

ShadowBound 209

Chapter 209: Progress

Weeks had passed since the academy's new system was implemented on the first-years, and the students had begun to settle into their routines. Lectures and training sessions progressed steadily, with each day pushing them to take their studies and combat practice more seriously.

During this time, Liam returned to Mr. Blackwood's shop with Magnus to retrieve his newly crafted daggers. However, despite acquiring the weapons, he remained committed to mastering his grandfather's sword, a promise he had made to himself.

In the Knight Combat Training course, Liam relied solely on his sword, choosing not to wield his daggers even after obtaining them. Yet, in his private nightly training sessions, he dedicated time to adjusting to their weight and feel, ensuring he could wield them with precision when the time came.

Over those past three weeks, Liam had significantly refined his control over Fire Myst, mastering precision flame shaping and the ability to sustain fire forms. He had learned to mold flames into stable geometric constructs like spheres, whips, and blades without them flickering or collapsing. His understanding of fire density manipulation had deepened, allowing him to adjust the weight and intensity of his flames—whether for slow-burning effects or explosive bursts.

Additionally, his temperature regulation had improved, enabling him to generate flames that burned at controlled heat levels without unnecessary energy loss. This tied into his growing proficiency in myst efficiency, as he had learned to maintain powerful flames with minimal myst expenditure and even reabsorb unused energy before it dissipated.

Liam had also developed an advanced grasp of fire flow mastery, allowing him to guide his flames in controlled streams rather than relying solely on instinctive bursts. His resistance to external fire had increased, making him more durable against heat-based attacks.

Furthermore, he had begun experimenting with combustion control and chain ignition, enabling him to ignite objects selectively and create controlled fire-based chain reactions. This skill had granted him a tactical advantage, as he could detonate flames at will without losing control. With these advancements, Liam had steadily transitioned from raw power to refined mastery, ensuring that his fire no longer simply burned—but obeyed his command.

Back in Knight Combat Training, Liam significantly improved his combat skills, particularly in handling various types of demons. His ability to adapt his tactics in the heat of battle became second nature, allowing him to anticipate and counter attacks with precision.

His swordsmanship reached a new level, and his focus on defensive and offensive techniques became more seamless. In addition, he developed his ability to navigate extreme scenarios, improving his survival instincts and learning to fight effectively even when outnumbered or in unfamiliar terrain.

His mastery of weapon handling grew, with a deeper understanding of how to use swords in close combat. Moreover, the class taught him to adapt quickly to shifting circumstances, ensuring he remained effective even when the battle didn't go according to plan. These skills, combined with his growing tactical awareness, molded him into a far more capable fighter than before.

Meanwhile, in Tactical Espionage and Diplomacy, the class had undergone a drastic shift over the past few weeks. What had started with 21 students had dwindled to just 11. Five had dropped out on the first day, unable to stomach the harsh reality presented to them. Another five followed as the lessons intensified, the weight of truth proving too much to bear.

Seraphina and Kaine remained unfazed. This was an annual occurrence—one they had come to expect. Many students entered the course with grand illusions, only to falter upon realizing the brutal truth: humans were just as much their enemies as demons. The idea of taking another human life unsettled most, and while some attempted to endure, the relentless training and real-world scenarios chipped away at their resolve until they inevitably quit.

For Seraphina, this was a blessing. She had no interest in wasting her time on souls she deemed unworthy. Kaine, on the other hand, was indifferent. Whether one student or ten remained, his teaching methods wouldn't change. The training would be just as intense, just as merciless.

Over the past three weeks, Liam dedicated himself to mastering the lessons his instructors presented, forcing himself to push past the lingering unease about killing a person. Yet, no matter how much he tried to tune it out, the practical sessions made it impossible to ignore.

In the training hall, Seraphina made use of its myst-infused properties to generate holographic human adversaries, each armed and dangerous. The objective was simple: eliminate the target before it eliminated you.

Liam found himself hesitating. Unlike the Knight Combat Training class, where he dispatched holographic demons without a second thought, facing these human projections was different. His movements slowed, his instincts dulled by an uncertainty he couldn't quite shake.

Charlotte, however, was the complete opposite. Whether it was due to her beast affinity or something else entirely, she moved through every training with effortless ease, her animalistic instincts making it seem as though the hesitation Liam struggled with had never even crossed her mind.

Today was no different. Charlotte and a handful of the remaining students continued their training, executing their tasks with brutal efficiency. A select few, like Liam, still struggled—but unlike them, Liam wasn't failing outright. He simply refused to deliver the final blow with his weapons. Instead, he adapted. Using his sword, he deflected the incoming strikes of the holographic humans, redirecting their attacks while waiting for an opening. When the moment arrived, he unleashed bursts of searing flames, the heat distorting their forms and forcing the projections to dismantle. It wasn't the clean execution expected of an assassin, but it got the job done.

Now, he found himself cornered, two holographic opponents advancing on him with lethal precision.

The first lunged forward with a dagger, its movement swift and calculated. Liam sidestepped just as the blade whizzed past his ribs, bringing his sword down in a quick arc. The steel clashed against the dagger, redirecting the force as he twisted his wrist and drove a knee into the projection's gut. It staggered, but the second attacker wasted no time, swinging a short sword at Liam's shoulder.

Liam barely managed to twist out of the way, the blade grazing his sleeve. Gritting his teeth, he pivoted, his left hand crackling with flames as he swept it across the air. Fire roared to life, engulfing his immediate space in a controlled explosion. The first opponent dissolved instantly, the myst fueling its form unraveling under the heat. The second tried to press forward, but Liam's blade met it head-on, severing the projection at the waist.

As the final remnants of the projections faded into the air, Liam stood in the middle of the training hall, his chest rising and falling heavily. Sweat beaded along his forehead, and frustration settled deep in his bones. This wasn't enough. The struggle, the hesitation—it was weighing him down, holding him back. He clenched his fists.

' Why is this so damn hard?'

From across the hall, Seraphina let out a dramatic sigh, resting her chin on her hand as she idly observed him. Her lips curled into a pout, eyes twinkling with amusement and something else—mild disappointment.

"Why is my lovely little crush struggling this much? And here I had such high hopes for him," she murmured to herself, shaking her head. Experience new tales on

She continued to watch him, studying every move, every hesitation. Then, after a moment of consideration, she activated the Whisper spell. As she spoke, her voice slipped directly into Liam's ears like a seductive murmur.

"Come here, little shadow. Let's have a chat."