

## MY LIVING SHADOW SYSTEM DEVOURS TO MAKE ME STRONGER

### Chapter 9 Same Everywhere

Damon stormed out of Professor Kael's office, his hands trembling with barely contained rage.

He strode through the hallways, which were mostly empty since most students were in class. If any of them had known that he had talked back—and even made a rude remark—to the academy's most feared professor, they'd likely think him insane. But Damon didn't care. Not about Kael, and certainly not about the prestigious Seras Blade. None of that mattered. All he cared about was his sister's life, and that came down to one all-encompassing problem: money.

'There's nothing that money can't buy', he thought bitterly.

'If you can't buy something with money, it simply means you don't have enough—or you don't know where to find it.'

"I need more zeni..." he muttered under his breath.

The academy's scholarship provided him with some relief, but even a million zeni wouldn't be enough to cover what he needed. He couldn't leave or get expelled, but he had no idea what to do next.

'Ahh... curses.'

He bit his lip, the weight of his burdens pressing down on him until he felt he might burst. He'd talked big in Kael's office, fueled by his anger, but deep down, he knew how hopeless he felt.

Taking a deep breath, he chanted his usual mantra, a quiet whisper to himself.

".....Today was a horrible day... tomorrow will be worse..."

Repeating it a few times, he let out a long sigh and found a nearby fountain, sinking down onto the bench beside it.

"What... what do I do... how... can I..." His voice trailed off, heavy with exhaustion.

Just then, his shadow flickered, moving strangely, as if waving at him. Damon blinked, watching as it gestured, attempting to communicate. After a moment, he understood: it was pointing toward the system.

Damon shook his head with a faint smile. "Right. How could I forget about that?"

Summoning the system panel, he scanned his stats. Most were unchanged—except for two.

[Shadow Energy] had dropped, and even more concerning, [Shadow Hunger] had increased to a new level.

Alarmed, he checked his condition panel, and relief washed over him when he saw the result:

[Condition: Shadow is Full]

He sighed, remembering that high Shadow Hunger could be fatal. "I really don't like the idea of perishing," he muttered, glancing down at his shadow, which had returned to behaving normally under the sunlight.

"Now what? What do I feed you... hmm, flesh to feed you and souls to level up..."

He frowned.

"Souls might be hard to come by, but flesh? Well, that's doable within the academy... we'll start there. Just... after class."

Damon's voice trailed off as he suddenly remembered. Class... His first class, Element Manipulation, was probably over by now since he'd been late to begin with. But if that was over, it meant...

Reaching into his pocket, Damon pulled out a small book bearing the academy's seal on the back. He opened it, and the pages glowed like a digital screen. This was the academy pager, a device with various functions, much like a modern smartphone. Scrolling through the schedule, he groaned.

"Oh, you've got to be kidding me... just my luck."

He closed the pager and stood up, glancing at his shadow.

"Come on. We have Practical Multi- Attribute Combat class next."

He sighed heavily. It was one of his least favorite classes. While the theory behind using magic attributes in combat was tolerable, he hated the practicals.

This was the class where students showed off their power—and he was always the weakest. And, to top it off, he was late.

Reluctantly, he walked down a flight of stairs, through a long hallway, and reached an elevator.

He stepped inside the enchanted device, pressing the button, and felt the slight drop as it descended. Soon, he arrived at the ground floor, where a

massive vaulted door awaited him. Pushing it open, the sunlight spilled in, stretching his shadow across the polished floor.

Damon walked past a maze of carefully cultivated flower beds until he reached the academy's open training grounds.

All around, students were launching elemental magic at training dummies or dodging attacks fired from hulking, metallic golems.

Standing off to the side was the instructor, a beastkin man with brown hair, wolf ears, and a build that radiated both power and control. His sharp blue eyes observed the students with an air of calm authority, his arms crossed as he silently assessed their performances.

Damon hesitated, his heart pounding as he took in the scene. He took a deep breath, looking down at his shadow, and nodded.

"It's now or never."

He walked slowly toward the students, keeping his head low and his breathing steady, hoping the beastkin professor wouldn't notice him amid the chaos of other students taking their practicals.

Damon's steps were careful, each one weighted with a mild sense of unease as he neared the weapons rack. Just as he was about to blend in with the rest, the professor's deep, booming voice cut through the noise.

"You are late."

Damon froze. The entire training ground fell silent as the professor's voice echoed, commanding instant attention. All the other students halted and turned to look at him, each with a different expression.

He didn't need to look up to feel their stares piercing through him. Instead, he frowned and raised his gaze slowly, his expression dark and unyielding. The shadowed look in his black eyes only made him appear more foreboding, casting an unapproachable aura that matched the gloom he radiated.

Meeting the professor's gaze, Damon maintained an icy, defiant stare. The professor, unaffected, nodded slightly.

"You... what is your name?"

Damon's heart pounded in his chest, threatening to betray him, but he held firm, his face a mask of cold resolve.

"Grey. Damon Grey."

The professor's eyes narrowed, clearly recognizing the name.

"Hmm... yes. You're that Damon Grey."

Damon's expression darkened further, feeling his irritation rise.

'These bastards are all the same... looking down on me, huh?'

He crossed his arms, determined not to let this professor belittle him, especially after what he'd just endured with Kael Blackthorn.

"So what if I am?" he replied, his tone cold and defiant.

A few gasps sounded among the students, surprised by his audacity. Marcus and Lark, among them, exchanged shocked glances, clearly not expecting to see Damon standing there, defiant and very much alive.

The professor's eyes hardened at Damon's response. His voice grew louder, and a trace of his aura leaked into the air, pressing down with an invisible weight.

"You are late. Go stand in the corner."

Damon felt his knees weaken as the professor's aura bore down on him, leaving him faint.

But just as the pressure threatened to overpower him, his shadow moved erratically beneath him, almost as if it absorbed the brunt of the impact, sparing Damon the worst of it. He managed to maintain his cold exterior, though his body trembled under the strain.

As he walked to the corner, his shadow wobbled instead of his legs, taking on the weakness he'd hidden from the others. His expression remained icy and grim, undeterred by the professor's display of power.