

ShadowBound 31

Chapter 31: First Fight With A Demon

Liam swiftly summoned his daggers, their dark blades gleaming faintly under the moonlight as he gripped them tightly. He steadied his breathing, sharpening his senses to pinpoint where the menacing presence might strike from.

Every muscle in his body tensed as he turned in slow circles, scanning his surroundings with predatory focus.

Then, from the depths of a dense thicket, came a chilling sound—the unmistakable scrape of claws dragging across the earth. The noise grew louder, each scratch sending a jolt through his nerves.

Emerging from the shadows, it finally revealed itself—a twisted, grotesque figure towering over seven feet tall. Its frame was unnaturally lean, its pale, sickly skin stretched taut over wiry muscles that pulsed with raw power.

Long, sinewy arms hung nearly to the ground, ending in razor-sharp claws that gleamed menacingly in the faint light. But what caught Liam's attention most was its eyes—two pinpricks of crimson staring back at him with a hunger that only a demon could possess.

A low, guttural growl escaped its lips, and in that instant, Liam knew—this creature wasn't just a beast. It was something far worse.

"Flesh... kill," the demon rasped, its voice a chilling, inhuman whisper that carried a promise of violence. Its crimson eyes locked onto Liam, filled with a primal, bloodthirsty hunger that made the air feel heavier, colder.

Liam tightened his grip on his daggers, his pulse quickening. He'd encounter a demon once before, but back then, he hadn't fought—it was more of an escape, a fleeting encounter. This was different.

He knew nothing of their strengths or weaknesses, but one thing was clear: this creature was a relentless killing machine, its very essence radiating the intent to tear him apart.

'Its aura... it's similar to Jamak's, but not as overpowering,' Liam thought, his mind racing as he gauged the demon's myst.

Jamak had been a force of nature, a monster beyond comprehension, yet this creature felt like a shadow in comparison—a dangerous one, but a shadow nonetheless.

A faint smirk tugged at the corner of Liam's lips. 'If this demon is weaker than Jamak, then I have a chance.' The thought brought a spark of confidence. He wasn't the same person who couldn't do anything from his first encounter. Now, he was ready to fight.

Suddenly, the demon lunged at Liam with blinding speed, its claws outstretched, eager to rip him apart. But Liam, with newfound agility, sidestepped the attack effortlessly.

If this had been the old him, he wouldn't have stood a chance against such ferocity. Now, however, he moved with purpose, his eyes sharp, tracking every movement of the demon.

They exchanged blows, darting back and forth in a deadly dance. Liam quickly noticed something crucial—this demon wasn't just a mindless beast.

Beneath the bloodlust was a flicker of intelligence, a predatory cunning that made it more dangerous. The demon was adapting to his movements, using its unnaturally long limbs to cover distances faster than its body ever could.

'Damn, this is going to be a problem,' Liam thought as he narrowly avoided another swing, feeling the rush of air from the demon's claws graze his cheek.

With each attack, Liam realized the advantage the demon had—it didn't need to get close. Those elongated limbs and razor-sharp claws allowed it to strike from a distance, forcing him to either retreat or take the hit.

He couldn't afford either option.

As Liam strategized, the demon's claw lashed out again, slicing through a nearby tree like it was paper. Liam's eyes narrowed, catching a glimpse of a dark, viscous liquid oozing from the claw's tip, seeping into the tree's wound.

Within seconds, the bark began to wither and decay, blackened veins spreading outward from the point of contact.

'Poison,' he realized with a jolt. This creature didn't just rely on brute strength; it had venom potent enough to rot flesh on contact. One wrong move, one scratch, and it would be over. He had to be more than just careful—he needed to be flawless.

The demon, sensing Liam's hesitation, accelerated its assault. Its movements became erratic, more aggressive, faster than before.

It was testing him, pushing him, forcing him to stay on the defensive. Each swipe, each strike, felt like a brush with death, and Liam could feel his heart pounding against his ribcage. He was running out of room to maneuver.

'I could use the Ignition or Furnace State,' he thought, desperation creeping in. 'I could overwhelm it, end this in seconds.' But something held him back, a gut instinct warning him.

He hadn't seen the demon's full power yet—if he gambled everything on Crimson Breathing now, he might exhaust himself before the real battle even began.

No, he needed to be patient. He needed to force this demon to reveal its true strength first, to draw out every ounce of its power. Only then could he strike with the full force of Flare Burst, ensuring there was no chance of failure.

'But how do I push it to that point without using Crimson Breathing?' he wondered, gritting his teeth. The answer lay in endurance, in keeping his defenses sharp and using every ounce of his skill.

He'd have to bait the demon, provoke it, and make it think it was winning until it had no choice but to unleash its full might or try something more which will change to demon even more.

'Come on,' Liam thought, tightening his grip on his daggers. 'Show me what you've got.'

An idea sparked in Liam's mind, and he seized the moment. As he gained some distance from the demon, he extended his hand, summoning the shadow beast that had carried him from the city outskirts earlier.

The air around them shifted as the enormous creature emerged from the depths of his shadow, standing tall and imposing at Liam's side.

The demon halted, its bloodshot eyes narrowing as it took in the sight of the shadow beast. It let out a guttural snarl, its lips curling back to reveal rows of jagged teeth.

Rage twisted its features, and Liam could feel the sudden spike in hostility. The demon's myst surged, swirling violently around it, whipping the air into a frenzy, as if responding to some deep-seated fury at the presence of another predator.

"Ah, there it is," Liam muttered, a smirk tugging at his lips. The gamble had paid off—the demon's arrogance had been provoked. "You don't like competition, do you?"

The ground trembled as the demon's aura exploded, raw energy pouring out in waves that crashed against Liam like a violent storm. But instead of backing down, Liam felt a thrill of excitement course through him. This was it—the full power he had been waiting to draw out.

"Alright then," he murmured, tightening his grip on his daggers. "Let's see if you can handle both of us."

Turning to his shadow beast, he nodded. "Let's attack."

The shadow beast let out a thunderous roar, its eyes glowing with an eerie crimson light, muscles tensing as it prepared to launch.

The sound echoed across the field, rattling the trees and stirring the night. With that signal, both Liam and his shadow beast surged forward, moving as one—an unstoppable force charging toward the raging demon.

The ground cracked beneath their feet with each step, and Liam felt the surge of adrenaline heighten his senses, sharpening every detail.

He could see the demon's muscles coiling, ready to counterattack, but this time, Liam wasn't alone. He wasn't just fighting; he was leading a charge, and the thrill of it sent a shiver down his spine.

The battle had truly begun.

As Liam and his shadow beast launched their coordinated assault, the intensity of the battle escalated to a fever pitch.

The demon, now faced with two relentless attackers, fought with an even greater ferocity, its fury seemingly boundless.

Despite having two foes to contend with, the demon adapted quickly, its rage fueling every movement, granting it the strength and speed to fend off both adversaries simultaneously.

Liam and his shadow beast attacked in perfect harmony, their strikes flowing seamlessly together like a well-practiced dance. Liam's resonance technique kept their connection strong, even though he wasn't using Crimson Breathing to amplify it.

Together, they struck from all angles, weaving around each other with such precision that they never collided or obstructed one another's attacks. Their combination of slashes and strikes kept the demon on the defensive, pushing it back inch by inch.

For a brief moment, Liam allowed himself a glimmer of hope. "Maybe I won't need Flare Burst after all," he thought, seeing the demon's movements becoming more erratic under their unrelenting assault.

But then, the demon's rage erupted once more, its aura intensifying with an ear-piercing screech. With a single, devastating swing of its elongated arm, it cleaved through the shadow beast, dispelling it in an instant.

The sheer force of the attack reverberated through Liam's body, momentarily disrupting his concentration and draining his energy. He could feel the sudden emptiness where his beast had been, and he knew he couldn't afford to summon it again—not without risking further exhaustion.

Before Liam could fully process what had happened, the demon lunged forward, delivering a brutal backhand swipe with its razor-sharp claws.

Reacting on pure instinct, Liam crossed his daggers just in time to block the attack, but the sheer power behind the strike sent him skidding backward, his boots digging deep furrows into the ground as he struggled to maintain his footing.

The impact forced him down onto one knee, his breathing heavy, his heart pounding in his ears.

He looked up, eyes narrowing as the demon stood before him, its malevolent gaze fixed on him, the thirst for blood unmistakable. It was stronger than he had anticipated, and now, without his shadow beast, he was running out of options.

"Looks like I've got no other choice," Liam muttered, slowly rising to his feet, his resolve hardening with every second.

His myst surged, enveloping him in a crimson aura that flared brilliantly in the night.

It was as if an inferno had erupted from within him, his body now thrumming with an overwhelming power.

The Flare Burst state.

The air around him crackled, and the ground trembled under the weight of his unleashed myst. Liam's eyes glowed with a fierce light as he locked onto the demon, his voice dropping to a cold, unwavering tone.

"Three minutes," he declared, pointing one of his daggers at the demon with unwavering confidence. "That's all I need to end you."

The demon snarled, but this time, there was a flicker of hesitation in its movements, as if it could sense the shift in power. Liam took a step forward, the crimson flames of his aura intensifying with each breath, ready to unleash everything he had in the final, decisive clash.