

Leveling up the World

Chapter 7: A Mother's Hairpin

The more Dallion learned about awakening in this new world, the more its limitations became clear. For starters it was not possible to use the ability at will. Although invisible the stress on the body was extreme, and a day of light activity, or better yet rest, was highly recommended. Dallion had discovered that the hard way when he had attempted to improve a broken chair shortly after the chiefs trial. Not only was he unable to enter the chairs state, but he had fainted immediately after.

Upon waking up, the first thing he received was a sharp slap from his mother. The second was a long and detailed explanation of what to and not to do as far as awakening powers were concerned. She might have lost the ability to use her power, but as a daughter of an awakened had studied the theory for years before breaking through her barrier.

Apparently awakening was divided into levels. Being level one allowed a person to use the ability once per day without suffering harm. As a general rule, it was also sensible to focus on items that were on the same level, in order to avoid harm. That explained why the village chief hadnt followed up the trial by another taskeven he couldnt break the rules in such an obvious way.

Skills and statistics were also an important part of a persons life. The statistics were the representations of ones being, namely body, mind, perception, and reflexes. Body represented a persons strength and ability to heal, mindtheir wit, perception was the degree to which one perceived sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touch, and finally reflexes were the reaction speed of the individual. Normally one started with three points on each, and was allowed to increase the value of one of them with each breakthrough.

Dallion didnt mention he had received a bonus of two reflexes points. He did, however, thank his good fortune for it. If he had fought the guardian with a reflex of three, the outcome might have been very different.

The boys mother also spoke of two lost statistics: magic and one other, the name of which had been forgotten with time. From her words Dallion understood that incredibly few awakened with magic, and those who did went on to quickly become nobles of vast import in the large cities or even the Imperial Capital itself.

Skills, on the other hand, were much fuzzier. For one thing, there was no clear consensus as to their type and number. Some of them, such as Guard and Attack, were obvious. Most people were offered one among them, occasionally given the option to pick between both. Every now and again, less common skills would appear.

I was offered music, Dallions mother said with a sad smile. It allowed me to see and create emotions for people. I could have brought cheer to the entire village, maybe beyond but it was no combat skill.

Dallion felt a lump in his throat. To be given such a rare gift only to have it snuffed out by a jealous village chief that was beyond cruel.

Do you miss it?

The boy wanted to ask, but knew he shouldnt. The answer was obvious.

I better go help dad in the field, Dallion moved to stand up from his bed.

No. His mother placed her hand firmly on his shoulder. Youre an awakened now. You dont have to work.

That doesnt sound fair. That explains why everyone in the Luor family is so spoilt. Besides, I dont mind helping a bit.

What you must do is train. The soft tone of the womans voice had become as hard as steel. As an awakened, youre given a week to get used to your power. After that, the village chief will call you to perform another task. She clenched her fists.

Let me guess. Another tradition for the good of the city.

Now that Aspion has seen what youre capable of hell think of something more difficult to break you. Your only chance is to be ready.

Seven days to prepare. With one gone, only six remainedsix chances to improve items and develop his skills.

How do I increase my awakened state? Dallion asked.

Youre not ready for that. His mother shook her head. It takes months to reach the point of a breakthrough. The only thing you can do until then is improve the skills you have. She took out a bone pin from her hair and held it in front of him. And Ill help you do that. Use your skill as much as you can. Its not about defeating your opponent, its about learning what you have.

Learning what I have.

Dallion reached out and grabbed the tip of the hairpin.

The HAIRPIN is Level 1

The boy was in a small room again, this one smooth and white, as if made of pearl. His buckler was placed on his arm, same as last time unfortunately the clothes were his pajamas.

This is awkward.

You are in a small bone room.

Defeat the guardian to change the HAIRPINs destiny!

I know, I know. Dallion gently tapped on the rectangle.

As it vanished a doorway emerged. If nothing else, that confirmed the notion that nothing bad could happen in the initial room. It was also apparent that the room depended on the material the item was made of. Going by that, the room size had to be linked to the items level.

Guard skills, activate! he said out loud, raising his buckler.

Nothing happened.

Okay, so they dont appear on command. He lowered his shield. At least there was no one to see him. Taking a deep breath, he walked through the doorway. Going by his experience, Dallion expected to enter a room with an opponent. Instead, he found himself in a very short and twisty corridor branching off in three directions.

You are in a Labyrinth of DAMAGE

Reach the center of the labyrinth to repair the HAIRPIN.

Well Dallion swallowed. This is new.