

## Excerpt from Shadow Blade (Fantasy Novel)

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“Flame dive!” Shadow Blade shot downward and hit the ground sword first. An explosion rocked the night, creating a small crater in the ground and finally doing some damage to the seemingly imperturbable Mage of Heaven. Several small patches of grass continued to burn after the spell had finished, augmenting Shadow Blade’s fading solar burst spell.

Not wasting an instant, Geld jumped the moment he saw Gauthor go down beneath Shadow Blade’s attack. Having lost his shield and his footing, there was no way for the muscle bound mage to block both of the white swords. The first struck one of the rusty gauntlets but Geld had been expecting that. The second blade swung up and...

“No way!” Geld gaped as his sword was pushed back.

Blood streamed from what remained of Gauthor’s left hand. Bits of skin and bone fell quietly to the ground as he rose, gripping the blade with his shredded fingers. Cold, unquenchable hatred filled his eyes as he wrenched the sword out of Geld’s grasp and hurled it away. Before Shadow Blade or Milla could stop him, he’d slammed his good fist into Geld’s face, knocking the shocked swordsman a good twenty feet through the air. He hit the ground and lay still as Gauthor turned his wrath on Shadow Blade and Milla. The earth trembled and cracked as spells rained down so fast that not even Shadow Blade could dodge them all. Avoiding the ones he could, he tried to deflect the others and attack but they kept coming too fast. To his right Milla huddled beneath a shield. Several times she tried to reach Geld but each time Gauthor sent such a fierce burst of magic her way that she was forced to retreat.

Shadow Blade screamed in frustration as his body seemed to split into eight identical clones. Acting as one, they all charged Gauthor. Bellowing like a wounded bull, he attacked. Reaching down, he used magic to pull up a tremendous section of the ground itself and hurled it at the group of Shadow Blades. The illusions faded as the real Shadow Blade crashed into the wall of dirt and stone and tumbled back. Meanwhile, Milla formed a cluster of fireballs and launched her own attack. Past all point of reason, Gauthor charged straight through her spell, ignoring his burning skin, and wrapped his remaining hand around the startled girl’s neck.

“No!!!” Shadow Blade made a desperate lunge but Gauthor hit him over the head with what remained of his left arm and pinned the struggled mage down with his foot.

Milla struggled to cast a spell, any spell, but the lack of air was making her head swim and it was all she could do to remain conscious. On the ground, Shadow Blade was casting spells of his own only to have each one blocked before it could take effect. He gulped, realizing that he’d have to use something stronger. But if he did Milla might be caught up in it too, although, if he didn’t do something fast Gauthor would finish her anyway...

“Urgh...” without warning Gauthor pitched forward. He coughed loudly, spraying blood across the dirt, as Milla dropped to the ground and scrambled to get away.

Rolling back, Shadow Blade jumped to his feet as Gauthor struggled to remain standing. A single white sword was protruding from his back. Not wanting to see if the powerful mage could recover from that as well, Shadow Blade fired off a purple ray, striking the center of Gauthor’s chest. With a last groan, his eyes rolled up as he fell, shaking the ground for the last time. Several yards away Shadow Blade and Milla could just make out Geld’s battered form grinning through a shattered jaw before he too collapsed.