

ShadowBound 89

Chapter 89: Testing The Technique

Liam stepped out of the shower, steam trailing after him as he closed the door behind him. A towel hung loosely around his neck, and water dripped from his damp hair, cascading down his toned frame.

He took a deep breath, the cool air of his room contrasting against the lingering warmth from the shower.

After drying himself off, he slid into a pair of simple black pants, tossing the towel onto a nearby chair. He sat at the edge of his bed, his elbows resting on his knees, staring at the faint moonlight filtering through the window.

His thoughts began to churn, drifting to the techniques he had started picking up during his time at the academy. 'Amplification and Shielding... foundational techniques but surprisingly useful,' he mused. A faint smirk tugged at his lips as he leaned back slightly. 'And then there's Crimson Breathing... my old friend.'

The realization hit him like a spark igniting dry tinder. 'If Crimson Breathing enhances endurance by circulating myst through my body, doesn't that mean it could also help me absorb and channel more myst than usual? And now that I know more about core dynamics...'

The possibilities unfurled in his mind, each more enticing than the last. His smirk deepened. "Looks like things are about to get a lot more interesting," he murmured, the excitement glimmering in his eyes.

Liam's thoughts drifted back to his time in the Dark Forest under Draven's harsh tutelage. His mentor had focused on survival—teaching him the brutal, practical skills needed to endure in a relentless environment.

But Draven had skipped over the basics, the foundational knowledge of magic and myst. While Liam had grown strong and resourceful, he now realized just how many gaps existed in his understanding.

'Four years in that hellhole... and I missed out on the basics,' he thought, shaking his head slightly. 'But now, those gaps were beginning to close, one by one.'

With every new piece of knowledge, he felt himself becoming more complete, his arsenal growing sharper and more versatile.

He fell back onto the bed, staring up at the ceiling. "I'm bored," he muttered, his voice flat. The stillness of the room only made the feeling worse.

Then an idea struck him. "Myst Shielding..." he said aloud, a spark of intrigue lighting up his otherwise calm demeanor. "Why not test it out and see how useful it really is?"

But how? His mind began to race, considering his options. A slow, mischievous grin spread across his face as a thought came to him. "Yeah... that should do it."

Springing up from the bed, Liam grabbed a simple black shirt and pulled it over his head. Without wasting any more time, he slipped on his boots and headed for the door.

The hallway outside was quiet, the faint hum of lamps lining the walls creating an almost eerie stillness. Liam placed his hands in his pockets and calmly walked down the hallway.

The moonlight bathed the academy grounds in a pale glow as Liam moved calmly, his footsteps were neither fast nor slow but silent against the cobblestone paths.

The air was cool, and the distant rustle of leaves accompanied him as he made his way toward Galen's training ground.

Minutes later, he arrived at his destination. The colosseum stood eerily quiet, its vast stone walls illuminated by the moonlight.

The stillness of the arena was broken only by the occasional gust of wind, which swept through the open space, producing a haunting whistle as it passed through cracks in the ancient structure.

Liam stepped into the colosseum with an unhurried calm, his eyes scanning the empty stands before moving to the center of the arena.

Reaching the center, he came to a halt. His gaze dropped to the shadow cast before him, long and sharp under the moonlight's glow.

"Come out," he commanded, his voice low but laced with authority.

The words carried weight, resonating in the still air. Almost immediately, his shadow began to shift unnaturally, stretching and expanding across the ground like liquid darkness. The smooth, fluid motion had an otherworldly quality, as if the shadow itself were alive.

The air grew heavy as the shadow swirled and coalesced, taking on form and substance. The ground trembled faintly as the silhouette began to rise, its shape twisting and expanding upward.

Within moments, a massive dragon emerged from the darkness, its form towering above Liam. Its scales shimmered faintly, black as night yet edged with an ethereal glow.

The dragon's eyes burned like glowing embers, their intense blue light contrasting sharply against its shadowy, ethereal body.

Its massive wings stretched outward, casting an imposing silhouette in the ancient stone colosseum before folding neatly against its sides.

Lowering its enormous head, the beast bowed obediently to Liam, a gesture of unwavering loyalty that seemed almost reverent.

Liam stepped closer, placing a hand gently on the dragon's snout. The smooth, cool texture of its scales sent a faint chill through his fingertips. "It's been a while since I last summoned you," he said, his tone soft.

His thoughts drifted for a moment as he continued to pet the dragon. 'Actually... it's been a while since I summoned any of my beasts. Guess I've been too focused on other things.'

The dragon let out a low rumble, wagging its tail slightly as Liam gave its snout a reassuring pat.

"Alright, enough pleasantries," Liam said, his voice firm but not unkind. "I need you to do something for me."

The dragon tilted its head slightly, its glowing eyes narrowing with curiosity.

"I'm going to form a protective barrier around myself," Liam began, pointing at his chest. "And you... you're going to use your fire breath on me."

The dragon's eyes widened in shock, its expression surprisingly humanlike as it recoiled slightly, clearly taken aback by the request.

Liam smirked, sensing the beast's hesitation. "Relax," he said, waving his hand dismissively. "If it gets too hot for the barrier to handle, I'll just dodge out of the way."

The dragon's glowing eyes flickered, still uncertain but willing to trust its master.

Liam turned and started to walk a safe distance away, casually waving over his shoulder. "Besides," he added with a smirk, "if you accidentally destroy this place with your flames, I'll be the one who gets in trouble. And trust me, if I'm in trouble, you'll be in trouble too."

At this, the dragon visibly gulped, its body language reflecting an exaggerated, almost comical sense of unease. Its tail flicked nervously, and a small puff of smoke escaped its nostrils.

Liam stopped and turned back to face the dragon, his smirk widening. "Got it? You fire only when I say 'go.'"

The dragon exhaled sharply through its nose, a plume of warm mist escaping as it nodded its massive head in understanding.

"Good," Liam said, rolling his shoulders as he began to focus. He felt the myst within him stir, swirling and gathering into a protective layer that began to envelop the structure his body like a faint, shimmering aura.

The dragon crouched slightly, its chest expanding as it prepared its fiery breath, its glowing eyes fixed intently on Liam.

Liam smirked, the excitement of testing his barrier against such a powerful force lighting up his features. "Alright," he said, his voice steady, "let's see just how strong this Myst Shielding really is at my current level."

He raised his hand, signaling the dragon. "On my mark... three... two... one... go!"