

Living Shadow 83

Chapter 83 Legacy of Carmen Vale

Damon's muscles ached as he sat in Anvil's workshop, the sourness of exhaustion creeping through his body. He had spent the last three hours in the smith's cluttered shop, mastering the controls of what he now called the "Omnidirectional Gear." The name felt fitting for the intricate mechanism Anvil had crafted.

The usual rhythmic hammering from earlier was gone; it was a kind of mourning. Anvil, like the rest of the town, was grieving the death of the kind hunter Carmen Vale.

It had been a few days since Carmen's death was discovered. The town had come together for a funeral, though there was no body to bury—just a few personal belongings that symbolized the man he had been. Most assumed his body had been consumed by a monster.

They weren't wrong. Damon had consumed him.

As he flipped through the manual, deciphering the intricate controls of the gear, Anvil spoke in a wistful tone about Carmen, his voice tinged with sorrow.

Meanwhile, Carls had been sent on an errand by Damon to pick up supplies and withdraw ten thousand zenì to pay Anvil. The smith, oblivious to Damon's role in Carmen's death, continued reminiscing about the man who had touched so many lives.

Damon listened, feeling an uncomfortable knot forming in his chest. Guilt? Regret? It was hard to say, but the old man's words made the air feel heavier.

The Omnidirectional Gear was tricky to master, but after three hours of practice, Damon had figured out the basics. Anything beyond simple movements still felt dangerous, so he set it aside and decided to ask more about Carmen.

He already knew some details from Carls—like the name of Carmen's daughter, Iris, a pink-haired girl—but he wanted to understand more.

"How could he command so much loyalty even after he's dea... gone? It feels like the whole town is angry over his death," Damon asked, his tone quiet but curious.

Anvil sighed heavily, setting down his tools.

"Honestly? I never really got the man. He was always sticking his nose in other people's business, but not in a bad way. If someone needed help, he'd come running—even if they didn't ask for it. And he wouldn't take no for an answer."

The smith's eyes moistened as he continued.

"You could call him an oddball, but he was kind. Always trying to see the best in people, even the ones who didn't deserve it. That's probably why everyone loved him so much."

Anvil glanced at Damon, his voice softening.

"His magic was being kind. And that magic? It touched everyone."

Damon nodded slowly, his expression grim beneath the blindfold.

"Kindness is reciprocal," he said after a moment.

Anvil chuckled, a faint smile breaking through his sorrow.

"Yeah, that's exactly what he used to say. There's not a single person in this town he hadn't helped before. This world lost a great man, and it'll probably never recover. Folks like him? They're one in a million."

Though his eyes were hidden, Damon's posture grew even gloomier. The weight of Anvil's words pressed down on him.

The smith, noticing Damon's somber demeanor, spoke again, his voice filled with quiet conviction.

"You know, kid... he might be dead, but he's not forgotten. The people he helped? They'll remember him."

Damon raised his head slightly, the phrase resonating in his mind.

"Dead but not forgotten," he murmured, the words heavy with meaning.

Damon took a deep breath, trying to steady himself as a familiar churn twisted his stomach.

'His legacy, huh... He's dead, but a whole town mourns him because he was kind. If I died, who would even care? No one would remember... I'd just be another corpse. My parents were kind, and how did the village repay them...?'

He clenched his fists tightly, his nails digging into his palms.

'But Carmen Vale is different. Maybe kindness is reciprocal. I can't undo what's been done, and I can't atone either. But I can try... to be better.'

He glanced at Anvil, his thoughts momentarily quieting.

"You know... I wanted to be a hero when I was a kid," Damon admitted, his voice low but steady.

Anvil raised an eyebrow before bursting into laughter.

"Don't we all!" he roared, wiping his hands on a cloth.

Damon wasn't deterred by the reaction. His expression darkened as he pressed on.

"But somewhere along the way, life hit me—with all its trials. I came to really hate people for their treachery. Kindness became a symbol of people who'd die early. I... I wanted to pick a path of remorselessness."

He paused deliberately, lowering his head.

"No hesitation in action. No pause for regrets."

Anvil let out a deep sigh, setting down his tools.

"You're too young to be this gloomy, and you're too young to give up on making regrets. If you have no regrets, can you even say you've lived? Take it from an old man—it's impossible to go through life without regrets."

"No pause for regrets doesn't mean no regrets, I think it means moving forward despite them."

Damon nodded, absorbing the words. "I take it you have many?"

Anvil smiled, his gaze distant.

"And I carry them with pride," he said.

"Carmen had plenty too. He was a troubled guy in his youth—or so he said. Had some serious anger issues. Lost everything. Watched his wife and sons die right in front of him. Lost his noble house. Forced to flee with only his young daughter. And yet... he managed to smile after all that. That guy was tough stuff."

Damon nodded again, this time more resolutely.

"Thanks for the advice, Anvil. I appreciate your perspective."

"Wouldn't really call that advice," Anvil muttered, shaking his head.

Still, Damon understood now. He had a path to follow, his own way of paying back what he owed to Carmen. In a sense, even though he had killed and consumed the man, Carmen had still saved him—his kindness had left a mark. It was up to Damon to carry that legacy forward.

Not through kindness—that wasn't his way. He had a different idea in mind.

The door flung open, and Carls stumbled in, carrying a small bundle.

"Ahh, Damon, you're such a slave driver," he complained, dropping the bundle on a nearby table.

"I don't even know why you need hair dye and explosive ice crystals."

He tossed a pouch toward Anvil.

"And here's your pay from the outlet. Geez, I'm beat."

Carls glanced at Damon with a grin.

"I'm glad you're starting to trust me enough to send me to get stuff for you."

Damon shook his head.

"No, you're still a shady character. I just didn't want to risk running into the student council in town, that's all."

Carls clutched his chest in mock pain.

"You break my heart, Damon! How can you be so cruel?"

Damon ignored him, picking up the bundle. He stood, stretching his sore muscles, and pulled up his hood.

"Thanks for everything, Anvil. If I need more weapons, I'll be back."

Anvil sneered, crossing his arms.

"Oh, I don't doubt it. You're a repeat customer, now. Those hollow arrows and braces will need maintenance, so you'll be back. And I intend to charge you really good."

Damon sighed, shaking his head.

"I knew it. It was just too good to be true. I'm still going to be losing money after all."

With that, he turned and walked out, the bundle in hand, a new resolve settling over him.