

ShadowBound 146

Chapter 146: Flame Concentration

Back in his room, Liam had already been teleported back and wasted no time freshening up with a quick bath.

Afterward, he lay sprawled on his bed, his legs still dangling over the edge as he let out a deep breath.

'With my dark magic concealed, looks like I can't try out Void Passage today, what a pain, I made plans for it very well. Anyway, I guess I might as well sleep. Extra hours won't hurt.' He closed his eyes, his body sinking into the mattress as his thoughts faded.

However, that peace was short-lived. A sharp knock at the door jolted him awake, his eyes snapping open instantly.

'Who could it be at this hour?' he wondered, glancing at the clock on the wall before dragging himself off the bed.

He opened the door to find Asher standing there, his usual cocky demeanor intact.

"Why are you here?" Liam asked, his voice calm despite the mild surprise he felt.

"I need to show you something. Just follow me," Asher replied, already turning to walk down the hallway.

Liam stared at him for a moment, unimpressed. "You don't just knock on someone's door and ask them to follow you without giving a proper reason," he stated, making a move to close the door.

"For once in your life, restrain yourself from being stubborn and just follow me, dammit," Asher said, his frustration evident.

Liam studied him for a moment before letting out a resigned sigh. "This better be worth it." He stepped out, shutting the door behind him.

Without another word, Liam followed Asher down the dimly lit hallway. The silence between them stretched until something familiar caught Liam's attention—the path they were taking.

'Why are we headed toward Galen's training ground?' Liam thought, his curiosity growing.

Minutes later, they arrived at the mini colosseum that served as Galen's private training area. Liam followed Asher into the center of the arena before Asher stopped and turned to face him.

"Why are we here?" Liam asked, his tone steady, though his patience was wearing thin.

"Do you have short-term memory? I told you I had something to show you," Asher replied, his eye twitching slightly in annoyance.

"Then hurry up. You're eating into my sleep time," Liam said bluntly.

"Trust me, that eagerness to sleep will vanish once you see this," Asher said, a smirk tugging at the corner of his lips.

'What is he even talking about?' Liam wondered, narrowing his eyes slightly.

Asher stepped away, putting distance between them as he prepared for what he was about to do. He finally stopped, turning back to Liam with a sharp glint in his eyes.

"Pay attention, weakling. This is better shown first, explained later," Asher said, shaking out his limbs in preparation.

'What is he planning?' Liam thought, his interest piqued despite himself.

"Ay, take a fighting stance. I can't show this without making you feel it," Asher said, his tone filled with a teasing edge.

Liam sighed, already regretting his decision to come along. "Alright, buzz cut. Make this quick," he replied, stepping into his fighting stance with practiced ease, his eyes locking onto Asher.

Asher smirked and began to prepare, his presence shifting as an invisible heat seemed to radiate from him. His flames, though unseen, charged the air, and his piercing blue eyes glowed brighter, as though they were filled with a molten energy.

Liam observed him carefully, skepticism tugging at his thoughts. 'What's he planning?' But before he could second-guess, Asher vanished in a blur, leaving behind a sudden explosion of blue flames that scorched the ground where he had been standing.

In the blink of an eye, Asher reappeared mid-air, his knee aimed directly for Liam's chest with ferocious intent.

Liam barely had time to react. Instinctively, he raised his forearms to block, but the moment Asher's knee made contact, a secondary blast erupted from it—an intense shockwave of compressed blue flames that forced Liam backward. He skidded to a stop, his boots digging into the ground to anchor himself.

Asher landed effortlessly, his movements fluid and confident. Liam glanced down at his forearms, now smoking slightly. There were no serious injuries, just a faint scratch—a testament to his own durability and quick reflexes.

'This power... it's far beyond Asher's usual control over flames. The precision, the impact—it's on a different level,' Liam thought, his expression calm as he shifted his gaze back to Asher.

"So? What do you think? Impressive, huh?" Asher asked, pride practically dripping from his voice.

Liam brushed the soot from his forearm. "Well, I guess I can say that."

"You guess?" Asher said, his voice rising with mock outrage. "Don't tell me you're being all emotional over a tiny hit? Tsk. You've gone soft, haven't you? What happened to the cold, heartless warrior I used to spar with? You're practically a weakling now. Pathetic."

"Quit the nonsense, buzz cut, and just tell me what that was," Liam said, his voice steady but carrying a subtle edge of authority.

Asher's smirk widened. "Look at you, all curious. Fine, I'll spill. What I just showed you doesn't have a specific name, but the technique behind it does. Galen likes to call it Flame Concentration," Asher explained, the pride in his tone undeniable.

Liam raised an eyebrow, his interest piqued despite his exhaustion. "Flame Concentration? Does that mean compressing your flames into a fixed point or something?"

"You could say it like that," Asher replied, tilting his head slightly, "but there's more to it. It's about refining and focusing the flow of myst to produce targeted, efficient flames rather than just spewing uncontrollable bursts like some amateur."

Liam nodded slowly, piecing it together. "So, unlike when you used to summon flames that burned all over the place, with this Flame Concentration technique, you're able to release precise flames—focused, controlled, and not just wildly spreading. Is that it?"

Asher's smirk faltered for a moment. "Huh, you catch on faster than I expected," he admitted, though his irritation seeped through.

'That makes sense,' Liam thought, recalling Asher's earlier display. 'Those flames from his feet during the speed burst and even the knee strike—they were all released from specific points, not just flaring wildly. I don't fully get this concept yet, but... with the upcoming exams, I can't ignore how useful this could be.'

He placed his hands in his pockets, eyes narrowing slightly. "Hey, Buzz Cut, care to explain in detail?"

Asher's eye twitched at the nickname, but he waved it off. "Why the hell do you think I dragged you out here, genius? Shut up and listen." He straightened up, his tone growing more serious. "Normally, fire

manipulators—oh, sorry, Galen prefers Pyroknights —release flames that burn and expand in all directions, wild and uncontrolled. That's just raw fire myst in action. But with Flame Concentration, we channel myst toward a specific part of the body or a single target, concentrating the energy to control and refine the fire's output."

"Refining myst," Liam muttered, absorbing the explanation.

"Exactly," Asher said, gesturing with his hand. "It's about funneling energy into one focused point instead of letting it disperse. This lets you 'compress' the myst, creating a denser, more intense flame. Like the speed boost from my feet or the knee strike earlier—that was all thanks to Flame Concentration."

"So," Liam said, a faint glint in his eye, "it's not just about control but also efficiency. This lets you focus all your power into a single, devastating point instead of wasting energy. Makes sense. And it's faster too, right?"

Asher grinned, leaning slightly forward. "You're damn right. Compared to that flashy trick you pulled in our spar with Galen months ago? This would leave that move in the dust. Flame Concentration does just help me move just faster; but cleaner, more precise, and hits way harder."

Liam nodded again, his face unreadable. "I see." He turned away slightly, looking at the night sky for a brief moment before speaking. "Well, since you've told me this now, I'm eager to learn it."

Asher barked a laugh, folding his arms. "Pfft. Don't think you can master this overnight, Hunter. Galen made me practice on boulders for days before I could even get the basics down. You'd need—"

Liam cut him off, his eyes narrowing as a faint smirk tugged at the corner of his mouth. "Sorry to break it to you, Buzz Cut, but after dragging me out here and disrupting my sleep for something this interesting, especially given the exams coming up..." He turned back to face Asher fully, his voice resolute. "...we're practicing this until the moon and the sun trade places."

Asher blinked, startled, before breaking into a wide grin. "You're insane," he said, laughing as he stepped forward, the competitive fire in his eyes blazing. "Fine. Don't come crying to me when you can't stand tomorrow."

"That's rich coming from someone who passes out just after a light hit to the face, you know."