

ShadowBound 198

Chapter 198: Fire Myst Mastery Class: First Lesson

Professor Vale let the silence linger for a moment before turning to the blackboard. With a flick of his fingers, a wisp of flame sparked at his fingertips, then stretched into a thin line of fire. The flames danced in the air as if responding to his thoughts, and with a subtle motion, he directed them to write "Fire Myst Fundamentals" on the board. The letters burned brightly for a few seconds before fading into glowing embers that settled into the surface like ink.

"As this is your first official lesson, we will begin with the core principles of Fire Myst." He clasped his hands behind his back and paced slowly. "Tell me—what are the three main properties of fire in myst application?"

A few students hesitated, but one eventually raised their hand. "Uh... Heat, Light, and Destruction?"

"Close, but not quite." Professor Vale turned toward the class. "Anyone else?"

Liam and Asher exchanged a glance but remained silent. Galen had trained them in combat, drilled them in technique, but he had never once mentioned something like this. They both knew how to wield their flames, but they had never thought about its fundamental nature.

"Tch," Asher clicked his tongue in annoyance. He hated not knowing things when it came to fire.

A student in the back finally spoke up, his voice hesitant but clear. "Ignition, Expansion, and Consumption?"

Professor Vale's lips curled slightly in approval. "Correct."

With another flick of his fingers, three glowing symbols appeared on the board, each one representing the concepts he had just mentioned.

"Ignition," he tapped the first symbol, causing it to flare up, "is the act of starting a fire. Whether through a spark, friction, or myst infusion, all flames require a trigger."

"Expansion," he moved to the second, which grew larger, "is fire's ability to spread—to feed off air, fuel, and myst to increase its range and intensity."

"And finally, Consumption." He gestured to the third symbol, which slowly dimmed and faded, "Fire is hungry. It will take everything if given the chance—fuel, oxygen, even your own myst if you lose control."

Liam narrowed his eyes slightly. 'So fire isn't just about burning things—it had an actual structure to how it worked.'

Asher crossed his arms, absorbing the information with a rare moment of silence. 'That bastard of an instructor, Galen, never mentioned this... is it because he thought we didn't need to know? Or because he didn't care?'

The professor turned back to face the class. "These three properties form the foundation of every fire-based technique, whether basic or advanced. Mastering them means controlling not just your flames, but also your own limits."

He then glanced at the clock, nodding slightly. "For now, we will focus on Ignition—the most basic yet essential aspect of fire myst. And so..." He gestured to the classroom. "Let's see where you all stand."

A pulse of myst flared from his fingertips, and suddenly, small flame sigils appeared on the desks of each student.

"Your first task is simple," Professor Vale said. "Channel your myst and ignite the sigil before you. No incantations, no unnecessary movements—just pure myst control."

Some students immediately placed their hands over the sigil, already focusing their myst. Others hesitated, clearly nervous about failing such a fundamental exercise.

Asher smirked, cracking his knuckles. "Heh. Easy."

Liam, meanwhile, simply placed a hand over the sigil, his myst already stirring.

Asher exhaled sharply, rolling his shoulders. "Alright, let's see what this is all about." He placed his palm over the sigil and channeled his myst. A sharp blue spark flickered—then nothing.

He blinked.

Liam, sitting beside him, narrowed his eyes at his own sigil and did the same. His myst stirred, flowing to his palm, but the moment it met the sigil, the flame barely sputtered before fizzling out.

The two boys exchanged looks.

"...What the hell?" Asher muttered.

Liam didn't respond. He focused again, pushing more myst into the sigil—but the result remained the same. A weak flicker, then silence.

Across the room, some students had already managed to light theirs. A few small flames hovered over their sigils, flickering steadily. Others, like Liam and Asher, struggled.

Professor Vale, watching from the front of the class, finally spoke. "Having trouble?"

Asher frowned. "I don't get it. We literally use fire all the time. Why is this different?"

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"Because this exercise is not about simply producing flames," Professor Vale explained, stepping closer. "It is about precision and balance. From what I observed during the battlefield exam, you both have strong control over fire, but your method until now has been based on instinct and brute force. Here, your myst must align perfectly with the sigil's structure. Too much force, and it will reject your myst. Too little, and it won't activate."

Liam's gaze flickered toward the sigil again. 'So that's it.'

He took a slow breath, adjusting his myst flow. Instead of forcing it, he let it seep into the sigil gently, like a steady stream rather than a crashing wave.

The sigil glowed.

A small, steady ember flickered to life in the center.

Asher's eyes twitched at the sight. "Tch—no way I'm letting you get ahead." He clicked his tongue and closed his eyes, adjusting his approach. Instead of pouring his myst in all at once, he eased it in, mimicking Liam's method.

A second later—fwip!—his sigil ignited with a small, controlled blue flame.

He grinned. "Hah! Knew I had it."

Professor Vale nodded approvingly. "Better. Fire Myst is not just about raw power—it is about understanding how much to give and when. Those of you who succeeded, remember this. Those still struggling, adjust your myst flow accordingly."

Liam leaned back slightly, watching the ember flicker before him. 'Understanding the theory behind this... it's going to change how I fight.'

After a few minutes, every student had successfully lit their sigil. Noting this, Professor Vale adjusted his glasses. "It seems you all are quick learners. Since Lady Emberhart is absent today, there will be no practical session. That gives us time to continue."

He turned back to the board, raising his hand. Flames surged to life, forming new symbols in the air.

"If you wish to master fire, you must learn how to shape it."

Professor Vale let the flames linger in the air, each symbol burning with a steady glow before shifting into familiar forms. Ignition. Expansion. Consumption.

"Now that you have grasped the basics of Ignition, we move on to something slightly more difficult," he announced. "Fire is not merely something you create—it is something you command. A flame without control is as dangerous to its wielder as it is to its enemy."

With a flick of his wrist, the flames shifted, twisting into distinct shapes—a straight line, a swirling spiral, and finally, a contained sphere.

"Your next task is to shape the fire you create. It must not waver, must not flicker, and must not burn beyond your will."

The students exchanged glances. Some looked confident, others hesitant. Liam and Asher, however, were intrigued. Shape fire? That was an easy task. They had formed fireballs countless times in battle—was that not considered shaping?

Professor Vale continued, "Many of you likely use fire instinctively. But a true master of Fire Myst does not simply conjure flames. They dictate its movement. They determine its form. Fire must behave as an extension of yourself."

He gestured toward their sigils. "Now, take the flames you've created and mold them into a sphere. A perfect sphere. No flickering, no warping—absolute control."

A murmur spread through the room as students turned their attention back to their flames.

Asher smirked. "Alright, time to see who's got real talent." He focused on his small blue flame, attempting to mold it into a round shape. It worked—to an extent. The flame bent to his will, forming a sphere just like the ones he made in battle. But then, it flickered. It wavered at the edges.

"Hey, what the hell?" he muttered.

Liam remained silent, observing his own flame. He faced the same problem—he could bend the fire into a sphere, but it refused to stay perfectly smooth.

Professor Vale walked between the students, watching their struggles with a knowing gaze. "Many of you are trying to force the flame into a shape. That will not work. Fire is fluid, not rigid. You must guide it, not crush it into submission."

Asher scowled. "Easy for you to say."

Professor Vale smirked slightly. "Indeed." With a simple snap of his fingers, the small ember on Liam's desk suddenly flickered—then effortlessly molded itself into a perfect, motionless sphere.

Liam's eyes narrowed slightly. 'He didn't even touch it.'

"Fire," the professor continued, "responds best to intention. Not brute force, not excessive myst output—but balance."

The students kept trying. Some got close, forming slightly misshapen spheres, while others could barely keep their flames steady.

Liam adjusted his approach, loosening his grip over his myst. Instead of controlling the flame directly, he guided its edges, allowing it to curve naturally rather than forcing it into shape.

Slowly—very slowly—his flame began to round out.

This feels like Flame Compression, but gentler, he thought. He glanced at Asher and muttered under his breath, "Hey, buzz cut, think of it as Flame Compression."

Asher shot him a sharp look before clicking his tongue. "You've gotta be kidding me..." But after a moment of hesitation, he took a deep breath, mimicking Liam's approach. Finally, his flame settled into something that almost resembled a sphere.

For the rest of the lesson, Professor Vale allowed the students to refine their technique. Some gradually got the hang of it—especially Liam and Asher.

As the minutes passed, the session neared its end. With only five minutes left, Professor Vale clapped his hands once, drawing their attention.

"Alright, my students, you've done well. Some of you are beginning to understand. But do not be mistaken—this is only the first step. Your flames are still unstable, unrefined."

"Tomorrow, we will advance further. You will learn how to sustain your shapes under external pressure. A fire that cannot hold its form is useless in battle."

He paused for a moment, then added, "Ah, and one more thing." He gestured toward the small floating crystal orbs above each student's desk. "These belong to you. They are recording orbs, capable of storing any class session for later playback."

"For them to function, you must infuse them with myst. You are also permitted to bring them to any other class for personal study."

With that, he adjusted his glasses. "This concludes today's lesson. Class is dismissed when the bell rings."