

ShadowBound 22

Chapter 22: Crimson Breathing: Overdrive

As Liam began to read, the hidden words of Liora slowly revealed themselves, each stroke brimming with a sense of urgency and history.

"If you've uncovered this text," it began, "then you've already grasped the truth: a temporary technique will never secure victory. Crimson Breathing served us well, allowing us to push our limits. But as battles grew fiercer, we learned that relying on something so fleeting would only lead to defeat."

Liam's eyes widened, his pulse quickening as he continued.

"After years of relentless effort, pushing this technique to its very brink, I achieved something greater — something that transcended its limitations. I reached a pinnacle that few can dream of, and I named this perfected form: Crimson Overdrive."

A thrill surged through Liam, his heart hammering in his chest. Crimson Overdrive. He whispered the name as if tasting it for the first time, feeling its power.

Liam's gaze sharpened, and a spark of determination flickered in his eyes. "So, now I can reach greater heights," he muttered, now more intrigued than ever.

Liam's eyes remained fixed on the page, the flickering light of his flame reflecting off the crimson-inked words. As he read further, Liora's instructions unfolded like the whispers of a long-forgotten legend.

"To achieve Crimson Overdrive," the text continued, "one must first master the foundations of Crimson Breathing until it becomes second nature, a rhythm that merges seamlessly with every beat of your heart. But that alone is not enough. To transcend its limits, you need something more — a catalyst."

Liam's breath caught, his fingers curling tighter around the edge of the book. The word 'catalyst' hung heavy in the air, pulsing with the same intensity as the crimson glow.

"The catalyst is a rare and sacred element known as the Myst Infusion Catalyst," Liora explained. "It is a flower, its petals the color of blood and radiant as the setting sun, pulsing with the energy of life itself. It grows only in places where myst is abundant, where the earth burns with an ancient power. Seek it in volcanic soil, or in the deep heart of forests where magic flows thick and unyielding. But be warned — it can only be harvested at dawn or dusk, when the air is saturated with myst."

Liam could almost see the flower in his mind, feel its warmth against his skin. He clenched his fist, excitement bubbling within him. The path is clearer now...

"Once you obtain this catalyst," Liora's words continued, "you must then undergo a ritual known as the Crimson Trials. This will force your myst to harmonize with the Crimson Breathing technique, allowing you to channel its power more efficiently and without restraint. The trials will test not just your body, but your very soul. It will push you to the edge, and you must be prepared to face the consequences."

Liam's pulse quickened, adrenaline coursing through him. He could almost feel the heat building within, the raw, untamed energy begging to be released. But Liora's message wasn't finished.

"Understand this," she warned, her words growing darker, "Crimson Overdrive is not without its risks. Your body will become a furnace, capable of sustaining the technique's power indefinitely — but only if you possess the willpower to maintain it. Lose focus, even for a moment, and you will be consumed by the very flames you seek to wield. Lastly, this technique takes time before it can be full mastered, it took me two to learn this properly"

As Liam absorbed her final words, a slow smile spread across his face, fierce and determined. "Crimson Overdrive... This is what I've been searching for."

He closed the book with a sharp snap, his pulse roaring in his ears like a battle cry. "Thank you, Liora," he murmured, eyes locked on the flickering flame that still hovered over his fingertip. "But your secret dies with me."

A shadow crossed his face, and his grin took on a ruthless edge. He wasn't about to let anyone else discover the path to Crimson Overdrive — this power would be his and his alone. With one swift, fluid motion, he tore the page from the book, the parchment crinkling in his grasp as if resisting.

For a moment, he stared at the now-blank sheet, feeling the weight of Liora's words still etched into his memory. Then, he folded the page carefully and tucked it into his pocket, as if sealing away a precious artifact.

"I will find that flower," he vowed quietly to himself, his voice barely more than a whisper, but carrying all the intensity of a raging inferno. "And when I do, I'll make Crimson Overdrive mine."

With that, he turned, leaving with the book as a faint trail of smoke curled from the tip of his finger, the embers of his resolve burning brighter than ever.

As Liam reached for the door, a sudden thought struck him. He hesitated, the thrill of newfound knowledge coursing through his veins.

"I think I should give this a try before I go to bed," he muttered to himself, excitement igniting his determination.

He set the book down gently on the floor, its cover glinting in the light. With a swift motion, he peeled off his shirt, the fabric pooling at his feet.

The cool air caressed his skin, heightening his senses as he prepared himself for the task ahead.

Sinking into a meditation pose, he settled onto the ground, his legs crossed and hands resting on his knees. He closed his eyes, blocking out the distractions of the world around him.

Deep breaths filled his lungs, steadying his racing heart. This was a moment for focus, for transformation.

With each inhale, he visualized the rhythm of Crimson Breathing, the Ignition Phase coursing through him like a flickering flame.

He pictured the energy pooling within, igniting his myst in a vibrant crimson glow. Minutes passed, feeling like hours, as he surrendered to the stillness, letting the warmth envelop him.

Time blurred, but slowly, after nearly an hour of concentrated effort, a familiar pulse began to resonate through him.

He felt it — the first stage of Crimson Breathing awakening, the energy swirling and vibrant, igniting his very essence. A triumphant smile crept onto his lips as he embraced the newfound power.

Driven by curiosity and a hint of ambition, Liam decided to attempt resonance with one of his shadow beasts. He extended his arm, summoning a flicker of shadow that coalesced into a form beside him.

As their energies intertwined, he marveled at how the initial stage of Crimson Breathing amplified his connection with the beast. The bond felt electric, their myst thrumming in harmony, an exhilarating dance of power.

But just as he settled into this euphoric state, a sudden wave of discomfort washed over him. An insatiable heat ignited in his chest, a burning that spread through his lungs like wildfire. Panic surged as he gasped, the flames of his energy spiraling out of control.

Before he could react, he fell to his knees, the world around him blurring. He coughed violently, the metallic taste of blood filling his mouth as he doubled over, each spasm a reminder of the price of power. Crimson droplets stained the floor, stark against the wood.

As the Ignition Phase wore off, pain radiated through his body, but beneath that pain, clarity emerged. Liam's heart raced, not just from the struggle but from a newfound understanding of Crimson Breathing's true potential. Each breath, each pulse, was a testament to his strength and resilience.

Through the haze of agony, he gritted his teeth, determination igniting anew within him. He could feel the flames of Crimson Overdrive calling to him. This pain would not break him; it would only fuel his drive to master the technique.

With each labored breath, he whispered to himself, "Just wait for me Overdrive, I surely reach you"

The rest of the night passed quickly, and the day dawned bright and clear. Liam sat in Ms. Valeria's class, the sun streaming through the windows, illuminating the room.

Despite the vibrant atmosphere, his mind was elsewhere, consumed by thoughts of Crimson Breathing.

Last night's revelations swirled in his head like a tempest.

'If I'm going to master this technique, I need a new training regimen.'

He recalled Liora's journey and the two years it took her to master Overdrive.

'I can't afford that kind of time. There's too much I need to learn, and I won't let this technique hinder me.'

Determination surged within him.

'I'll dedicate the next six months to mastering both Breathing and Overdrive.' With newfound focus, resolved to pour all his energy into perfecting this technique.

Lost in his thoughts, he barely registered Ms. Valeria's voice cutting through his reverie.

"Alright, class, that's where we end today," she announced, gathering her belongings and exiting the room.

As the students began to file out, Liam felt a familiar tightness in his chest, a lingering pain from trying to learn the Ignition Phase the night before. Just as he contemplated heading out, Elsie, seated beside him, noticed his discomfort.

"Are you alright, Liam?" she asked, concern etched on her face.

"Yeah, it's nothing to worry about. Just overdid it a bit during my workout yesterday," he replied, offering a casual smile to downplay his discomfort.

"Can I see?" she pressed, her tone gentle yet insistent.

Liam, not in the mood for a debate, relented. "Fine."

Elsie gently placed her hand over his lung area. Memories of their last encounter flooded her mind, and a faint blush crept across her cheeks.

Focusing her energy, she summoned her healing magic. A warm glow enveloped her hand as she channeled the magic into him.

As the soothing energy coursed through him, the pain dissipated completely. "Wow, thank you very much," he said, his voice calm but with a hint of genuine appreciation.

"You're welcome," she replied, her eyes brightening. Trying to shift the atmosphere, she asked, "Umm... want to grab lunch together today?"

Liam stood, adjusting his posture. "Sorry, but I have something to do at the library. How about next time?"

"Oh... okay," Elsie said, her voice tinged with disappointment.

With a nod, Liam walked out of the classroom, the lunch bell ringing in the background. As he stepped into the hallway, he couldn't help but feel the weight of his decision settling in.