

ShadowBound 234

Chapter 234: End Of Semester Exam 5

Within minutes, the battlefield had shifted from chaotic to catastrophic.

The students who once fought valiantly now found themselves outnumbered and outmatched. The wave of horrors poured down like a living nightmare, swarming in grotesque harmony. It was no longer just a matter of skill or bravery—it was survival against the impossible.

Where they had once carved through feral wolves and towering Titanbornes, the tide now dragged them under.

The Ravens swooped low, ripping students from the ground with cruel talons, flinging them into the air before letting them crash like broken dolls. Vyraxes darted through the sky, diving and slashing with terrifying speed, leaving behind screams and splatters of crimson as bodies hit the dirt.

The ground-based horrors—Ravagers and Nexuliths—tore through defensive lines like they were paper. Ravagers, all jagged teeth and slicing limbs, skewered students with ease, while Nexuliths crushed and dismembered with their towering frames, their tentacles whipping bodies into nearby rocks like ragdolls.

For the first time since the war began, the students began to 'die.'

Sheila hurled a jagged spear of ice into a Ravn, watching it screech and plummet from the sky, but her victory froze in her throat. To her left, a student—a friend—was torn apart by a Nexulith, limbs flailing as they were slammed into the ground with sickening force.

They didn't vanish. They didn't flicker out.

Instead, their body lay crumpled, their face twisted in the final seconds of agony. Blood soaked the dirt beneath them. The system, in all its merciless realism, left the corpse behind. Flesh torn, eyes glazed, fingers twitching once before stilling.

"No..." Sheila gasped, voice shaking.

All around her, the same horror played out. Every student who 'died' remained as a hyper-realistic body strewn across the battlefield. Some impaled on Ravager talons, others reduced to broken silhouettes beneath the weight of Nexulith claws.

"This... this wasn't supposed to..." she mumbled, barely able to finish as her stomach churned. The screams and the blood-soaked terrain gnawed at her resolve.

It was everything the Headmaster warned them about—and worse. They knew this was a holographic simulation, but as Sheila glanced at another fallen student—eyes glassy, mouth ajar in silent terror—it didn't matter.

"This is just a simulation," she whispered, forcing herself to keep casting, "It's not real... it's not real—"

Yet, every scream and every splash of blood burned itself into her mind, as if reality itself was folding. The Headmaster's warning echoed louder now.

"You'll feel it. The fear, the weight... the death."

The fear felt real.

The loss felt real.

And as the horrors kept swarming, the survivors weren't just fighting for victory anymore—they were fighting to keep their sanity intact.

Three Ravagers circled Liam like vultures, their sinewy frames pulsed with feral power, and as Liam shifted his stance, he noticed the jagged protrusions along their arms and backs twitching like coiled vipers.

Fwoom!

In an instant, a barrage of razor-sharp projectiles exploded from one Ravager's back, streaking toward Liam like bullets. He ducked low, his instincts sharp, flames igniting around his boots as he dashed forward, letting the scorching heat blur his form. The ground behind him erupted in a spray of shattered earth and splintered rocks where the blades struck.

Another Ravager lunged in from the left, talons gleaming. Liam twisted mid-dash, parrying the creature's slash with his flame-edged sword.

The third Ravager flanked him from behind, blade-spines launching from its shoulders.

Clink! Clink! Clink!

Liam spun, flames coating his free hand as he caught two of the flying blades mid-air, the searing heat melting their edges before he hurled them back, one embedding deep into the Ravager's thigh. It screeched, staggering but not falling.

"You guys really don't know when to quit," Liam muttered under his breath, beads of sweat rolling down his dirt-smudged face.

The Ravagers regrouped, positioning themselves in a deadly triangle around him. Their feral snarls vibrated through the air as more blades clicked into place on their backs and forearms.

Swoosh!

All three fired their spines simultaneously this time—hundreds of black shards slicing the air like a hailstorm of daggers.

Liam gritted his teeth, flames surging violently up his arms and legs. His feet slammed into the ground, creating a burst of fire beneath him as he launched into the air, narrowly dodging the onslaught. Mid-air, he twirled his sword, channeling an infernal spiral into the blade.

WHOOSH!

He descended like a meteor, crashing into one Ravager, cleaving through its skull with an eruption of red flames. The creature's headless body toppled, igniting like dry leaves.

The remaining two snarled in unison and lunged at him again, claws outstretched.

Liam, breathing heavily, tightened his grip on his sword. "Come on, then." His red eyes burned brighter as the flames along his blade roared to life once more.

Just a few meters away, Asher was locked in his own storm of violence.

The Nexulith towering before him was a nightmare made flesh — all sinew, bone, and biomechanical horror. Its four clawed arms lashed out with savage speed while its twin snake-like tendrils writhed hungrily from its back, snapping at the air like vipers.

"Ugly as hell," Asher muttered, flames flickering wildly across his knuckles. "Let's dance."

The Nexulith lunged, its claws slashing downward like guillotines. Asher's feet pivoted sharply, leaving behind a scorch mark as he sidestepped the attack. He shot a flame-coated fist into the creature's ribs, flames detonating on impact. The demon recoiled slightly but countered fast, swinging one of its tendrils like a whip.

CRACK!

The tendril slammed into Asher's side, launching him into a crumbled ruin of stone and dirt. He coughed, wiping the blood trickling from his mouth, and let out a sharp laugh. "Oh yeah... that's more like it."

The Nexulith barreled forward, shrieking with its inhuman maw stretched wide. Asher rose just in time, clapping his palms together as fire spiraled into his veins, surging out as a wave.

FWOOOOOSH!

The wave of azure flames blasted outward, forcing the Nexulith to stagger back, smoke curling from its cracked exoskeleton.

But it adapted fast—vaulting over the flames, its tail and claws poised to rip Asher apart mid-air.

Asher grinned wildly, flames bursting from his feet as he launched himself skyward to meet the beast head-on.

CLASH!

He collided with the Nexulith mid-flight, his fists slamming into its armored chest, creating a shockwave of burning heat. The Nexulith lashed its claws, barely grazing Asher's face as he twisted around its massive form. His feet found its shoulder for half a second—long enough to ignite another burst.

"Burn!" Asher roared as a concentrated sphere of blue fire exploded point-blank into the creature's skull.

The Nexulith's head snapped sideways, smoke trailing from its mangled jaw as it crashed into the dirt below, leaving a crater.

Asher landed, panting slightly, eyes flicking toward Liam's direction. "Oi! You better not be dying over there, weakling!"

But when he saw Liam holding his ground against two more Ravagers, Asher's grin widened. "Yeah, alright, we're still kicking."

Then, the Nexulith behind him growled, rising from the crater with molten cracks glowing beneath its armored skin.

Asher wiped the blood from his nose, his flames intensifying. "Oh, you're stubborn, huh? I like that."

And with another sharp step forward, he dove right back into the fight.

As Asher squared up with the rising Nexulith, Liam's sharp eyes caught the glint of movement behind him. One of the Ravagers—spurred by bloodlust—abandoned Liam and lunged for Asher, its talons gleaming like obsidian daggers.

"Asher! Behind you!" Liam barked, twisting his blade to deflect a barrage of razor-sharp projectiles from the other Ravager still locked on him.

Asher's reflexes snapped to life, spinning just in time as the first Ravager's claws sliced through where his head had just been. He ducked low, sliding across the dirt in a trail of scorched earth, then sprung up beside Liam with a cocky grin. "Damn, you almost let that thing ruin my pretty face."

The two stood shoulder to shoulder now, sweat and blood painting their skin, but neither flinched.

Their eyes flicked across the battlefield: the two Ravagers circling like wolves and the Nexulith stomping behind them, its guttural growl shaking the air.

Neither said a word—but their instincts aligned in perfect, violent harmony.

The first Ravager swooped low, claws slicing through the fog. Liam dashed forward, blade shimmering with heat, and sidestepped its claws with surgical grace. He swung low, carving across its thigh before reversing the grip of his sword and driving it up through the Ravager's jaw, the tip bursting out the top of its skull.

Without missing a beat, Liam yanked the blade free and spun as the second Ravager loosed a volley of bone-blades. He raised a wall of flame, melting the deadly shards mid-flight.

While Liam tore through the Ravagers with brutal efficiency, Asher was already in motion.

The Nexulith lunged, its two remaining claws crashing down. Asher ducked beneath them and grabbed both monstrous arms mid-air, tendrils whipping at his sides but missing by inches. His muscles strained as he grinned, flames spiraling violently from his palms and searing through the Nexulith's flesh.

"You're not getting these back," Asher snarled.

With a savage roar, he ripped both arms clean off, the Nexulith howling in agony as molten blood sprayed into the dirt.

"You're half the beast you were, ugly!" Asher taunted.

The Nexulith staggered backward—but Asher was already in its face. His legs ignited with blazing blue flames as he vaulted up, delivering a devastating roundhouse kick to its chest. The force cratered the Nexulith's ribcage, leaving a gaping hole where its core flickered like a dying ember.

The beast's eyes widened, but Asher wasn't done.

He landed behind it, spun the severed arms in his hands like batons, and with a feral grin, plunged them straight into the Nexulith's back to pin it in place.

Then came the finishing blow. Flames gathered in Asher's fist until they roared like a miniature sun.

He thrust his hand through the back of the Nexulith's neck, molten fire burning straight through and bursting out the front of its skull like a geyser of light. The demon crumpled forward, smoldering and limp.

Asher yanked his arm free, letting the corpse slump into the dirt. He dusted himself off, cracked his neck, and flashed a sharp smile at Liam.

"Flawless victory," he smirked.

Liam, panting but steady after shredding both Ravagers into heaps of burned flesh and scattered bone-like blades, gave Asher a side glance.

"Took you long enough," Liam replied coolly.