

Shadow 481

Chapter 481: Still Stupidly The Same

Damon's mood was light—for all intents and purposes, everything had gone exactly as planned.

He recalled seeing Kudi Kudi's profile in one of the files Lilith had handed him months ago. Apparently, she'd been aiming to recruit the little bastard for a while.

'I wonder if Kudi Kudi's got some grudge against the Temple...'

Either way, it didn't matter. Damon could already see how this would play out.

Kudi would take the potion to the market, and from there, its reputation would explode. Alchemists, scholars, even black market collectors would kill to get their hands on a potion with a perfect purity rating.

A shame, really... to Damon, it wasn't even worth a second glance. It was one of the more common system drops.

The system had the tendency to give him weird potions too, like one that could cure almost any debuff. But only if you feed the recipient mouth to mouth.

Still, nobles, merchants, alchemists, mages, and underground dealers would be clawing over each other to trace its origin.

"How the Adventurers Guild responds... that'll push Kudi right to us."

And because the deal was a private transaction between Damon and Kudi, the guild wasn't obligated to offer any protection.

Or they would pressure him to give it to them for a price; as a merchant, he'd hate that.

If Damon knew anything about Leruchuna, it was this— They hated losing money.

So, naturally, Kudi would reach out to Lilith Astranova for protection.

Damon explained it all to Lilith over the pager.

She sighed, feeling a bit excited. He could tell by her tone.

"I see. That does settle things... though we don't really have an organization yet. But leave it to me. I'll push him to join us."

Damon could almost picture the smile on her face.

She went on, telling him a bit of her plan.

"I've got contacts in the Assassins Guild. I'll use them to... encourage him a little. For now... I'm in the capital. If you need me, I'll be there in moments."

The wind caught Damon's hair as he smiled. So she was setting him up.

"There's no need. I'm enough for this... Just take care of those two for me."

Lilith didn't argue. She knew who those two were—

Iris and Luna. Once again Damon had left her to babysit for him.

Did he forget looking after his sister and his apprentice was his responsibility.

She hung up.

Damon felt a faint irritation lingering in the air.

He glanced to the side, to where the shadows seemed just a shade too deep.

"Shall we go, Matia?"

A female knight, her form wrapped in darkness, stepped forward with a quiet nod.

It seemed his shadow had caught up to him. He did tell her to do as she pleased.

But that was fine.

Tonight, it all ended.

She moved to stand silently at his side.

They were now in a familiar part of the city.

Not far from here was the headquarters of the infamous smuggling ring—Quick Hand.

This was where Damon had been raised.

Where he had spent years struggling between life and death.

Where he had lived with back-to-back the elf who had saved him more times than he could count.

But also sent him toward death more.

Looking back on it... he wouldn't have survived without Back-to-Back.

Especially since Damon had a bad habit—

He pissed off every single member of Quick Hand.

He wasn't the type to take things lying down.

If someone pissed him off, he'd steal flay powder from Gubi's poison stash and smear it on their clothes.

Naturally, there were consequences.

Beaten half to death.

Locked in a dark room for days.

Once, they'd stuffed him in a coffin with tiny holes drilled in—

The claustrophobia nearly broke his mind.

Sometimes they cut off a finger... or two.

Quick Hand had a thousand ways to punish the street rat they couldn't seem to get rid of.

Why would they?

The kid was daring—

He did anything and everything.

And somehow...

He always came back alive.

And Damon had made it very clear.

He'd kill them all.

Every. Last. One.

But none of them cared.

What was a street urchin going to do?

They thought they knew the way the world worked—

A crook bows to a mafia.

A mafia bows to a noble.

A noble bows to a king.

And a king?

Who would Damon bow to?

No one.

"Nothin's changed, Back-to-Back... I grew up. I saw the world. And I'm still the same small, pathetic, defiant loser I've always been. I don't know how this story ends... but I do know... I'll lose on my own terms."

He clenched his fists.

"Against man, demon... or god."

It was the same when he joined Aether Academy.

Beaten. Mocked.

Bullied by Marcus and his dogs.

But never once had he groveled.

It might seem lame to others—

But that was Damon Grey.

Cold eyes, holding a hatred even time couldn't erase.

The disgrace of the Academy... had returned.

Born of shadows.

His deeds wouldn't be noble.

He wouldn't be a hero sung in tales.

He'd be the demon lord they all wanted to purge.

A disgrace to every noble ideal he should have stood for.

From the shadows, armor began forming.

Metal clicking into place over his body.

Thick, heavy plates—

Built for battle.

Built for war.

And Damon...

Was calm.

His skill Remorseless dulled his heart, numbing his mind.

Quick Hand wasn't even a threat.

But if he wiped out a group this big, this violently...

The Imperial Knights would move.

Quick Hand might be trash...

But they had powerful backers.

The kind of backers with friends in high places.

"I might not make it out alive..."

The thought made him laugh.

A low, bitter sound that grew louder until it echoed through the streets.

He laughed like a madman.

Because the idea of death stopping him—

Was a joke.

He laughed because he couldn't cry.

And when the laughter died...

He vanished into the night.

Chapter 482: Good On His Promise

Damon teleported into a room with a long table and wooden flooring... there was nobody there, but... soon enough, there would be.

It seemed so easy to get in now... all he did was take one step... there was no barrier or magical defenses to stop him from getting inside.

He slowly walked to the table... sat on the chair, his eyes locked on the door...

Hmmm... what a sight for sore eyes... many times he had been brought into this room, tied up or beaten half to death, just to receive punishment from the man who usually sat on this chair...

The boss of Quick Hand.

A shame, really... none of them would be leaving alive.

Damon walked to the wall, and using the metal finger of his gauntlet, he carved the final rune on the door...

He placed his palm on it, mana pouring through the rune, linking with runes spread all over the building...

He half expected them to sense something and come running...

"It seems I overestimated."

In the end, he had to give credit where credit was due... he was someone who had learned rune craft from an Ascendant—and most of them had learned from the God of the Abyss himself... ..

Vathren did, maybe Mugu as well.

Damon had learned from the best. How could lowly smugglers ever compare?

He sighed, sitting on the chair... his shadow stood by his side, her form stalwart...

Now, he had to wait... he certainly hoped they hadn't changed how they did things in Quick Hand... because that would be disappointing.

If he remembered correctly, they met on this day of the month to report progress and have a small drinking party to boost morale...

The best thing about it was—all of Quick Hand came.

He looked out the window... any minute now...

And sure enough... the door opened.

Damon smiled lightly... raised his dark eyes to look at a familiar face...

Broad shoulders, thick beard... a massive frame that looked like it could strangle an orc... his black hair wild like a mane... brown eyes still as piercing as Damon remembered...

He hadn't forgotten. He had glared into those eyes too many times.

Damon sat there like he owned the place...

His smile calm his crown resting on his head like a halo... his shadow behind him gave off a deep and formidable aura.

He said nothing.

The leader of Quick Hand narrowed his eyes.

The huge lumber axe he carried gleamed.

"Who are you... and why are you here...? What business do you have with Quick Hand?"

Damon sensed it—uncertainty in the man's voice.

"Have I changed that much?"

The boss frowned... was he supposed to know this person in armor?

Was he a prince... a noble? The man looked young, long hair almost fused with the shadows in the dimly lit room...

Everything about him screamed power... as if when he spoke, the heavens would move... when he wished for something, it became law.

He couldn't tell his rank, but this man... he was powerful.

More than that... he had command of a lady knight with deep, cold eyes that reminded him of the dark winters in Frost Continent—Norrath.

These people were powerful.

"My apologies... I don't seem to recognize you... if you mean us harm... know that we are with the Charkata family—"

"And the Viscount Raymond, right?" Damon interrupted.

"Right, I already know that... I just don't care."

He stood up from his chair... sighed slightly...

"I feel a little betrayed... after everything, you still don't recognize me... Back-to-Back would have in a heartbeat... but that's fine... still... the treachery..."

The boss stood still, hands on his axe... ready to pull it at a moment's notice... instincts honed in the criminal underworld screamed—danger.

"There's no need to be alarmed..."

Damon took a step forward... until he was face to face with him.

"I told you all... I'll kill you one day... didn't I? I'm here to make good on my promise..."

The boss's eyes widened... his expression grew stiff.

"Yo... you are... Phantom..."

Damon smiled calmly.

"Good... now die."

His fist clenched—

And he punched him square in the chest.

Damon was smaller, so it looked like he was punching a literal tank—

But his fist connected.

The man's body lifted from the floor... smashed through the door... sent flying through the walls and halls with deep rumbling sounds...

As if the building itself was going to collapse...

Damon could hear cries of alarm as the members of Quick Hand watched their boss get sent flying out of his office.

He slowly walked out of the room.

As he did—

The runes carved all over the building finally came to life... sealing the building.

These runes roughly translated to the word—Seal.

Damon had meticulously carved them around the building... it took time... but that was fine...

As long as he poured mana into them...

No one was leaving this building without his say-so... or until his mana ran dry...

Whichever came first.

Too bad... he had a colossal amount of mana.

And right now...

His shadow was hungry.

There was a whole building's worth of people to feed on.

"Looks like I'm having a feast tonight..."

The first low-level thug to stop him raised his hand—

A ball of fire shot at Damon.

He didn't even dodge.

It slammed into him and turned into harmless sparks.

He sighed, irritated by their weakness...

"You're not even in First Class Advancement... but I commend your courage... really, I do... but that was a little weak..."

Before the man could react—

Damon teleported behind him—

Slammed his head into the wall.

Like a melon being crushed—

It smeared.

He didn't even twitch by the time he hit the floor.

The shadows devoured him—

Feeding Damon's strength.

The halls had been filled with Quick Hand members rushing in...

But they all froze.

There was a brief, terrifying silence.

Until a squirrel and a raven excitedly broke it—at the scent of blood.

The first fool charged to their death.

All Damon did—

Was raise his hand.

Shadows rose.

Black flames flickered.

Death followed.

Chapter 483: Three Minutes

Cough... cough...

He coughed, brushing off the rubble from his body... cough... cough...

Blood poured out of his mouth... he could feel the metallic taste of it on his lips...

His ribs were broken... that was a punch.

A single punch had sent him flying...

And he was in the Second Class Advancement.

He trembled with rage... he trembled with fear.

This was the same little runt he could have killed with nothing but a whim...

"No... in just a few short months... how... did he become such a monster...?"

That power... it was the power of Second Class Advancement...

He had been punched by someone supposedly in the same rank... with even less experience than him...

He coughed, forcing himself to stand...

He cleaned the blood from his mouth.

He could hear the sounds of battle...

No... the sounds of slaughter...

The screams of his people...

The sound of blood flowing...

He gritted his teeth...

Recalling something Back-to-Back had told him years earlier...

That kid... should never get a taste for blood...

"Because he'll become a demon..."

He muttered the last part out loud...

If not a demon... who would slaughter people he had known for years... with such calm... with such an indifferent expression?

He hoped... at least... the bastard would show something... rage... hate... anything...

But no... there was just a calm indifference...

As if he was handling a menial chore... something he had to do...

He reached into his back pocket as walls crumbled... as shadows rose... black flames consuming his gang members before they could even scream...

Shadows devouring their corpses...

A raven... eating the eyes of the fallen...

And a squirrel... ripping out parts of their... their...

It was their testicles...

He gritted his teeth... pulling out his pager as hell broke loose around him...

It was answered almost immediately...

"This is Lumberjack... we're under attack... help us!"

The voice on the other end heard the chaos... the sounds of battle... the screams...

"Huh... who would dare attack a group backed by the Charkata family? Did you tell them who you were with?"

Lumberjack almost popped a blood vessel.

"No shit... I told him... he doesn't care... our base is under attack! If you don't want to lose the merchandise... SEND HELP!"

He threw his pager away...

His pride as the boss of Quick Hand was on the line...

He had to hold out until the Charkata family sent their people...

"I'll flay that little demon shit alive myself..."

He grabbed his lumber axe and stepped into the fold...

When he came out... all he saw were deep bloodstains... wrecked tables...

The survivors stood around a blood-covered man... his long dark hair soaked in blood...

If there were any corpses left... he would be standing on a pile of them.

The survivors looked at him with dread...

None dared to attack him...

The female knight with him... hadn't even killed anyone... she merely followed wordlessly...

He had devoured the corpses.

He was a monster.

"Is this how you became so powerful...? You sold your soul... for power...? You sold your soul to a demon..."

Damon glanced at the terrified, familiar faces...

He could tell Lumberjack was buying time... but that was fine...

"A demon...? No... not really... I sold my soul to a god... actually... and after I kill you... you'll get to meet him too... rejoice..."

Lumberjack clutched his axe... he glanced around... most of his stronger chiefs were dead...

This would be much better if Back-to-Back wasn't dead already...

He looked at a woman with light makeup and purple lipstick... she had a vial and a smoke canister in her hand...

Gubi...

He bit his lip.

She was the only one here who could help...

As long as she poisoned the bastard... they could win... or at least slow him down...

She was also the only person here at First Class.

"Back-to-Back and Makia are dead..."

Damon raised his hand...

"I'll stop you there... it was me. I killed them. I can see you're trying to buy time... that won't help you... no matter who you call... you'll all still die..."

He raised his hand again...

"Look around you... this building is surrounded by runes powered by my magic... you can't leave... unless I run out of mana... or I die... and between the two... I can do this all day..."

Gubi bit her lip... she glanced at Damon...

"Aren't you a bit ungrateful...? This is your own home... we practically raised you here..."

Damon tilted his head...

"Ahh... Gubi... almost killed you without noticing... you still smell like cheap perfume... and the red-light district..."

She bit her lip feeling insulted.

"I'm an alchemist... not a prostitute..."

Damon smirked, snapping his fingers...

"Right, right... what was your origin story again? Outstanding alchemist... got raped by your teacher... then forced onto the streets... eventually joined the underworld..."

Her face scrunched up...

"What... did I hit a nerve?"

Damon took a deep breath...

"There's no need to get your hopes up, Gubi... the poison you released into the air... has no effect on me..."

She gritted her teeth... glancing at her canister... her plan exposed unease rising in her gut...

Damon smiled...

This woman had a history with him... like most of Quick Hand.

She was not a good person.

Time and again, she had taken him hostage... force-feeding him poison, she had a tendency to take out her frustration with men on him.

Among other things... things he didn't even want to remember.

"I never forgot, Gubi... all the things you did... I promised you all and I will make good on my word..."

Gubi glanced at Lumberjack...

Before he could speak, Lumberjack thought he saw an opening—

He struck—

Damon dodged with ease...

Lumberjack sneered, stepping back—

The ground shook... his body began to grow... his skin turned red, steam seething off him... his aura doubled, his skin hardened...

He growled as his clothes tore...

"I didn't want to have to use my skill... but you forced my hand..."

Damon touched his chin with a mild expression...

"Hmm... a transformation-based skill... I've heard rumors of yours... never got a chance to see it though..."

Lumberjack waved his axe— rallying the surviving members...

"Swarm him... the Charkata family will be here in six minutes... KILL HIM!"

Damon smiled...

"Six minutes, huh... fine... I'll kill you all... in three."

Chapter 484: Dusk Of Quick Hand

Knowing they could not win the fight was all the self-awareness Lumberjack needed. Still, his pride as an underworld boss could not allow him to just die—especially at the hands of Damon Grey.

If this was an unknown enemy with this much power, maybe. But this was the runt—the little boy he watched grow.

How did he get this much power?

His huge hulking form punched towards Damon. Damon took a single step, flashing away with speeds that looked like teleportation. From behind, Lumberjack felt his hair stand on end. He quickly swung his lumber axe, but Damon didn't move.

The axe passed through his body as if he were made of shadows.

Damon had naturally used the skill Flash Step. It was pretty handy.

[Skill: Flash Step]

[Description:]

A refined movement art once mastered by phantom assassins of the Forgotten Court, Flash Step allows the user to vanish from their position and reappear a short distance away, as though skipping between heartbeats.

[Effect:]

Moves instantly to a visible location within 15 meters.

[Type:]

Active.

[Cooldown:]

5 seconds.

This was just one of many skills he had gained from his time in the Chasm. Damon said he'd kill them all in three minutes—he wasn't joking or being arrogant.

"Rrahhhh!" Lumberjack roared, his axe shattering the ground around Damon with his Second Class Advancement strength.

Damon could feel it—the emotions in Lumberjack's heart. Fear.

Still, Lumberjack was his only real opponent. Different blasts of magic came from various directions, but Damon didn't bother dodging the weak, skill-less, unadvanced, rank-less apes.

What were they going to do—kill him with weakness? Besides, his magic resistance was high.

The only attacks he bothered dodging were the needle attacks from Gubi. She was in the First Class Advancement. He had to be cautious.

Lumberjack's skin grew redder. His eyes seemed bedeviled.

"Stay still!" he roared.

His fist barreled down at Damon. Damon didn't move, his face cold.

"Fine. I'll humor you."

Their fists met. The ground shook. The air whipped as astral winds sent anyone weaker than them flying. Lumberjack felt his hardened body crack... his bones.

"Arrgh... ho... how..."

Damon glanced at his own fist. Lumberjack thought Damon's bones would break from the impact. A shame. He had the Iron Bones skill.

"I've been taking my milk. Haven't you?"

[Skill: Iron Bones]

[Description:]

A brutal defensive art originating from the war-prisoners of the Hollow Spire, Iron Bones transforms the user's skeletal structure, reinforcing it through sheer will and arcane calcification.

[Effect:]

Passively increases bone density and durability. Reduces fracture risk and physical damage taken by 50%. Grants resistance to internal blunt trauma.

[Type:]

Passive.

[Cooldown:]

0 seconds.

Lumberjack raised his one good hand and swung forward. Damon turned into a shadow.

"Let's end this already."

[Blitz]

Lumberjack felt his skin get cut. He felt the air whipping as Damon moved around him with intense speed, leaving behind afterimages. He fell to his knees as blood pooled around him.

This particular skill was memorable. Damon had gotten it from devouring Fuska the Face Stealer—and it fit him.

[Skill: Blitz]

[Description:]

An ancient combat technique developed by lightning-wielding war priests of the Stormcradle Monastery, Blitz is a burst-movement skill that mimics a thunderclap's sudden violence. It was used to break enemy lines before they could even blink.

[Effect:]

The user propels themselves a short distance at blinding speed, damaging and knocking back enemies in their path, leaving behind a brief afterimage that distracts foes.

[Type:]

Active.

[Cooldown:]

8 seconds.

Lumberjack raised his head, seeing a sword in Damon's hands.

"Sin... since when did he have a sword..."

His tendons were severed, his arteries where damaged. He was brought to his knees... by a boy.

Steam rose from his hulking form as he shrank back to normal size. He felt his soul tearing apart from the inside out. Even if Damon did nothing more, he would die.

"A... a cursed weapon..." he rasped.

Damon rested the sword on his shoulder.

"Are those your final words?"

Lumberjack smiled with bleeding gums, eyes wide.

"I should have killed you all those years... demon scum."

Damon pushed the sword into his throat slowly until he felt it touch the neck bone. Then he viciously lifted, ripping the head off in a fountain of blood. The body and head fell with a wet plop.

Damon heard the sound of despair—the members of Quick Hand, those left at least, lost the will to fight.

The boss was dead. He was the strongest... and he died.

Damon turned to a woman with purple lipstick, eyes wide with fear. She let go of the vial of poison in her hand and the canister.

He glanced at Matia, who watched in silence with two animals perched on her armor—a squirrel and a raven—both excitedly watching the slaughter. Her expression was indifferent, unmoved. He could tell by the calm glow of her visor.

He glanced at the trembling members of Quick Hand. He didn't have time for them.

"Kill the rest."

She nodded slowly. Her visor glowed brighter with cold killing intent. From her back, wings like glass appeared. She flapped them once, creating winter in the sealed space. These weaker fools had no resistance to her chilling cold. Like dominoes, they fell. The flames of their souls extinguished.

Damon's eyes didn't leave Gubi. She trembled, realizing he hadn't killed her with the rest.

"I... I'm useful! I know things—potions, poisons—please... I can serve... I'll do anything..."

Her voice quaked. Desperate to live.

"I... I... please don't kill me! I beg you... you wouldn't kill a beautiful woman... I... I can please...that..thats want men want..please.."

She forced herself to say that.

Damon smiled, looking at her fear.

"Beautiful woman?"

He smiled.

"Right... you are."

She nodded furiously.

"Y... yes... you wouldn't kill a beautiful woman."

Damon sighed.

"That's true. Why kill a beautiful woman..."

Gubi let out a sigh of relief. Then Damon grabbed her by the neck and Flash Stepped to a wall.

"Let's fix that."

He pressed her face against the wall. Like a carrot getting grated, he ran her delicate face across it. Her screams and flailing did nothing. Blood splattered. Her nose was crushed, her left eye mushed. Tears mixed with blood.

He looked at his handiwork. Half her face still persisted. The other half... ruined. Nose and teeth gone. He could see her nose bone.

"Ahr... ahr... I... I... I don't want to die... it's... it's not fair," she cried weakly.

Life was fair.

His expression remained calm, ignoring her pain.

"Now... what about ugly women? I have no mercy for those."

She sounded cheap.

"At least die with the dignity, you lacked in life."

Black flames engulfed her body, leaving no trace.

A soft chime echoed.

[You have slain Gubina of Purity]

[You have leveled up]

[You have gained 140 attribute points]

[You have awakened the skill Shadow Reconstruction]

Damon sighed. That woman didn't deserve that name... but maybe once, before she was ruined, she did.

He walked out as the building was consumed by black flames. He felt shadows waiting for him.

Hmm. It seems... they came a little early.

He checked the time on his pager.

"Two minutes early... they must really want to die."

Chapter 485: Gubina Of Purity

One day, a couple went to a lowly altar to beg a forgotten lesser god for a child. On that same day... a vile man forced himself on the wife.

Nine months later, Gubina was born.

From the moment she took her first breath, she was hated — by both her mother and her father.

She was never given their name. So, she took one of her own.

Gubina of Purity.

A cruel joke, considering she grew up being told, time and again, the disgusting truth of her origin. It wasn't her fault. Still... she was unloved. Hated even more than that.

Life was one of constant misery, Gubina was a walking stigma.

At ten, Gubina awakened her magical attribute. Years of trauma had stunted her growth, but her magic wasn't weak — it was just like her father's. Not that he believed she was his.

She was strikingly beautiful and born into a family of alchemists. The talent was in her blood.

If that cursed day hadn't happened... maybe, just maybe, she would've been raised like a princess of her clan.

But fate was never kind.

Her father grew tired of seeing the child he doubted was his and sold her to a wandering alchemist.

Maybe he thought she'd have a better life.

Or maybe... he just didn't want her around.

For a while, it even seemed like her life might change. Until she was old enough to bleed.

Then, her teacher — that same alchemist — began making advances.

She fought.

She lost.

When it was over, he gave her a choice:

Let it happen again, or be thrown into the streets.

She chose the streets.

But that man... he followed her there. Like a hunter stalking prey, again and again.

In the end, she was reminded she wasn't a person — just property.

Eventually, she resisted. And when she did, he decided to sell her.

Filled with hate, Gubina was delivered to the Quick Hand gang as merchandise.

But instead, she poisoned the man who came to trade her.

She expected death. Maybe worse.

But Lumberjack — the gang's boss — saw potential. And so... she became one of them.

The underworld became her life.

In those blood-soaked years, she saw countless women suffer the same fate. And with every story, her hatred for men grew.

By then, she had mastered poison. She even reached the First Class Advancement.

Life continued; nothing could change her past. In those years, her family lived on without her; somewhere along the lines, her parents were blessed with another child.

It was almost like she never existed. At last, the family was fixed.

She did not pray to any god. A god's cruel prayer had been why she had been born.

Life continued. She found monotony in this new life.

Then one day... they brought in a boy.

Bleeding. Beaten. Stubborn.

Gubina didn't care at first.

Until she saw him act.

He was weak — but never meek.

He was spiteful. And he made sure they all knew it.

He dared everything they told him not to.

And she hated him.

She didn't know why.

He wasn't a man. He was barely a child.

Maybe... maybe he reminded her of herself. How weak and helpless she had been.

But why couldn't he just accept his fate?

So she took her hatred out on him. All of it.

Damon closed his eyes.

That was all he knew about Gubi.

Back-to-Back had told him as much.

She'd lived like scum... and died like scum.

She even gave up what little dignity she had left in the end.

Damon didn't care that her life ended unfairly. This wasn't a fairy tale.

There was no justice here.

And Damon... Damon wasn't just either.

Maybe one day, his own sins would catch up to him.

When that day came — he'd pay.

He didn't know who would be his killer.

That was fine.

Was this her fate... or her choice?

Damon looked up at the sky.

The Unknown God would've said it was all choice.

Her parents chose to be there that day.

That man chose to violate her mother.

Her parents chose to hate her.

Her teacher chose to abuse her.

Gubi chose to kill him.

She chose to torment Damon.

And Damon chose to kill her.

In the end... everything was just choices.

That... was fate.

He didn't know if this was mourning or something else.

But the Unknown God always said fate wasn't some invisible hand.

It was nothing more than choice.

Blaming fate... that was the excuse of the weak.

Damon took a breath. The scent of blood lingered in the air.

Gubi was dead. Her soul would meet the Unknown God.

She was now part of His endless cycle of life and death.

He wondered... if she saw Him, would she resent Him?

Would He care?

Or would she be just another soul — drowned in the abyss?

"She wasn't a monster because of what was done to her. She was a monster because she chose to be."

Damon glanced at his bloody gauntlets.

This was Aetherus.

There was no justice here.

"If there's a god... he's blind and deaf."

He chuckled.

Of course, there were gods.

They had a Goddess of Doom. And like the rest... she didn't care.

He looked ahead.

Two men stood at the road, weapons in hand.

One was a red-haired beastkin with leopard ears and a small cap.

He carried a spear, cold brown eyes glaring.

Beside him stood a winged man — elven ears, light armor, a golden chakram on his waist.

A fae.

The beastkin narrowed his eyes.

"You the bastard who hit Quick Hand? Do you even know who you pissed off? The Charkata Family's not gonna let this slide."

Damon gave them a passing glance.

He sighed.

"The Charkata Family sure is confident... sending just three Third-Class lackeys."

He waved dismissively.

"I've got no grudge with you. Walk away."

They stared.

Was this guy for real?

They chuckled.

"We'll peel the skin off your bones before you die."

Damon sighed again.

"And I was being nice."

He snapped his fingers.

"Matia. Kill them."

She stepped forward, a sword of ice forming in her hand.

A winter chill spread through the air.

This wouldn't take long.

Chapter 486: With A Bang

Damon didn't need to look to know those fools would die soon — but still, he watched.

He wanted to see how the so-called boogeymen of an underworld group would fare against his shadow... in the same rank.

He did not have high hopes. For them.

Matia moved forward, her eyes holding that same unshaken resolve.

Damon knew she was still in there... but watching her fight like this always left him doubting himself.

She was his shadow now.

Bound.

Obedient.

Yet fighting with her own will.

Her wings spread. And before Damon — or the two Charkata family members — could react... there was a winter.

Buildings froze under sheets of ice and snow. The air thickened, time seemed to crawl beneath the weight of her freezing power... and then — she vanished.

No.

She moved so fast it only felt like she did.

The beastkin barely reacted in time, his spear jerking up purely on instinct.

What collided with it wasn't her weapon — it was her fist.

Ice exploded across the shaft of the spear, swallowing it whole.

Then his arm...

He yanked back right as his fae partner flung a glowing chakram at Matia.

She caught it with her frozen sword, the impact sending a sharp ring through the air.

The beastkin stumbled, shaking his spear free of ice.

But his fingers felt numb... and worse... the cold deepened every second, spreading like a silent death.

This... was Ruin's End.

Her Third-Class Skill.

It felt like a domain.

Damon studied the beastkin's weapon.

That was the annoying part about Matia — and Leona too.

Fight them, and their attributes would crawl over your weapons.

Leona spread lightning... mostly to things that conducted it.

Matia?

She didn't need conductors.

Just standing near her was like being tossed into a blizzard — naked.

Every touch... every clash... she laced it all in deathly cold.

That was why Damon had learned to coat his weapons in flame when fighting her.

The beastkin signaled the fae, who took to the air.

The fae hurled his chakram — glowing with space magic.

Damon narrowed his eyes.

A flying fae with space control?

"Annoying..."

Still, he wasn't going to help Matia.

She didn't need it.

He hadn't gained any skills from wiping out Quick Hand — just some items. The usual junk... and a special potion called Bedevilment, which he got from killing Lumberjack.

His level-up requirements were complete now that most of Quick Hand was dead.

One last task in Valerion.

And yes... it'd probably get him labeled a terrorist.

But who cared?

In a few weeks, the law wouldn't be able to touch him anyway. Might as well run wild.

He watched as Matia conjured a barrage of ice spears... and shot the fae out of the sky.

The notification chimed in his mind.

[You have slain Smikiris Taitis]

Damon didn't even look twice.

The other one would be dead soon.

He turned his attention elsewhere — just in time to see Matia toss the corpses aside.

Far from the battle, a raven and a red squirrel cheered her on as they dug into the fresh meat.

The raven went for the eyes.

The squirrel? It dove straight into the corpse's pants.

No respect for the dead whatsoever.

Damon smiled — not at those two twisted pets he'd adopted...

But because Matia was moving on her own will.

That was enough to make him grin.

He flicked open his skill window.

Might as well check it. His next level-up was over a thousand kilometers away anyway.

[Skill: Shadow Reconstruction]

[Description:]

Lured by greed and dreams beyond their station, they cast aside their vessels to descend into the lower realms. Yet upon arrival, their ranks fell, their powers shackled. They forged new bodies — carrying dark ambitions in lesser shells.

[Effect:]

So long as your Heart of Shadows is intact and your soul remains, the destruction of your physical form can be undone. In the embrace of shadows, where light cannot reach, you may rebuild yourself. Yet, the process requires time, resources, and leaves you at your most vulnerable.

[Active]

[Cooldown: 1 Month]

A peculiar skill.

He could restore his body — but only if his Heart of Shadow and his soul survived.

And even then... he'd need shadow energy, which mostly meant devouring corpses.

"Guess I'm still a corpse-eating shadow freak ..." Damon muttered, closing the panel.

Then he glanced at his shadow.

"Hey... what's a Heart of Shadow anyway?"

The shadow raised a hand.

Roughly translated to.

'I'll stop you right there. You don't have it. If you die now... you're dead.'

Damon sneered.

"Don't threaten me with a good time. I kinda wanna die anyway."

Still... a lot of conditions.

Heart of Shadow. Soul intact. Time. Resources.

And worst of all... total vulnerability during recovery.

"In a dark place, no light, munching on corpses... yeah, sounds about right."

He clicked his tongue.

"Motherf—... Is this just my Deathless Skill trying to screw me over again?"

This skill was built to make sure he would not die when he wanted to.

When he looked up, the battle was over.

The cold vanished. All that remained was frozen ruin.

A shattered district of ice and broken buildings... and at the center... stood a dark fairy in fractured ice armor.

In her hand... a severed head.

Frozen mid-scream.

Her visor locked on Damon — cold blue eyes meeting his with silent understanding.

She walked up to him...

Knelt...

Drove her sword into the ground...

And held the head out to him.

Her task complete.

Awaiting his praise... or his next order.

He took the head, studying it.

"Erhm... good job. But... you really didn't have to bring me his head."

Before he could say more, a raven snatched it away.

Croft — always eager for a snack.

No need to waste a perfectly good set of eyes.

At least... that's what Damon heard him say.

He chuckled.

"Shall we go?" He asked, glancing at Matia with a faint smile. "There's one more building I wanna blow up before we leave Valerion."

He turned away.

"Since we already pissed off half the city's underworld..."

His eyes narrowed with a devilish grin.

"Might as well leave with a bang."

Chapter 487: Scum Agents

The city had been lively and boisterous as always until, in one of the newer night districts, a casino building burst into black flames. The fire started on the upper floors, giving enough time for the rich patrons and staff to be evacuated.

Luckily.

Luckily, because of what came next.

A destructive explosion of black fire roared through the night. In a single second, the entire building was gone every brick, every stone, every trace obliterated, leaving nothing but a deep crater where it had once stood.

Emergency response units arrived on the double. Knights, healers, local patrol squads... soon the entire area swarmed with experts providing care and amenities to the people.

The fast response was a stark contrast to the slums. Naturally, it was because the people here were richer and thus their lives had more value.

A cry of misery echoed through the streets — not from someone injured, but from the noble owner of the casino. He had just lost millions of zeni in investment, along with the obligation to compensate all the patrons who had lost their wealth during the incident.

Worse, someone had taken advantage of the chaos to steal jewelry and valuables.

Damon watched it all from a distant rooftop. He'd wanted to destroy that building for years. Not out of jealousy — no, this was personal.

The land beneath that casino had once been a residential district. The noble had forced the people to sell their homes for dirt-cheap prices.

Damon remembered it well. When he first came to Valerion, he'd hoped to live with Luna in the house their father once owned in that district — a safe, middle-class neighborhood, far from the slums.

But when he went to the war banks, the noble had already planned to seize it...

Later, when Damon saw the place, it was a giant casino.

"Well... I won't kill him," Damon muttered, "since he paid for the house. But I can blow off some steam every now and then. Can't wait for him to rebuild it."

Housing in the capital was expensive — that's why the slums were packed to the brim. As for how his father had bought the house in the first place... that wasn't a mystery.

"What can I say about a man who seduced the daughter of a grand duke?"

His mother must have been the one to give it to him — or at least found some excuse to throw her 'princess money' at him.

Damon smirked, feeling in a good mood.

"She must've been his version of Lilith Astranova."

Lilith did have a tendency to spoil him — from his wardrobe to just about everything else.

He looked at the staff in his hand. The Staff of Carnage. The weapon he'd used to blow up the building.

[Staff of Carnage]

Type: Weapon

[Description:]

His fangs were swords, his wings the wind, and his breath could reduce cities to ash. All feared Ashergon. Wherever he flew, only smoldering ruins remained.

[Effect:]

Forged in destruction, this staff can absorb any single form of energy drawn from your body. There's no limit to how much it can contain, no matter how vast or volatile. With a single strike, it releases all stored energy in a cataclysmic burst — mimicking the fury of a dragon's breath.

But beware. Push it beyond its limits, and the staff will crack... then shatter.

[Cooldown:]

24 hours

Truly his most powerful weapon. And now, he'd have to wait a full day before charging it again.

Damon was about to leave when he spotted a group in robes, carrying magical tools.

"Ahhh..." he groaned. "Scum."

He wasn't insulting them — that was their name. Special Control Unit on Magic. SCUM for short.

An imperial knight division tasked with dealing with magical crimes and disasters. Dragon attacks, dark spirits, evil rituals, mana anomalies... they handled all of it.

"Yeah... that's my cue to exit."

He figured it would take them a while to investigate. Hopefully, they'd blame it on Ignath or a radical who summoned him.

And even if they suspected him... well, as long as he left the capital first, it didn't matter.

Teleporting several times, he reached the city gate. The guards there were as lax as always. They didn't even see this as a threat needing a full-city mobilization.

Damon slipped into the shadow of a woman passing the checkpoint. She handed a small coin to one of the knights with a wink. The knight took it like it was nothing.

Nothing special. By the end of the day, he and his buddies would pocket plenty of bribes.

Damon didn't relax until they crossed the gate. Then, he slipped into the shadow of a carriage and teleported half a kilometer away, appearing near a tree.

He resumed his human form with a sigh of relief. Moments later, a squirrel and a raven swooped down beside him.

He stretched his back. "You two have your fill of human eyeballs and testicles?"

He opened his palm. "Now hand over the stuff you stole from the casino." Find the translation on MV&LEMPYR.

The squirrel and the raven obediently produced rings, watches, necklaces, earrings — all expensive trinkets.

Damon cleared his throat, trying to look serious.

"You disgusting thieves... I can't abide this. I'll be taking this for... erm... safekeeping."

He dumped them into his shadow storage. He'd sell them later.

The squirrel and raven exchanged looks.

They thought they were living rent-free... When did this fiend start charging rent?

Wasn't this guy too shameless? Wasn't he the one who told them to steal during the chaos? Didn't he say it was "redistributing wealth from greedy hoarders"?

Caw caw. Squeal squeal.

They made sure he knew what they thought of him.

He ignored them.

Damon leaned back against the tree. The light of dawn still far on the horizon.

"Now then... time for our next — and final — stop."

He closed his eyes.

"But first... let's rest a bit. It's a long journey."

Just as he started to relax... his eyes snapped open. His danger sense flared.

He tilted his head just in time for the tree trunk behind him to explode in splinters — an arrow slamming into it.

Damon's expression went cold. He spread his shadow perception, sweeping the distant trees.

Figures moved in the treeline. Shadows carrying bows and weapons.

"Elves."

Chapter 488: Shadows Of The Moon Glades

He wasn't a man known for taking things lying down. He wasn't smart enough to let someone in power trample him while he endured it in silence.

Sure, maybe it was pathetic to ignore the smart option just so he could bare his teeth and fire back — and still lose anyway.

But that was who he was, and Damon Grey didn't want to forget it.

Weak, but egotistical. Very much so as some would claim.

Why wait until you had power to be arrogant, when you could be the most arrogant ant the world had ever seen?

Why treat people stronger than you like gods, when you could act like they were just the supporting cast in your story?

Wasn't that short moment of ego, before it all came crashing down, the most glorious feeling?

Maybe you didn't win. Maybe you didn't even survive. But you endured. You became a tiny scar burned into their memory. They would remember the day an ant spat on them.

Wasn't that worth more than bowing your head and conforming?

The nail that sticks out gets hammered in — but at least it stuck out. Better that than being one of the cowardly nails that never even tried.

How could you know your limits if you just gave up and accepted things?

That was simply the core of Damon Grey. Whether it was thugs, bullies, or an entire nation's military.

So what if the rulers of the Moon Glades wanted him dead?

He was pissed now, and he had a few words.

Wasn't it their daughter who caught feelings for him? It wasn't even his fault; maybe he was a little bit of a Chad and very handsome. Maybe he was smooth, too.

But couldn't they see it wasn't his fault?

"I'm the victim here dammit."

If he could have a heart-to-heart with the white ruler, he would tell him all this violence was unnecessary. He could just pay Damon off; a few billion zeni was nothing to the White ruler, and Damon would never talk to Sylvia again.

Screw true love or forbidden love. Money was everything.

Too bad those people weren't here.

Only the assassins they'd sent.

Damon glanced at the hole in the tree where an arrow had pierced straight through.

He sighed.

"Geez... this is annoying..."

It was annoying because there were a lot of them — all third-class, all heavily armed, well-trained, and a cut above the ones from the Charakata family. This content is presented by

These guys were battle-hardened. They weren't some glorified bodyguards. They'd seen their fair share of fights — and deaths.

"Hah... I knew it. The moment I ranked up, powerful enemies would become cabbages on the roadside."

He deftly dodged another arrow aimed at his head. This time, the entire tree exploded.

The squirrel and raven scrambled for cover inside his hood.

No... they weren't cabbages. It just meant he'd pissed off someone very powerful.

Honestly, sending this many third-class assassins after a seventeen-year-old who had only just reached second class — before even refining his second-class body — was overkill.

"Not that it'd help much anyway..."

He saw them — figures gliding between the trees, faster than their ranks suggested. They were farther than they seemed, too. Damon stood in an open field. The forest? More than nine kilometers away.

They were firing from that far?

If not for Danger Sense, he would've been sniped already.

The choice was simple — fight or flight.

If he fought, it'd be a bloodbath, one he wasn't sure he could win. They weren't weak. Their numbers were overwhelming. With Matia's help, maybe they could survive... but it'd mean killing them all. No holding back.

And if that happened... he'd have to explain to Sylvia that he'd killed her people.

At one point in his life, he might not have cared. But now? Somehow, he didn't want to hurt her.

"Since when did I start caring how others felt?"

Then there was flight — the safer option.

They might chase him for days, but catching him wasn't easy.

He looked up.

A glowing cloud was falling.

Except it wasn't a cloud.

Arrows. Hundreds of them, raining down at insane speed.

Yeah... flight was definitely the best option.

He turned on his heel, stepped into a shadow, and vanished.

He reappeared four kilometers away, feeling his shadow energy drain hard from the distance. Without hesitating, he crushed and devoured one of the corpses stored in his shadow, letting the energy flood back into him.

But they were already closing in.

He didn't even see them — only felt the sudden spike of danger.

He moved to dodge, but it was too fast.

An arrow struck his arm, aimed right for his heart.

He twisted at the last moment, slowed it with his hand, and phased part of his body into shadow, letting the arrow pass through.

He teleported again, gritting his teeth as blood pooled from the wound.

Without pause, he reached into his shadow storage and grabbed one of the potions he'd looted from Quick Hand. He poured it over his shattered gauntlet and torn flesh.

The wound sealed — slowly, but enough.

He flexed his arm, noting the faint crescent-shaped mark burned onto his skin.

A tattoo? No. Something worse.

He didn't bother trying to wipe it off.

Instead, he activated Appraisal.

[Crescent Mark]

The Moon Death Elves are cold and cunning. They know no fear. They hunt without end.

The crescent mark they place on a target will act as a beacon until either the one marked or the marker is dead — or the prey has escaped its range.

Death will likely come first.

Damon scoffed.

"Thanks for the vote of confidence."

He stared over the horizon.

Yeah... this wasn't good. One of them had marked him.

Teleporting wouldn't help — they'd find him.

But if he stayed, they'd swarm him.

The longer he waited, the more likely someone in the fourth class would join them.

Not that they thought they needed it.

A nation's top assassination unit against a mere student.

Damon sighed.

"Sorry, Sylvia... I might have to kill a few of your people."

He looked up at the sky.

Griffins.

Flying in with the rising sun.

The odds were definitely not in his favor.

He stepped into the shadows once more.

"On second thought... I've had enough bloodshed for one day."

Chapter 489: Helm Of Balero

"Target on my back lone survival."

"My luck is still as shitty as I remember..."

Damon cursed as he ran — or rather teleported.

His luck was really horrible. These assassins didn't even know how to do their job. What type of assassins attacked at first light?

It was like they were trying to tell the whole world:

"Look, look at us, we're assassins."

Which was annoying since Damon was not running in the direction of the academy, and he had left the capital. He couldn't go back there.

Worst was the riders on Griffins flying over him and loosing arrows at him.

Damon was getting increasingly pissed with Sylvia's family. If he had a chance to say something... well, it would be something extremely rude.

The sun cast away shadows as he ran, and suddenly he found himself on a meadow off the Golden Roads.

Far from the crowd — except this was supposed to be a meadow, but it was without any grass or shadows.

Which means... Damon looked at the bright morning sun and the vast distances of a few kilometers without a shadow in sight...

His eyes twitched. This was going to be the longest few kilometers of his life.

Naturally, he didn't have time to think about it. He turned himself into a shadow.

Gliding off the ground... he tried teleporting through his shadow, but it was only a short distance without another shadow for support.

He took a deep breath and used his Accel skill.

Weaving in a zigzag fashion as arrows came from around him... explosions rocked the ground, and dust and shrapnel scraped his skin.

Accel boosted his travel speed, wind whipping his face.

[Skill: Accel]

[Description:]

My sister moved like the wind — free, untouchable. When she drew her sword, the battle was already over. Speed is everything in combat. Even here in the abyss, I remember her swift, regal... faster than death itself.

[Effect:]

Greatly amplifies movement speed by 10,000% when traversing vast distances. However, you experience 10,000% the exhaustion afterward.

[Type:]

Active

[Cooldown:]

12 seconds

The person the Unknown God thought about was his sister when he created this skill. She could supposedly move faster than death could react. Damon was certainly hoping to move as fast.

Still, Accel didn't even touch upon that power, but that was fine. Damon was still fast.

He turned into a black streak. Bolts of arrows followed as the silent assassins continued their pursuit.

Damon had to endure longer... from the looks of it, they were trying to tire him out then kill him.

He gritted his teeth. That was bad because the longer he used Accel, the faster he got tired. Still, he was desperate... he had to get out of the open field and find more cover.

The woods were their best terrain, but he was too open in this field.

"I'll have to risk it... let's see who does better in the woods..."

Better yet, if he could endure until nightfall when shadows were deeper.

Then he could turn the tides.

He could see the woods closing in. It was then his danger sense pricked...

His shadow perception saw what they were doing...

In the sky there was a giant magic circle... its light was white like the moon, and from it a flashing beam of death was firing... This text was acquired from M|V|LOEMPYR.

As soon as he reached the forest, he veered off at the last second before he entered — just in time for the tree line and the earth to become a world of red and melted glass.

The earth was burned so red that it looked like glass — no, it had formed glass...

Damon flicked with his Parkour skill. In the last minute, he pulled out a bow from his shadow storage. This was the Helm of Balero — not to be confused by its name. The Helm of Balero was not a helm, it was a bow. As for why it had such a name...

[Helm of Balero]

[Type:] Weapon

[Description:]

Who could stop Balero on the battlefield? His sword was the slayer of giants, and his fist could crush mountains. All parts of his body were hidden by his armor, and no harm could come to him.

It was said his magic helm gave him power and it was all but unbreakable. Still, as despair spread, a young man created a bow that could pierce even Balero's unbreakable helm — killing this unstoppable warrior with but a single shot.

[Effect:]

This bow carries a Killing Shot — arrows increasing their power, precision, and penetration. Once an hour, you may create an Unstoppable Shot, but at the price of all your mana.

Damon wasn't using the Unstoppable Shot, but that was fine. Even a normal arrow shot from this bow was terribly fast and powerful. After all, this was the bow that shot down the legendary Balero... whoever he was.

In the brief instant before his feet touched the floor, his body hanging upside down in the air while he moved at speeds that were only superhuman...

Damon's Mastery Snipe was set. His skill Dead Eye Mark was ready, and under the time-slowing effect of Beholder's Eyes...

The world seemed slow for that instant. Dead Eye Mark showed him a red trail to his target.

And he aimed for the forehead.

He pulled the bow, nocking and releasing the arrow in a swift motion.

He turned into a shadow before he crashed and crushed his own body due to his speed.

The arrow let out a deadly screech... then a deafening boom as it tried to break the sound barrier.

It hissed as it cut through the air. Not even the resistance could slow it down...

The elf's eyes widened on his Griffin.

He moved his hand on instinct. He had trained his whole life and seen many years of battle. Seeing Damon's impossible maneuver...

His hand had a small shield, and he guarded his face even without seeing the arrow.

But that didn't matter.

The arrow could pierce Balero's legendary helm. His shield met nothing. He felt his arm get pierced and explode. In the last moment, his Griffin faltered, causing him to pivot on accident — and that one accident saved his head from being blown apart.

His right arm was gone... only a mass of flesh and bones pouring from the sky...

He gritted his teeth, looking at the group running after Damon on foot and the others on the Griffin.

Now he knew they were not hunters chasing down prey.

They were chasing down another hunter.

Chapter 490: Walk Fools

Damon felt his exhaustion mount, his breath heavy and his chest burning.

That was intense. He smiled at the feeling of death creeping up on him.

"Hehejehe..."

He couldn't help but laugh.

His exhaustion was mostly the side effect of the Accel skill. He was getting 10,000% the exhaustion. Still, Damon's endurance stat was quite high.

Now he was in the cover of trees, but the trees weren't many. He would have to cross a valley, then a rocky terrain full of trees.

Which meant if he left this place, there was at least a few hundred kilometers without any trees.

He seemed to recall that particular area had been a forest once, until the Valtheron Empire had cleared it and destroyed all monster habitats for safety — and also to prevent bandits from using it as cover.

Thus the valley.

"Damn those bastards of the imperial family."

How could they just arbitrarily change the landscape?

Then again, that was not unusual when a single entity had the power to move mountains.

Damon glanced at the sky. Griffins flying over the tree line.

He was somewhat disappointed, really. Why didn't they send someone who could move mountains to kill him?

Only these insanely strong guys at the third class. No one in the fourth.

Which was crazy to think about. But Damon was a death seeker.

Searching for death was his thing. And if he didn't search for it, it would find him.

As for the members of the Moon Glades of the fourth class — this wasn't their country.

The imperial family could overlook this group, but not someone in the fourth class.

The ones in the fourth class were probably hosted in the capital where the empire kept a close eye on them.

While a dragon was not sent to kill him, these drakes and wyverns were more than enough.

He dived through the shadows, glancing at his hand as the small forest was penetrated by a white beam of destruction.

Damon teleported away as the area was leveled by white death.

He gritted his teeth. Right — he could not hide. One of them had placed a magical mark on his arm and he still didn't know who.

'If I stay too long, I'll be surrounded and bombarded by artillery-class magic.'

However, he didn't have the range to hit them with magic bullets, so he had to rely on his bow.

He teleported again. If he stayed in one place, they would just bomb where he was with magic.

He used an erratic pattern knowing he was tracked.

However, he wasn't just wasting time.

Every time he stopped, he drew small runes on his body with his blood.

The runes were simple.

[Accelerate] — the rune gave him speed.

[Endurance] — the rune gave him endurance.

[Feather] — he hoped this one didn't have any weird effects since he was just writing whatever words he thought would work best.

This rune was supposed to make him light as a feather.

It would have been better if he could use rune syntax and link various runes of different types. Or better yet, draw runes in the air.

Alas, he was still a novice with this type of magic.

He couldn't draw more on his body... due to the limit of his body and skill.

He poured mana into the runes hoping they would work...

The world exploded in a flash of white as the forest trees were seared and destroyed.

Damon sent his shadow out, making it glide out in the direction he was going...

A few Griffins wanted to give chase, but one of the members raised his hand, stopping them.

Damon smiled.

"I found you."

Now he knew who was tracking him.

He grabbed the bow and dashed out with the Accel skill. His body was hot from fatigue, but so what? When there was a will, there was a way — and running was his forte...

He just hadn't gotten a chance to show off that skill yet.

As soon as he was out in the open, colorful explosions followed, destroying the area.

It was clear they were not aiming — they were just carpet bombing, hoping to destroy him with no chance of escape...

His body was a black streak in the open valley as he ran down the valley with the momentum...

Bow in his hand. But he could not stop to shoot them.

He could see the forest destroyed behind him. That was at least a few kilometers of forest — yet it was now a world of smoke and craters.

"They're destroying another man's country... I'll be sure to let the Valtheron people know about this..."

He just needed to lose them. His black form streaked, flipping and gliding...

As he neared the foot of the valley... he knew coming out of the valley would slow down his momentum.

But he never planned to come out of the valley — at least not in the way they hoped.

Climbing uphill would only slow him down and get him poked full of holes...

So Damon jumped a few meters into the air...

They got their arrows ready to shoot. His form, after all — the fool should have stayed closer to the ground. That way he could dodge.

He had no way of controlling his direction or momentum in the air.

Pretty easy — so they thought.

[Skill: Air Walk]

[Description:]

A mystical technique from the Skyward Monks of Mount Vienta, Air Walk allows the user to defy gravity in short bursts. Legends say its masters could dance among clouds and duel above storms. T%h!i&s! c%h+a&p&t.er fi.rs!t appe@ar*e+d on M-|V\$|L^^.E%M*P!YR&.%

[Effect:]

User can create temporary footholds in the air, allowing mid-air dashes, jumps, or changes in direction. Each step lasts for 1.5 seconds before vanishing.

[Type:]

Active.

[Cooldown:]

0 seconds

He took a single step in the air. Like a comet, he shot himself into the sky...

The elves' eyes widened...

Damon was already as light as a feather due to the rune he drew on himself.

However, he wasn't planning to use Air Walk for that. He turned around.

Many meters in the air, high above the Griffins — and knocked his bow and pulled.

He didn't aim for the elf. They would dodge. So he shot the head of the Griffin.

The beast let out a screech and came falling.

Blood rained from the sky as it fell.

However, just like it — Damon fell too. All things that go up must come down. He was no different...

Still, he didn't seem fazed because from the ground at the center of the valley where his shadow had been — a figure emerged from his shadow and shot into the sky...

Unlike Damon, she had wings — and she did belong in the sky...

The Ruin Fairy... grabbed him, soaring into the sky...

But Damon wasn't done. He stood on her back like a glider and readied his bow.

He smiled.

"Sorry, only I am allowed in the sky... walk, fools."

Then he shot down another Griffin.