic clanging of a hammer striking steel. Weapons, tools, and armor were meticulously arranged on racks and shelves. Some of them bore intricate enchantment runes, their faint glow indicating that they were artifacts.

A warm light emanated from the furnace, casting flickering shadows across the walls. At the center of it all stood a large, burly man with a thick beard. He was engrossed in shaping a heated blade, wearing heavy gloves and a fireproof apron.

Carls gestured for Damon to follow, leading him closer to the blacksmith, who didn't bother to look up from his work.

"Old man Anvil, it's been a while. How's business treating ya?" Carls called out with an easy grin.

The blacksmith, Anvil, didn't respond, his focus unwavering as he hammered the blade.

Carls smirked, undeterred.

"Still obsessing over your work, I see. Anyway, I brought a friend. He wants some tools made, and you're the only guy I trust to give him the best."

At this, Anvil finally raised his head, his intense gaze shifting to Damon.

"Tools, huh? What kind?" His deep voice carried the weight of someone who had seen and done much.

Damon stepped forward, meeting the blacksmith's piercing eyes.

"The kind that can kill and carry poison. I have a concept in mind."

Anvil studied him for a moment, his eyes narrowing as if peering into Damon's soul.

"You've taken a life before," Anvil said gruffly. "More than once, even. You have the eyes of someone who's seen death—and will create more of it."

Damon's expression hardened. He hadn't expected the man to see through him so easily, and the bluntness of the observation left him momentarily unsettled.

Anvil quenched the blade he'd been working on, steam hissing as it hit the water. Setting the sword aside, he folded his arms.

"What kind of weapon do you want?"

Damon slung the bag off his shoulder and set it on the floor with a heavy thud.

"That depends on what these rocks hold. Can I borrow a hammer?"

Anvil motioned toward a door at the back of the workshop.

"There's a sledgehammer and an anvil inside. Break your rocks and bring me the ore."

The blacksmith paused, casting Damon a sideways glance.

"Gambling at such a young age..."

Damon said nothing, heading toward the back room. Just as he reached the door, Anvil's voice called after him.

"If you manage to find anything worthwhile, I'll make you something on the house. Tch... if."

Damon ignored the remark, disappearing into the back. Behind him, Carls leaned casually against the counter, striking up a conversation with the blacksmith.

The room was a forge, cluttered with tools that seemed unused for the most part. Dust coated several surfaces, but everything was arranged methodically. Damon scanned the area until his gaze landed on a sledgehammer propped against the wall.

He set his bag down and unzipped it, pulling out the rocks one by one, leaving only his academy uniform behind. His shadow quivered with anticipation, pointing eagerly toward the rock it had first selected.

"You want me to break this one first?" Damon muttered, his curiosity piqued by the shadow's enthusiasm.

The shadow swayed in what almost looked like a nod. Shrugging, Damon placed the rock on the anvil, gripping the sledgehammer tightly. With a grunt, he swung it down with all his strength. The hammer struck with a resounding crack, splitting the rock cleanly apart.

Damon bent down and picked up the fractured pieces. His breath hitched, and his eyes widened when he saw the faint white glow radiating from within.

"It's... a mana crystal," he whispered, his voice trembling. His fingers trembled as he cradled the pure, radiant stone. "A pure mana crystal."

He could feel the raw energy emanating from it, a warm, pulsing sensation that seemed to hum in his palm. A grin spread across his face, and he could barely contain his excitement.

"Hehehe... I'm rich!" Damon exclaimed, laughing like a madman. "This could be worth up to two million zeni! I'm rich!"

He began dancing in place, overwhelmed by the windfall, but his joy was short-lived. In his exuberance, he fumbled the crystal, and it slipped from his grasp, falling directly onto his shadow.

The moment it made contact, the shadow rippled like water disturbed by a stone, and the crystal was gone—devoured. Damon froze in place, staring in horror at the spot where the crystal had vanished.

Then he heard it.

[You have gained +50 mana.]

The system prompt echoed in his mind, but Damon barely registered it. Instead, he dropped to his knees, clutching the ground where his shadow had swallowed the crystal.

"My... my money," he croaked, his voice breaking. "My... two million zeni..."

He let out a miserable shriek, his despair echoing through the room.

Continue reading on empire

A knock sounded on the door, followed by Carls' worried voice.

"Hey, Damon, are you okay? I'm coming in."

"No!" Damon shouted, biting his lip until he tasted blood. "I'm fine! Don't come in."

Carls hesitated on the other side.

"Uh... okay, sure. I'll be waiting out here. Just... take your time."

Damon listened to Carls' retreating footsteps before collapsing back against the wall. For several agonizing minutes, he alternated between cursing his shadow and muttering, "My money... my two million zeni..."

Eventually, he managed to calm himself. He wiped the sweat from his brow and sighed. Something felt... different. There was a subtle shift within him, an unfamiliar sensation coursing through his veins.

Curious, Damon opened his system panel.

[HP: 50/50]

[Mana: 90/90]

[Strength: 9]

[Agility: 12]

[Speed: 25]

[Endurance: 10]

[Class: —]

[Shadow: 99]

[Shadow Hunger Levels: 1%]

[Shadow Level: 1]

[Condition: Shadow is Full]

[Attributes: Umbra]

[Skills:]

[5x] [Remorseless]

[Locked]

Damon stared at the screen, almost laughing despite himself.

"Ninety... my mana grew to ninety."

The excitement was quickly tempered by regret as his mind returned to the lost crystal.

"But at what cost? Two million zeni, gone..."

His shadow flickered, as if sensing his discontent, but it remained silent, watching him with what Damon could only describe as a hesitant expression.

After a moment of reflection, Damon took a deep breath and forced himself to think rationally. Money could be earned again. Rapidly raising his mana capacity, however—that was priceless.

"So," Damon muttered, turning his attention to his shadow. "You eat mana crystals too, huh? And instead of feeding shadow hunger, it boosts my mana directly. Interesting."

The shadow rippled slightly, but it made no response.

Snapping out of his reverie, Damon straightened his back and grabbed the next rock. He didn't have all day, and there were still more to break open. There was no telling what other surprises these stones might hold.