

Months had passed in the real world, but inside the Forest of Kyrell, it felt like an eternity. Liam's once uncertain footsteps had grown sure, and his trembling hands were now steady with purpose. He no longer feared the constant darkness that enveloped the forest. Instead, he had come to accept it as part of him—just as he had begun to accept his own inner darkness.

In one of these countless battles, Liam faced a pack of fearsome creatures—fangs dripping with venom, eyes glowing with malice. They lunged at him from all sides, a coordinated attack that would have overwhelmed the boy he once was. But now, his movements were sharp and calculated. He ducked, rolled, and struck with precision, flames bursting from his hands like a whip, searing the air.

His once clumsy use of fire magic had evolved into something deadly. Flames wrapped around his arm, forming into a blade-like edge as he sliced through

one creature's neck. The others flanked him, but Liam danced through their attacks, almost effortlessly. It was clear that he had changed.

He wasn't surviving anymore. He was thriving.

Draven watched from a nearby ridge, arms crossed. His cold, unwavering eyes followed Liam's every move, nodding silently to himself as he observed Liam's progress. The flames had become second nature to the boy, flickering more powerfully with each battle. *But the real power, the dangerous potential, still slept deep within him.*

"It won't be long now," Draven muttered to himself, noting how Liam's myst seemed to thicken with every blow he struck. He could see the faint trace of dark magic swirling beneath the surface. If the boy ever unlocked that power completely, it could prove both his greatest strength—and his undoing.

After the fight ended and the final creature fell to the ground in a heap, Liam wiped the sweat from his brow, feeling an unfamiliar sense of satisfaction. These creatures that once terrorized him had become mere obstacles in his path. But even in victory, there was no celebration, no cheering—just the ever-present tension of survival.

Draven approached him, stepping down from his vantage point. His presence was as intimidating as ever, but Liam had long grown used to his mentor's cold demeanor.

"We'll stay here for now," Draven said, his voice as sharp as a blade. "You've done well, kid. But there's still more to learn."

Liam breathed a sigh of relief. For the first time in months, they weren't immediately moving from one danger to the next. He sat down on a nearby rock, rubbing his tired muscles.

"What is it this time?" Liam asked, half-expecting to be sent off on another dangerous mission.

Draven's gaze softened slightly as he leaned against a tree, arms crossed. "Your myst... it's growing faster than I expected. Just using your flames alone, you're pushing it to its limits. And if you unlock your dark magic fully, it'll grow even faster—maybe too fast."

Liam looked at him, confused. "What do you mean, too fast? Isn't that a good thing?"

Draven narrowed his eyes, his voice dropping to a serious tone. "No, kid. Myst is like a beacon in this place. The stronger it gets, the more you attract everything around you—demons, malevolent creatures, even things more dangerous than what you've faced so far. They don't care what side you're on. They hunt power.

If you let your myst grow out of control, you'll have more enemies than you can handle."

Liam sat there, absorbing Draven's words. He had felt the growth in his power, but he hadn't considered that it might come with such a heavy cost. He clenched his fists, feeling the warmth of his myst flicker beneath his skin. *It wasn't just about surviving anymore. He had to control it.*

Draven continued, seeing the wheels turning in Liam's head. "Myst is energy, power. Everyone has it—humans, demons, creatures. But it's the way you *use* it that matters. Some people let it flow naturally, others force it out like a weapon. But what makes myst dangerous is that it responds to emotion.

The more anger, fear, or desperation you feel, the stronger it becomes. You've felt it, haven't you? The flames get hotter when you're desperate to survive."

Liam nodded, remembering the times he had nearly died, only to be saved by the surge of his own power.

Draven pushed off the tree, walking closer to Liam. "But there's a way to control that. To mask your true power, make your enemies underestimate you, or even drive them back with fear."

Liam's interest piqued. "How?"

"That's where the *Veil of Flux* comes in," Draven said, his cold eyes locking onto Liam's. "It's a technique few can master. You can manipulate the appearance of your myst, make it seem weaker or stronger depending on what you need in a fight. Confuse your enemies. Draw them in or push them back. It's a powerful tool—if you can learn to control it."

Liam stood up, his curiosity fully awakened. "You're actually going to teach me this?"

Draven smirked. "Don't get too excited, kid. You're still learning to survive, and this is just another part of that. But yes, I'm going to teach you properly this time. It's about time you start thinking beyond the moment."

For months, all Liam had done was fight to survive. Every day was a test of endurance and reflexes, a struggle to stay alive. But now, for the first time, he was being given something more—a strategy, a path forward.

The following days were filled with intense training. Draven taught him the subtleties of controlling myst, how to let it flow freely when he needed strength but pull it back when he needed to conceal himself. The *Veil of Flux* was more than just a skill—it was a way to deceive, a way to make Liam more than what he appeared.

Liam practiced shifting his myst between the different states: the weakened state, where he seemed vulnerable, tricking enemies into letting their guard down; the amplified state, where his myst flared, making him seem more powerful than he was; and the flux state, where it flowed erratically, creating an unpredictable aura around him.

At first, it was difficult. Liam struggled to keep the myst from reacting to his emotions. But with each passing day, he grew more adept, his control improving.

"You're doing well, kid," Draven said one night as they sat by a small fire. "But don't get cocky. The more you grow, the more dangerous you become—to yourself and to others."

Liam stared into the fire, his mind swirling with thoughts of everything he had learned. He wasn't just surviving anymore. He was becoming something more. Something stronger. Something... dangerous.

But with that power came responsibility—a weight he wasn't sure he was ready to carry.

Draven watched him in silence, knowing that the real battles were yet to come. For now, though, the boy was growing—slowly but surely, into the warrior he would need to become.

But as the shadows danced in the firelight, both men knew the darkest battles were still ahead, waiting for the day when Liam would have to face the true terror of the forest: Jamak.