

ShadowBound 142

Chapter 142: To Many Spells To Master

Two weeks had passed since the students' lively discussion about the exams, and the intensive training sessions had concluded. Now, they found themselves in the first week of the month, with the much-anticipated exams looming.

In those two weeks, most students buckled down, immersing themselves in study sessions and doing their best to absorb as much knowledge as possible for the theory exams. However, a handful of others dismissed the exams as trivial, deeming the theoretical portion unworthy of their time and effort. They prioritized the practical aspect, despite having no clear idea of what challenges lay ahead. Their confidence was unwavering, rooted in the belief that the academy wouldn't present anything beyond their abilities. For them, training and honing their magical skills were far more important than hitting the books.

Among Liam's group, a balance was struck. Ariana naturally took the lead as the group's intellectual anchor, helping her peers tackle concepts they struggled to grasp. Even Charlotte, who initially declared theory exams as her sworn enemy, began to see glimmers of hope. With Ariana's patient guidance, she reluctantly but earnestly gave studying her best shot, albeit with frequent complaints about her distaste for "so many damn words."

The group, originally consisting of six—Ariana, Sheila, Charlotte, Dylan, Asher, and Liam—grew by one as Maxwell joined their efforts. Known as the best weapon wielder among the first years, Maxwell approached Ariana for help, and the group welcomed him with open arms. Having frequently assisted them in their training sessions with insights from Magnus' teachings, Maxwell was already a valuable ally. Besides, his easygoing personality made him a natural fit.

Despite the study sessions, Liam didn't let his newfound focus on theory distract him from his personal growth in dark magic. Every night, after the group had dispersed, he delved into self-teaching, exploring the depths of his abilities in solitude. These quiet hours proved fruitful, as he made an important discovery: all his shadow beasts could understand him when he spoke to them.

At first, this realization caught him off guard. He had always assumed that only highly intelligent creatures, like Nyxie, could comprehend his commands. But through his late-night experiments, he came

to understand that the Resonance he shared with his shadow creatures acted as a bridge, enabling them to grasp his intentions without the need for elaborate explanations. It was as though they were extensions of himself, attuned to his thoughts and will.

This newfound understanding eased Liam's mind. He no longer had to worry about overcomplicating instructions or doubting their ability to execute his plans.

Now, back to the things Liam had discovered—both by accident during training and through his relentless studying of the tome.

One night, as Liam was practicing his shadow manipulation, something unexpected happened. Without warning, he accidentally created a small rift in the fabric of the shadow realm. His breath caught in his throat as he saw the tear shimmer, a swirling void of dark energy opening up in front of him. At first, he didn't understand what he had done. But when he stepped closer and found himself emerging from another shadow on the opposite side of the East Colosseum, a surge of realization hit him. He had inadvertently teleported.

The experience was brief, but exhilarating. However, without any understanding of what had just occurred, Liam felt the urge to dive deeper. He turned to the tome he had been studying and flipped through its pages, searching for any hint of something similar. After some time, he found it: Void Passage.

The description outlined exactly what he had experienced—almost eerily so. Void Passage allowed a person to momentarily step into the shadow realm and use it as a shortcut for teleportation between shadows. To perform the technique, the caster needed to focus their myst and create a rift between their own shadow and a nearby one, tearing open a space in the fabric of reality. The shadow realm was described as a fluctuating sea of dark myst, and by aligning their myst with its chaotic flow, the user could navigate through it, instinctively emerging at the desired shadow destination.

However, the spell wasn't without its risks. The technique required precise control of myst, for the shadow realm itself resisted foreign manipulation. Creating the rift was only the first part; the caster had to hold it open long enough to step through, a process that drained significant amounts of myst. The shadow realm itself was a dangerous place—chaotic, unstable, and full of fluctuating energy.

Prolonged exposure could strip the user's myst reserves or even trap them within its depths, disconnecting them from the material world. To reemerge into reality, the caster had to align their myst to force a reentry through the nearest shadow, but even that was no guarantee of success.

The next discovery from the tome caught Liam's attention in a way few other techniques had: Shadow Sight.

This technique allowed the user to channel dark myst into their eyes, aligning their senses with the shadow realm's frequency. By infusing their myst into their optic nerves, the user temporarily enhanced their vision, granting them the ability to perceive hidden objects, veiled enemies, and mystical traces invisible to the naked eye. For Liam, this meant more than just being able to see in the dark; it was an opportunity to tap into a deeper layer of perception that could give him a significant edge in battle and beyond.

The essence of Shadow Sight lay in the alignment of the user's myst with the shadows around them. In places of complete darkness, the resonance between the myst and the shadow realm was amplified, providing an incredibly sharp clarity of vision. Liam imagined how this could help him track movements or spot hidden threats even in the deepest of night, where his enemies might think themselves safe.

In such conditions, the technique would be at its strongest, revealing not just what was visible, but things that shouldn't have been—impressions left behind by magical forces, traces that appeared as faint glowing streams or ethereal auras, depending on their age and intensity.

However, as much as the power of Shadow Sight intrigued him, there were drawbacks. In brightly lit environments, the myst's resonance with the shadow realm would weaken, rendering the technique less effective.

On top of that, there was a risk of destabilizing the myst flow if exposed to sudden bright light while using it. In those cases, the feedback could cause temporary blindness or disorientation, a dangerous outcome if he were in the middle of a fight or needed to rely on the technique for critical insight.

These new discoveries excited Liam, but they also brought a sobering realization—his arsenal of dark magic spells and techniques was growing rapidly, yet few of them were truly mastered. While each spell carried immense potential, the lack of mastery left gaps in his combat effectiveness and control.

Extraction stood out as a prime example. Though it was one of his earliest techniques, Liam had the nagging sense that he had barely scratched the surface of its potential. There was more to it—he could feel it—but understanding its depths required time he didn't have. Then there was Shadow Solidification, the spell he was most confident in. He had dedicated countless hours to perfecting it, and

it was arguably his most reliable tool in battle. Even so, he knew it wasn't fully mastered; there were nuances he still needed to uncover, though it remained the strongest foundation in his repertoire.

Other spells, like Assassin's Veil and Shadow Rend, demanded attention as well. Between the two, Liam chose to focus on Assassin's Veil, finding its stealth and tactical advantages far more useful for his style. Shadow Rend, while powerful, felt redundant compared to Galen's Inferno Edge, which Liam had already trained extensively. Both techniques involved blade-infused strikes, but Shadow Rend consumed significantly more myst, making it less practical in prolonged engagements.

Now, with the addition of Void Passage and Shadow Sight, his list of priorities grew even longer. These two newly discovered techniques promised immense potential—short-range teleportation and heightened perception were game-changing abilities—but their complexity meant they required significant practice to integrate seamlessly into his combat style.

As Liam reflected on his growing arsenal, he realized he couldn't afford to spread himself too thin. Mastery would take time, and with the looming exams and constant need for secrecy about his dark magic, he had to be strategic. He decided to focus on spells and techniques that offered clear advantages in combat while minimizing their visibility to others. The last thing he could afford was drawing attention to himself and exposing his forbidden abilities.

As the first week of the new month drew to a close, the first-year students were summoned to the grand Beacon Hall for an announcement regarding their upcoming exams. The hall buzzed with a mixture of anticipation and unease, the tension almost palpable as students filed in, taking their seats.

Unlike the rigid seating arrangement during orientation, where they were assigned seats based on rank, this time, they were free to sit wherever they wished. This newfound freedom led to an intriguing game of musical chairs. Most students, wary of being under the scrutinizing gaze of school authorities, avoided the front rows like the plague.

The back and middle rows quickly filled up, leaving only the most unfortunate or tardy students to occupy the vacant front seats. Their faces betrayed their regret as they realized they had no choice but to face whatever was coming head-on.

Within moments, the chatter began to fade, replaced by a growing hush. Every student, whether confident or apprehensive, found their place and waited. The weight of the moment hung heavy in the air as eyes turned toward the stage.

The announcement was about to begin.