

ShadowBound 237

Chapter 237: End Of Semester Exam 8

Dylan sprinted away from the safety of the dome, weaving through rubble and shattered stone. His heart pounded, but his grin widened as the monstrous growls behind him grew louder. The Ravagers bit the bait, followed closely by Nexuliths and a handful of feral-class beasts, eyes wild and hungry.

"Alright, big boys," Dylan muttered under his breath, darting up the side of a crumbling building, boots slamming against broken glass and loose stone. "Let's dance."

As he launched himself skyward, clearing what was left of the building's peak, his voice dropped to a low chant. "Ravark estu Metor."

Myst flared along his arms, sharp and silver-blue like living steel. In mid-air, he pulled his bowstring back, three gleaming arrows crackling into existence. They shimmered against the stormy clouds above like tiny stars.

The demons below roared, lunging up after him—claws outstretched, fangs bared—but Dylan was already above their reach.

"C'mon then," he murmured, eyes narrowing as he focused.

Suddenly, the air around him warped as dozens—no, hundreds—of arrows materialized out of nowhere, each one humming with radiant myst energy. They hovered in a wide arc across the sky, circling him like a constellation ready to fall.

Dylan chuckled, shaking his head with a spark of mischief. "Meteor shower."

The arrows rained down all at once, streaking through the sky like comets. Each one homed in with deadly precision, punching through Ravager skulls, piercing Nexulith hearts, skewering feral-class demons like insects on pins.

Explosions of myst energy erupted on impact, lighting the battlefield in flashes of silver and steel, until the ground was littered with twitching, broken bodies.

None missed. Not a single arrow strayed.

Dylan landed hard on the other side of the battlefield, breathing heavy, knees buckling slightly under the toll. But his grin stayed sharp, eyes flicking back to the smoldering crater where the demon pack used to be.

"Yeah," he muttered, wiping blood from his brow. "Totally worth it."

Dylan lay sprawled on the cold, cracked earth, his entire body drained of myst. His limbs felt like lead, his breath came in ragged gasps, and yet—despite it all—a smirk tugged at his lips.

"Well... that was dramatic," he muttered, staring up at the sky. "Bet I looked cool, though."

The distant sounds of battle still raged, but he allowed himself just a second to enjoy the silence around him. A second of peace.

Then—he felt it.

The ground trembled. A low, guttural chorus of growls filled the air.

Dylan's smirk faded as he forced himself up on one knee, gripping his bow with shaking hands. His vision blurred with exhaustion, but he could still make out the figures emerging from the distance—Horrors. Not as much as before, but they were still a lot. And this time? He had no tricks left.

His myst reserves were dry. His body was shot. There was no backup coming.

But still...

He gritted his teeth, lifting his bowstring. One last arrow formed—a simple steel shaft, barely glowing with his dwindling myst.

"If I'm going down," he muttered, narrowing his eyes at the incoming monstrosities, "I'm taking at least two of you ugly bastards with me."

He steadied his shaking arms, drew back the bowstring, aimed for two Ravagers in the pack—

FWOOOOSH!

A violent gust of ice tore through the battlefield, howling like a blizzard's wrath.

Dylan barely had time to react before the incoming Horrors were frozen solid in an instant—thick, jagged ice crystallizing over their twisted bodies, locking them in place. Their snarls became muffled shrieks, their movements halted mid-charge.

Before Dylan could even process what just happened, a radiant blast of light surged through the battlefield.

A brilliant golden wave obliterated the frozen demons, shattering them into nothing but glimmering frost and dust.

Dylan blinked. His arrow dropped from his grip. He stared at the aftermath, utterly speechless.

Then, slowly, he let himself fall back onto his butt with an exhausted groan.

A dry chuckle escaped him. "Oh, thank the gods..." he mumbled, running a hand down his face. "Sheila, you reliable goddess, you..."

He turned his head slightly, catching sight of a certain white-haired princess standing atop a rooftop. Her deep blue eyes gleamed like cold sapphires as she lowered her sword.

Sheila Granger.

Dylan let out another weak laugh. "Remind me to buy you a drink after this," he called out, his voice hoarse. "Or, like... twenty."

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Sheila descended from the rooftop with swift, graceful movements, landing lightly beside Dylan. Her sharp blue eyes immediately scanned over him, taking in his pale skin, the bruises darkening across his face and arms, and the sheer exhaustion weighing down his body. His myst was completely drained—she could feel it.

But, of course, Dylan was still Dylan.

Instead of answering her concerned questions, he just smirked weakly and mumbled incoherent nonsense, something about the "divine punishment of overworking heroes" and how "falling from the sky should be considered cardio."

Sheila sighed, rubbing her temple. "Dylan. Focus. What happened to Ariana and the others?"

Dylan's smirk faded. He hesitated for a moment, his usual humor giving way to something heavier. "They're gone," he finally muttered. "It's just me, Ariana, and the ginger over there."

As if on cue, the earthen dome surrounding the civilians began to crumble.

Ariana stumbled forward, struggling against the ginger-haired girl's grip. "We can't just leave Dylan out there alone!" she shouted, her voice raw with frustration.

But the moment she laid eyes on both Dylan and Sheila—alive, if a little worse for wear—her tense shoulders relaxed slightly. Concern flickered in her green eyes as she took in Dylan's battered form and the shallow cuts marring Sheila's arms and cheeks.

Sheila, on the other hand, felt a rush of relief. Ariana was safe. Some of the civilians had survived. But the weight of everything still bore down on her chest.

"Great job," she finally said, her voice quieter than usual. "Seriously, you guys did more than anyone could've asked. If I'd—if I'd just thought to come sooner, maybe... maybe more students and civilians would still be alive."

She clenched her fists, frustration evident in the way she bit her lip. "I saw the light from the battlefield. That's the only reason I came. If I hadn't..."

Dylan groaned, cutting her off. "Sheila, please don't start blaming yourself. I'm already tired, and I really don't have the energy for a guilt trip."

Sheila blinked, caught off guard.

Dylan grinned weakly, resting his head back against the ground. "You had faith in us. That's why I even pulled that insane stunt in the first place. So, in a way, you were kind of like... a mental buff."

Sheila exhaled, a small smile tugging at her lips despite herself. "A mental buff?"

"Yeah," Dylan nodded sagely. "Like an emotional support sorceress."

Sheila rolled her eyes but allowed herself to chuckle. With a flick of her wrist, soft golden light engulfed her hands, and she placed them over Dylan's chest, Ariana's arms, and the ginger-haired girl's shoulder. Warmth spread through them as the wounds mended, the bruises fading, their exhaustion alleviated just enough to keep them standing.

Luckily, none of the civilians were injured, meaning she didn't have to expend any extra myst.

As the glow faded, she rose to her feet. "I have to go back to the battlefield," she said firmly. "This simulation needs to end. Now."

She turned, lifting her hand, and with a sweeping motion, a towering twenty-foot ice wall surged up around the city's perimeter, encasing them in a frozen fortress. The temperature dropped slightly, a crisp chill lingering in the air.

Sheila glanced back at the three of them. "And don't even think about following me."

Dylan, still sprawled on the ground, gave a lazy thumbs-up. "Oh, don't worry, princess. You don't have to tell me twice. I'm definitely staying put."

He let out a breath, closing his eyes. "Besides, I'm not worried. Liam, Asher, Max, Charlotte, and even that absolute d*ckhead, Chris, are still out there. You've got backup. Now go kick this nightmare's ass."

Sheila smirked before turning on her heel, sprinting toward the battlefield. The moment she left, Dylan sighed.

"Gods, I hope I don't have to move for a while..."