

ShadowBound 232

Chapter 232: End Of Semester Exam 3

"Everyone! Eyes up! Focus on the demons!" Sheila barked, snapping the group out of their trance as the wave of monsters barreled toward them, fast and relentless.

'Sh*t... this is bad,' Sheila thought, weaving through the students to the front line. 'Didn't expect them to come from just one direction—and with this many, they could steamroll us without even flanking.'

Liam slid up beside her just as she reached the front. "What's the move?"

"Hold the line here," Sheila answered quickly. "I doubt they'll flank us from the north or south. I need you and Asher to intercept them before they close in—you two are the fastest and most capable."

She trailed off, eyes flicking to Chris, who was still radiating irritation from their earlier spat.

"Hey, Prince," she called out, flashing a sly grin.

Chris's glare could've melted steel. "What the hell do you want?"

"Relax," she teased, voice like velvet. "Since you're so eager to play hero, how about joining Liam and Asher up front?"

Chris scoffed. "You serious?"

"You're the quickest here thanks to that lightning affinity. I need the three of you to slow them down while the rest of us catch up."

Chris glanced at Liam and Asher, jaw clenching. "I'm doing this because I want to. Don't twist it—I don't take orders from you."

"Of course not," Sheila said sweetly. "I'm just asking nicely."

Chris turned toward Liam and Asher, eyes full of disdain. "I'm calling the shots up there. Get in my way, and you'll regret it."

Asher just chuckled, hands behind his head. "Sure thing, Vice-Leader. But I only take orders from the actual leader." He shot Sheila a wink. "So pipe down, thunder thighs."

Chris's eye twitched. 'I swear to God, I'll turn that clown into a crater.'

"Enough bickering! Move!" Sheila commanded.

"DON'T BOSS ME AROUND!" Asher shot back, grinning.

"Sheesh, Liam, mind babysitting them?" Sheila asked, already exasperated.

Liam shrugged. "Not my circus, not my clowns. As long as they don't annoy me, they can fight each other for all I care."

Sheila sighed but smirked. "Good to know you're still the same."

Turning to the students behind her, Sheila's voice shifted—steady, commanding, powerful.

"Listen up, knights! Forget the fact this is a simulation. Right here, right now, this is real. Today, we stop being students and start acting like what we aspire to be—knights."

Her blade gleamed as she pointed it forward, eyes blazing.

"Draw your weapons. Brace yourselves... and prepare for war!"

Without hesitation, steel rang out as swords, spears, and shields were drawn. The air was thick with tension, hearts pounding in sync with the rumble of the charging horde.

Up ahead, Liam, Asher, and Chris darted forward, their feet kicking up dirt as they sprinted to meet the incoming tide.

Asher's blue flames flared to life, dancing wildly around his fists. "Man, I've been waiting to stretch my legs all day," he grinned, reckless excitement in his eyes.

Chris zipped ahead in a crackle of lightning, gritting his teeth. "Don't get in my way," he snapped.

"Yeah, yeah, sparky," Asher said, tossing him a lazy salute before focusing on the oncoming monsters.

Liam, calm as ever, silently unsheathed his blade. His red eyes scanned the horde, locking onto the tall figure still looming on the mountain's peak. 'That one one seems to be the real problem,' he thought.

The demons thundered closer, their growls like an earthquake.

"Formations!" Sheila shouted from behind, leading the second wave. "Shields up! The spell casters, prepare yourselves!"

The students rallied, locking into place behind her as the ground trembled beneath their feet. They were terrified—but Sheila's presence burned like a torch in a storm.

Up front, Chris launched into the horde like a bolt of fury, cutting down the first demon with a flash of lightning. His eyes burned with pride and rage.

Asher dove in right behind him, igniting the battlefield with bursts of searing blue flame. "Woo! Now this is fun!" he laughed as feral-class demons lunged at him, only to be engulfed in fire.

Liam was quieter, but deadlier—his blade slashing through two demons in a blur before fading from sight leaving behind embers of flames where he stood seconds ago. Only to reappear behind a Titanborne's leg. One precise cut and the beast staggered, crashing into its allies.

"They're closing in fast!" Sheila called out to the backline. "Archers, fire now!"

A volley of arrows soared overhead, thudding into the mass of demons. Some fell, but many more surged forward unfazed.

Sheila gritted her teeth. 'They seem much tougher than what I faced in real life,' she thought. 'We need to hold long enough for Dylan to back us up.'

Meanwhile, back in the city's shadow, Dylan, Ariana, and the thirteen other students hustled the holographic civilians to safety, clearing the streets before forming a defensive line at the city gates.

Dylan scanned the squad, grinning. "Alright, who here's got an earth affinity?"

A ginger-haired girl raised a brow, eyeing him suspiciously. "That'd be me."

"Lovely," Dylan said, voice dripping with playful mischief. "Milady, could you raise me a nice little 30-foot tower? Pretty please?" His tone was pure chaos—half-kid, half-smartass.

"Thirty feet? Why the hell do you need that?" she asked, arms crossed.

He sighed dramatically. "Isn't it obvious? I need to play hero for our lovely, helpless teammates. Chop-chop, fair maiden."

Ariana stepped in with a patient smile. "What he's trying to say—poorly—is that he needs a vantage point to support the others from range."

The ginger girl rolled her eyes. "He could've just said that. Idiot." Without another word, she planted her palms on the ground, channeling her myst deep into the earth.

The ground rumbled beneath Dylan's boots, and before he could flash another grin, the earth shot him up like an elevator on steroids, lifting him high above the rest.

"Now we're talking," Dylan smirked, balancing on his new perch. He turned back with a wink. "Hey, ginger! Once we're done here, how about dinner? My treat—well, technically yours."

"Shut up and do your job, Dylan," Ariana called from below, arms crossed but clearly used to his antics.

"What? She smiled, I swear. Gotta seize the moment," he teased.

"Just help them, you perv."

Dylan chuckled, settling onto one knee, steel bow gleaming as he gazed across the battlefield. From here, he could clearly see red flames and blue bursts—Liam and Asher raising hell as usual. Lightning crackled near ice—Chris and Sheila holding the line.

Dylan inhaled deeply, breath steady as steel arrows materialized around him, orbiting in a hypnotic swirl—dozens upon dozens.

"Alright," he whispered, eyes narrowing. "Time to crash this party."

He nocked two arrows at once, pulling back the string until the steel hummed. With a sharp exhale, he loosed them.

The arrows sliced through the air like comets, invisible to most below. They struck a Titanborne demon square in the skull, exploding its head into a cloud of gore and bone.

Dylan grinned wide. "One oversized meathead down... plenty more where that came from." He pulled his bowstring again, eyes sharp, ready to rain hell.

Out on the battlefield, Sheila moved like water, calm and confident, watching as demons fell left and right. Between the top-rankers tearing through enemies and the other students holding strong, the tide was clearly in their favor. Everyone was stepping up.

'Huh, this is going smoother than I thought,' she mused, freezing two feral-class wolves mid-pounce before shattering them with a flick of her wrist. Yet, despite the momentum, a knot tightened in her chest. "So why do I still feel... off?" she whispered under her breath.

Her gaze drifted, almost pulled, to the distant ridge where the lone, horned figure loomed. The details were still lost to the haze of battle, but its presence sent a sharp, cold shiver racing down her spine.

'Yeah... whatever that thing is, it's not like these bottom-feeders.' Her grip on her blade tightened. 'It's something worse.'