

ShadowBound 238

Chapter 238: Boss Demon Descends

"That should be the last one." Asher muttered, yanking his sword free from the shattered skull of a Nexulith.

"Yeah." Liam stood amidst the carnage, rain pouring over him, washing away the blood that clung to his uniform.

Asher's gaze lifted to the shadowed figure perched atop the mountain. His blue eyes burned with their usual intensity. "Now, we just have that bastard left."

Liam followed his line of sight, expression unreadable. "Yeah... but let's be real. Even if we fight it together, we're dead either way."

Asher exhaled sharply, rolling his shoulders. "You're not wrong. My myst reserves are below fifty percent." His lips curled slightly, but there was no humor in his voice. "I wonder if Sheila and the others are still standing. Tch. How pathetic of me to hope for backup."

"Doesn't matter," Liam said, voice as cold and detached as ever. "Whether they live or not, that thing needs to die."

Asher let out a low chuckle. "Oh? Are you proposing a partnership? Wow, the weakling has finally acknowledged my superiority."

Liam barely spared him a glance. "We've been in a partnership since the start. Just... unintentionally." With a flick of his wrist, he swung his sword downward, sending a spray of black demon blood onto the wet ground. "Now quit running your mouth and back me up. Let's end this simulation nightmare."

Asher smirked despite his exhaustion. "Ha! Don't get cocky. You're the one who needs my help." He rolled his shoulders, stretching slightly.

They braced themselves, ready to charge toward the figure on the mountain—until a sharp chill washed over them.

A familiar voice cut through the rain.

"You better not engage without my command."

Both boys froze mid-step, turning to see Sheila standing behind them. She was battered, bruised, and soaked from the rain—but still standing, still commanding.

Asher's smirk widened. "Looks like our fearless commander didn't bite the dust after all. Living up to that first-rank title, huh?"

"Not the time, Asher." Sheila's tone was firm, her sharp gaze flicking between them. "Were you seriously about to take that thing on in your conditions?"

Liam exhaled. "Yeah. I doubt it was going to sit around and wait for us to find reinforcements. We're already closest to the main threat... and it seems to be the boss of this whole mess."

"You're right," Sheila admitted, her gaze still locked on the figure atop the mountain. "But if that thing wanted to attack, it would've done so already." She exhaled before shifting her focus. "Anyway... have either of you seen Max or Charlotte?"

Before Asher or Liam could answer, another voice cut through the rain—smooth, mocking.

"How cruel can you be toward your own vice commander? You don't even ask about me first."

Chris.

He landed a few meters away, his usual smirk plastered across his face.

Sheila didn't even look at him. "Why ask about something I already know?"

Chris scoffed. "Hmph. So you do care about me after all." His voice was dripping with amusement, but before she could retort, he continued, "Anyway, about your actual friends—Max is gravely injured. Lost his whole left arm. And the psycho? Overexerted herself in beast form and burned through all her myst." His tone was cold, detached, as if he were discussing the weather.

Sheila's head snapped toward him. "Where are they?"

Chris waved a hand lazily. "Relax, outcast. I was feeling generous, so I dragged their pathetic bodies back to the city. They should be fine." Then his smirk twitched slightly. "Oh, and since you don't care about my friends as much as I do about yours—Logan and Lucian are out." A pause. "Sorry, I mean dead, since that's the word our shitty Headmaster used."

Sheila's expression softened. "Oh... T-Thanks. And... I'm sorry."

Chris's smirk vanished in an instant. "Keep your pathetic thanks and sorry to yourself—I don't need that nonsense." His green eyes flickered with something unreadable before he gestured to the battlefield, the lifeless holographic bodies scattered across it. "Besides, why waste energy feeling sorry for the dead? This is just a simulation. Everyone who fell here is still alive in reality. The only thing that matters is that we are still standing." His gaze darkened. "And that thing up there still needs to die."

Then, he took a step closer, standing tall as the rain poured around them.

"So," he said, voice steady, sharp. "You'd better clear your head and lead us to victory. Because today—for the first and only time in your life—you will witness me, Chris Rature, Prince of the Tempest Kingdom, acknowledge you, Sheila Granger, Princess of the Crescent Kingdom, as my superior."

With that, he walked past her, past Asher and Liam, moving toward the battlefield without looking back.

"So don't you dare fail."

Sheila stood frozen, completely taken aback. Chris had never once truly acknowledged her as the leader of this war simulation exam. And yet... here she was, hearing words she never expected from him.

More than that—he had saved Max and Charlotte. Despite losing his own allies, despite his usual arrogance, he had ensured her people survived.

A part of her wondered—was there kindness buried deep within Chris Rature? Was he someone who simply refused to admit it?

...Or was this all just part of some greater plan?

She clenched her fists, forcing herself to push the thought aside.

"There's no need to overthink it," she murmured to herself.

She turned back to Liam and Asher, both watching her expectantly.

"Alright," she said, regaining her composure. "Working together is our only shot at ending this. Our myst reserves are low, but we still have enough to take that thing down. With Max and Charlotte out, that means we're the only ones left in this fight."

Asher cracked his neck, running a hand through his damp white hair. "Tch. So much for a full squad. Guess it's just us and prince charming over there." He jerked his thumb in Chris's direction.

Chris, already a few steps ahead, didn't even bother looking back. "Keep that finger out of my sight, flame boy number two, or I'll personally remove it for you." His eyes sparked with electricity.

Asher smirked, blue flames flickering to life at his fingertips. "Oh, I dare you."

"Enough," Sheila cut in sharply. "Use that energy on the enemy, not each other."

Chris scoffed. "Then keep your dog on a leash."

Asher's flames flared, but Sheila shot him a look, silencing any comeback he had brewing. She turned to Liam instead. "We can't charge in recklessly. We need a plan. Liam, thoughts?"

Liam's red eyes flicked toward the dark figure atop the mountain, analyzing every detail. "It hasn't attacked yet, which means either it doesn't see us as a threat, or it's waiting for something." He paused. "Either way, a direct assault is stupid."

"Not to mention," he added, "fighting up a mountain isn't exactly ideal. If we fall, we won't die, but we'll be out of the fight."

Sheila nodded, catching his train of thought. "So, you want us to bring it down here instead?"

"Yeah," Liam admitted, "but I don't see a way to do that yet."

"Well, we could try to—"

Before Sheila could finish, a deafening BANG echoed through the battlefield as something slammed into the ground just a few meters away. The impact sent a shockwave through the air, blasting both demon and human corpses aside like ragdolls. Smoke and dust swallowed the field.

"The hell was that?!" Asher demanded, bracing himself.

As the dust settled, the answer stood before them.

Towering at seven feet tall, the war-beast exuded pure, unfiltered carnage. Its deep gray skin, scarred and rugged, pulsed with demonic myst, its sheer aura heavier than before—crushing, suffocating.

Its silver eyes burned with endless fury, framed by massive, curved horns. A mane of midnight-black hair spilled over its broad shoulders like a stormcloud.

It wore cracked, bone-like armor—battle-worn and jagged, the pauldrons spiked like a beast's fangs. A tattered war-skirt swayed at its feet, decorated with the skulls of fallen foes.

And in its colossal grip—an obsidian battle-axe, jagged, wicked, dripping with raw, unstable myst.

A Berserker Demon.

Liam exhaled. "Guess we don't need to worry about bringing it down anymore."