

ShadowBound 233

Chapter 233: End Of Semester Exam 4

It had only been fifteen minutes since the clash began, but to the students caught in the chaos, it felt like they'd been fighting for days. Sweat, blood, and adrenaline blurred together as they held their ground. So far, no casualties—a small miracle amidst the madness.

On the southern flank, Max was nearly unrecognizable, drenched in demon gore from head to toe. His dual blades carved through feral-class beasts with relentless precision.

"Feels like they just keep respawning," Max muttered, kicking aside a fallen demon. "But nah, they're just endless. Good thing my blades don't get tired."

With a clean swing, he lopped the head off a snarling demon bear, grinning. "That's twenty-five down, and—"

A sudden gust of wind cut him off, sweeping past like a phantom.

Instinctively, he pivoted, blades raised—and froze.

There, prowling through the carnage, was a massive black jaguar, its size rivaling a full-grown Hanoverian horse.

"Char... Charlotte?" Max breathed, wide-eyed.

The jaguar's glowing eyes flicked to him, sharp and knowing. Its gaze lingered on him for a heartbeat, feral and intelligent all at once, before it turned back toward the chaos. Without warning, it lunged into the fray.

Max stood there, slack-jawed, watching as Charlotte—no, the beast—moved like a storm given flesh. She tore through feral-class and Titanborne-class demons like paper, her claws rending armor and bone alike. A demon wolf lunged, but Charlotte spun mid-air and crushed its skull beneath her paw, sending blood and fragments splattering into the mud.

Max blinked hard. "I know she said she transforms into a huge jaguar, but I didn't expect it to be this huge" he muttered, lowering his blades for just a second.

Charlotte roared, deep and thunderous, shaking Max out of his trance. He gripped his swords tighter, heart pounding as realization crept in.

"That's definitely Charlotte," he confirmed to himself, grinning despite the madness. "And here I thought I was putting in work. Well, that's the number 3 for ya."

A trio of feral demons charged him from the flank, jaws snapping, but Max sidestepped smoothly and cleaved two of them with a single spin. The third didn't even make it halfway before Charlotte pounced on it, dragging the creature to the ground and tearing through its hide like it was wet paper.

Max chuckled under his breath, adrenaline buzzing. "Alright then, Panther Queen, let's see who racks up more kills."

Charlotte growled, low and sharp, like she understood the challenge.

And with that, the two surged back into the melee—man and beast, carving a path of ruin through the demon tide.

At the western flank, Liam stood like a shadow carved in flame and steel, fresh from cutting down two towering Titanbornes. His right sleeve had burned away, exposing a bare arm streaked with shallow cuts and smears of blood, mixing with soot and sweat. He glanced at his wounds, wincing faintly. The pain felt too real, just like the Headmaster warned them—but there was something that felt very off to him. Yet, he could lay his hands on what it was.

'No time to overthink whatever this is,' Liam thought, shaking off the creeping unease. 'Stay sharp or die sloppy.'

With a sharp pivot, he impaled a charging demon bear, then pumped a surge of fire through his blade, turning the creature's skull into a fiery burst of gore.

"Oi, weakling!" came Asher's voice, rough and cocky as ever.

Liam didn't bother looking as he lopped the heads off three more demons. Then Asher dropped beside him, flames licking at the battlefield, scorching demons too slow to retreat.

"How many kills you up to?" Asher asked, flashing a competitive grin.

"Lost count," Liam replied, eyes still locked on the figure standing sentinel at the peak of the mountain.

Asher followed his gaze, smirk widening. "You wanna go after that thing, don't you?"

"Yes... and no."

"What kinda half-assed answer is that?" Asher scoffed. "Whatever, I'll smoke it myself and wrap this whole exam up."

He crouched, ready to launch himself upward, but Liam's calm voice cut through the air.

"Hold up, buzz cut. That thing up there? It's not just another big demon. Look at it. It's waiting."

Asher froze, muscles tensed mid-motion. Liam's words sank in as Liam continued, voice low but serious.

"And have you noticed? No horrors. No advanced horrors either. Just these ferals and Titanbornes. Doesn't it feel like we're getting played here?"

Asher clicked his tongue, shifting uncomfortably. "Dammit... I hate when you're right."

Liam kept staring up at the looming figure. "Whatever that thing is, it's not moving because it's watching. Waiting for something."

Asher cracked his knuckles, frustration and excitement dancing in his eyes. "Yeah, well, my fists don't care if it's waiting."

Liam gave a dry smirk. "Neither do mine, but—"

Before he could finish, the mountain trembled as a deafening, guttural roar shattered the sky.

ROOOOAAAARRR!

The sound slammed into them like a wave, shaking the ground beneath their feet. Both boys instinctively braced themselves, eyes wide.

"Oh, great," Asher muttered. "Here comes the main event."

Before anyone could even process the roar, the sky above the mountain darkened. Winged horrors emerged from the shadows, swooping like vultures from the heavens. The battlefield froze for a breath—then chaos deepened.

"Ah, hell no... those things look disgusting," Asher muttered, fists igniting as he readied himself for what was coming.

But it wasn't just one type. There were dozens—nearly a hundred of them—circling the mountain like carrion. And yet, there was method to the madness, two distinct breeds among the winged swarm.

The first were Ravorns—advanced horrors. They were dark, avian nightmares with long, sinewy limbs ending in talon-like claws. Black and purple feathers cloaked their twisted bodies, while four massive, ragged wings flared from their backs. Bone trinkets and scraps of cloth hung from their waists, as if trophies from some ancient, forgotten slaughter. Their sharp, hooked beaks gleamed in the rain, and their glowing crimson eyes radiated intelligence and malice.

The second breed were Vyraxes. Bat-like humanoid horrors with leathery wings fused to their elongated arms. Their snarling faces were straight from a fever dream—huge bat ears, razor teeth glinting like broken glass, and those same red eyes glaring with feral hunger. Their torsos were thick with muscle, yet their beast-like legs ended in curved claws ready to tear through flesh and steel alike. And they outnumbered the Ravorns two-to-one.

But that was just the sky.

The mountain itself began to shift, the ground splitting as more horrors emerged from its jagged slopes. Two more species clawed their way into the fray.

First were the Ravagers—lean, obsidian-skinned horrors, all sharp angles and predatory grace. Blade-like protrusions jutted from their backs and limbs like they were forged from shattered glass. Their faces were skeletal, helmeted, and eyeless, but serrated teeth filled mouths stretched into permanent sneers. Their talons glinted like knives, while whip-like tails lashed behind them with lethal precision.

Then came the advanced horrors, the Nexuliths, towering monstrosities fusing insectoid menace with draconic dread. Four elongated arms ended in jagged claws, and two serpent-like tentacles writhed from their spines like living whips. Their chitinous bodies were plated with sinew-bound bone, biomechanical and grotesque. Their elongated skulls housed rows of needle teeth, tongues flickering out like vipers scenting blood. Behind them, thick tails slithered, stabilizing their bulk with chilling ease.

Liam's gut sank as he took it all in.

"This... is not part of the script," he muttered under his breath.

Asher cracked his knuckles, grinning despite the horror. "They might look awful... but that isn't stopping me from killing them."