

Living Shadow 73

Chapter 73 Never Give Up

Professor Kael narrowed his eyes, his expression cold and unreadable. He had expected the battle to end swiftly, with Xander's overwhelming strength crushing Damon in mere moments. Yet, to his surprise, Damon had defied expectations, surviving the initial assault and proving to be far more formidable than Kael had assumed.

The boy he had written off as insignificant displayed agility and precision far beyond anything he had shown before. Damon's movements were sharp, calculated, and entirely calm, his focus unwavering despite the barrage of light magic raining down on him.

'He has impressive motor skills... agile, with sharp instincts. A shame his mana pool is so pitifully low, and he's shown no aptitude for magic. He won't make it far in the academy.'

Kael's cold gaze followed the battle closely as Damon swung his daggers, redirecting the beams of light toward Xander with remarkable precision.

'Hmph. So that's his plan... no wonder he chose the falsity daggers.'

The rest of the class was in uproar, their voices echoing through the arena.

"Did you see that? How is he moving so fast?"

"That dirty cheater! He's using the daggers to send the attacks back at Xander."

"That has to be against the rules, right?"

"That commoner scum should be punished!"

Among the crowd, Evangeline's sharp eyes gleamed as she studied Damon's technique.

"What an ingenious strategy," she murmured.

"To think he could deflect light with just the blades of his daggers."

Sylvia, standing beside her, nodded in agreement.

"That level of precision requires incredible control. He must have been testing it earlier to refine his approach."

Leona chuckled softly, her admiration clear.

"He's amazing. Since the rules forbid direct magical attacks, he's using the artillery's own magic to turn the tide against his opponent. It's bold and brilliant."

Kael's expression remained stoic as he observed Damon's relentless movements. While the rest of the class was divided between outrage and awe, Kael couldn't deny the ingenuity of Damon's strategy. However, in his mind, the boy's lack of magical potential was a glaring flaw that would inevitably hold him back.

'A commendable effort, but this is only delaying the inevitable.'

Inside the arena, Damon had sustained several bruises, his chest heaving as he dodged yet another explosion of light magic. His legs felt like lead, his lungs burned, and sweat dripped into his eyes, but he pushed forward. Across from him, Xander wasn't faring much better.

At first, the light orbs seemed manageable—exploding once and scattering beams in all directions—but as the match dragged on, their numbers multiplied. Now the entire arena was a death trap, filled with searing beams of magic and detonating orbs.

Damon clenched his teeth, frustration mounting.

'I don't have much time. My skill is about to wear off,' he thought grimly, the ticking clock of his temporary power boost weighing heavily on his mind.

He sensed the orbs of light in his shadow perception, their deadly energy crackling ominously.

"I have to risk it all..."

Tightening his grip on the twin daggers, Damon did the unthinkable. He charged straight toward the light orbs. Just as he reached the first, he swung his dagger with all his might, sending the orb hurtling toward the reflecting walls. It bounced off with a blinding flash and smashed into the barrier Xander was hiding behind.

The impact sent Xander flying, the light engulfing him in a fiery explosion. But Damon's sharp eyes caught the flicker of another barrier forming between Xander and the attack.

"Tch... he blocked it," Damon muttered, his irritation rising.

Not giving Xander a chance to recover, Damon sprinted after him. Sliding low, he struck another of Xander's barriers with his dagger, cracking it just as he narrowly dodged another orb of light. The orb exploded violently behind him, catching Xander off guard.

"Ahhh!" Xander's muffled cry echoed as he tumbled to the ground, his body bloodied and battered.

But Damon showed no mercy. Ignoring the searing pain in his limbs, he charged through a barrage of light beams, allowing them to graze him in non-lethal areas. His target was clear—the largest orb of light hovering ominously ahead.

Slashing at it with his dagger, the orb detonated in a blinding flash. The force of the explosion knocked Damon back, his body screaming in protest, but Xander took the brunt of it. Still reeling from the earlier attack, he was caught in the scattered light beams, his blood sizzling under the heat.

"Arghhh!" Xander groaned, his body convulsing as shattered ribs and torn flesh overwhelmed him. Despite the agony, he staggered to his feet, his vision blurred and his uniform in tatters.

Through gritted teeth, he growled, "[Gravity Magic: Weighted World!]"

The gravity in the arena shifted, pulling down everything around him. The light beams slowed slightly, their momentum dulled by the oppressive force.

'I won't lose...' Xander rasped, his voice barely audible.

"I won't lose to the likes of you!" he roared, blood dripping from his mouth.

On the other side, Damon wasn't in much better shape. His uniform was scorched, his limbs felt like lead, and blood seeped from countless cuts. His legs ached, and his body screamed for rest, but he stood firm.

'He's still standing? How...? He took that attack point-blank...' Damon's thoughts raced as he gritted his teeth.

"It doesn't matter. I'll still win," he muttered, his voice steely with determination.

Damon dodged another beam, his movements growing sluggish as his [5x] [Agility] skill teetered on the edge of deactivation. Glancing at Xander, he noticed how the gravity magic suppressed the light beams around him, but Damon sneered.

"Having more mana than me won't save you."

Xander roared back, "You're the one who needs saving!"

Damon snarled as he made his move, slamming his left dagger into another orb of light. The light burned his arm, but he bit back the scream, forcing the orb toward Xander.

Xander, already weakened, raised a cracked barrier. The orb collided with it and exploded violently, forcing him back. Damon seized the moment and hurled his right dagger at the barrier. The blade shattered on impact, breaking through and letting the light blast engulf Xander completely.

The force of the attack sent Xander flying into the arena wall, his body crumpling to the ground, unmoving. Blood pooled beneath him, his sword shattered beside him.

Damon stood amidst the chaos, his left arm burned and useless, his body trembling as the effects of his [5x] [Agility] skill faded. He staggered, struggling to stay upright.

"I... I win..." he whispered hoarsely, exhaustion washing over him like a wave.

But just as he was about to collapse, a faint twitch caught his eye.

Xander's blood-covered hand clenched, his battered body trembling as he forced himself to stand.

"I... am not done... yet!" Xander roared, his voice raw with defiance.

Damon's face paled, his breath catching in his throat.

'No... no way...'