

Living Shadow 91

Chapter 91 Finally Caught

The sun hung high in the sky, its rays filtering through the classroom windows. Damon, however, avoided the light, seated comfortably in a dark corner at the back.

His head drooped slightly as drowsiness weighed on him, though his fingers toyed with a small notepad Sylvia had given him. The notepad contained summaries of books on beast taming, with meticulous instructions Sylvia had crafted for training the raven she'd practically forced him to adopt.

He sighed, recalling how she'd strong-armed him into taking the bird.

Something brushed against his foot, snapping him from his thoughts. Glancing down, he spotted Croft, the raven, dragging a rolled-up piece of paper in its beak.

Damon leaned down, retrieved the paper, and rewarded Croft with a piece of meat. The raven eagerly snatched it and devoured it in no time.

Unrolling the paper, Damon noticed it was another letter from Sylvia. He glanced toward the front of the class, where Sylvia was seated beside Evangeline. She caught his eye and nodded subtly.

The letter itself held no meaningful content; it was just part of an ongoing training exercise. Sylvia had been teaching Croft how to deliver messages, and they'd been practicing since morning, even during classes. Initially, the group had been seated together, passing pens from one side of the table to the other to test the raven's intelligence. Croft had performed admirably, impressing them with its near-human wit.

After lunch at the cafeteria, their group split up to escalate the training. This time, the goal was for Croft to deliver letters discreetly without disturbing the professor. That's why Sylvia and Evangeline weren't seated near Damon anymore.

The only ones beside him now were Leona and, surprisingly, Xander.

Damon tried to focus on Sylvia's notepad, committing its contents to memory. Yet, his attention kept drifting to Marcus Fayjoy, who sat alone in a distant corner, muttering under his breath. Normally, Damon wouldn't have been able to make out the words, but he had taken the liberty of attaching his shadow to Marcus. This allowed him to hear and see everything as though he were sitting beside him.

What he discovered at first left him pale, but soon a cunning smile crept onto his face.

Marcus was paranoid—terrified, even. The boy had convinced himself that Damon was some kind of monster from beyond the barrier, a dark creature from the Evil Forest masquerading as Damon Grey.

'He couldn't be more wrong,' Damon thought, suppressing a chuckle.

'That's fine, though. I'll just feed his madness.' His smile widened as an idea formed.

'Good thing I bought some Attrax. I can use it to drive him over the edge. Even better, I'll use my arrows made with cursed ore to fray his mind slowly.'

Damon leaned back, his smile fading into a look of resolve. He had made peace with the idea of killing if necessary, but now he saw a different path. Why waste effort targeting innocents when scum like Marcus Fayjoy existed?

He had an apprentice now—Iris. That meant he needed to act like a proper role model, didn't it?

With his shadow latched onto Marcus's, Damon had a clear view of the notes Marcus was scribbling. Since morning, he'd been using Sylvia's notepad to practice imitating Marcus's handwriting. Now, he could replicate it perfectly—down to the smallest curve and flourish.

Damon sighed, closing the notepad.

'Marcus Fayjoy was the first enemy I made at the academy. A shame he'll be the last to die... after I drive him mad.'

He called his shadow back. It slipped away from Marcus undetected, returning to Damon's side and giving him a subtle thumbs-up as if to say, "Mission accomplished."

A yawn escaped him as he rested his head on the desk. His objectives for the day were complete, and thanks to Croft's unexpected intelligence, he could accelerate his plans.

Croft returned from another errand for Sylvia, dropping a letter from its beak before perching on Damon's head. The boy didn't stir—he'd already fallen asleep.

Leona glanced over, noticing Damon's head slumped on the desk. His blindfold obscured his eyes, so it took her a moment to realize he was asleep. She didn't wake him, though. Instead, she simply smiled and let him rest.

The professor, a tall woman with flowing green hair, paused her explanation as her sharp eyes settled on Damon's unmoving figure in the corner of the classroom. Her brows furrowed in irritation.

"Can someone tell me how the city of Madawaska was destroyed?" she asked, her tone laced with impatience.

A few hands shot up, Sylvia's among them. She had undoubtedly read extensively on the subject. But the professor's gaze swept past them, her green hair falling over her shoulder as she pointed toward the back of the room.

"You there, in the back. Tell me."

Damon didn't stir. He remained slouched in his seat, fast asleep.

Leona's eyes flickered toward him, her lips pressing into a thin line. Without hesitation, she jabbed her elbow into his ribs.

The sharp pain jolted him awake.

"Ouch," Damon muttered groggily, his blindfold still covering his eyes. The shadows, which served as an extension of his senses, quickly refocused on the classroom.

Leona leaned closer, whispering urgently. Damon tilted his head, catching her words the second time. With a resigned sigh, he stood, brushing his hair back casually.

"The city of Madawaska in the Holy Empire, right?" His voice carried an edge of confidence. "You haven't covered that yet."

Professor Emeraldalda's emerald eyes narrowed, her lips curling into a slight smirk. "And how would you know that if you weren't paying attention?"

Damon returned her gaze with a calm smile. She was clearly trying to humiliate him, but unfortunately for her, he was prepared. This wasn't like his first days at the academy when Marcus had tricked him into studying the wrong material.

"The answer is fire," Damon said, his voice steady. "The city was destroyed by fire."

Emeraldalda's smirk remained, though her curiosity was piqued.

"And how, exactly, was it destroyed by fire?"

Damon straightened, brushing his hair back with a practiced motion.

"It was burned to ashes by the flames of the dragon Ashergon. Thirty-five million people perished, and the Holy Empire deployed its army to repel the dragon."

The professor's expression faltered for a moment before she nodded. "Very well, then."

But she wasn't done yet.

"What is the base herb for healing potions, excluding verdant leaves and flowers?" she asked, her voice dripping with challenge.

Damon's smile grew sharper. He recognized the trap—verdant leaves and flowers were the most common ingredients, and she was fishing for an alternative to catch him off guard.

"The base herb, if not verdant leaves, would be moringa," he said confidently.

"Or you could use Hermes, vitali grass, Milana stems... there are a few others as well. Shall I name them?"

Professor Emeraldalda blinked, clearly taken aback by his knowledge.

"T-That... is correct," she stammered. "You may sit down."

Damon sat with a satisfied smirk, his confidence undented.

But his composure was short-lived.

The classroom door swung open, and a familiar figure entered. A red-haired woman with piercing green eyes scanned the room until her gaze landed squarely on Damon. Her cold smile sent a shiver down his spine.

She approached Professor Emeraldalda, whispering something in her ear before turning to address the class.

"Damon Grey," she called out, her voice ringing with authority. "Come with me. You must answer for your crimes against the academy."

Damon's face paled, his heartbeat quickening.

'Crimes? What crimes?'

But before panic could take hold, his skill, Remorseless, activated, washing over him with a wave of calm. His mind sharpened, analyzing every possible scenario. Each path led to ruin, save for one.

With a steady breath, he stood, his expression neutral as he prepared to face whatever awaited him.