

## Hammer God 109

### Chapter 109: Ether Spring

Kyle moved further to the south. Since dawn was here, he had to be more careful about being found by some random hunters.

During his travels, he passed a couple of hills and killed another Spitter.

'Why are there so fucking many of them everywhere?' Kyle thought as he ate his newest corpse.

With his advancement, the corpses of the Spitters were no longer as delectable as they used to be.

Now, they just tasted average.

But hey, it still kept his hunger at bay.

After stepping past a tree, Kyle noticed something big and blue in the distance.

He walked closer, and that's when he saw it.

A big lake!

This thing was probably several kilometers long and wide.

A bunch of fish were swimming around, and Kyle even saw some monstrosities deep in the abyss.

There were a couple of people fishing on the shores of the lake.

"Big lake," Kyle commented.

"That's the Ether Spring," Theodor commented.

"Ether Spring?" Kyle asked.

"Foolish inheritor, how do you not know what an Ether Spring is?" Theodor asked.

"Brah, I dunno. Just tell me."

Theodor snorted. "This is the core of the Cradle. Every Cradle has an Ether Spring. Ether Springs can have different elements, and this Ether Spring has the element of water."

"Ether Springs spread Ether across a big area, keeping the violent Ether of the Skysand at bay. This allows flora and fauna to thrive here."

"Huh," Kyle commented. "So, without this thing, this place wouldn't exist?"

"Correct," Theodor answered.

"What other kinds of Ether Springs are there?" Kyle asked.

"Fire Ether Springs are either big fires or volcanoes. They are not great for growing food or plants, but they still keep the Skysands at bay."

"Earth Ether Springs look like big mountains. They are also safe, but growing food is still difficult."

"Wow," Kyle said. "Lucky we got a Water Ether Spring then."

"It's not luck," Theodor said. "This is an artificial Ether Spring."

"Wait, we can make those?" Kyle asked in surprise. "I thought this was some kind of magical natural phenomenon."

"It is a natural phenomenon, but we can also make them. It's just very expensive to make one. You have to feed the land enough Ether that the cycle of distribution and absorption becomes stable."

"Crazy," Kyle commented. "Humans can change the environment here to this degree, and they don't even need to use greenhouse gasses or shit like that."

"Greenhouse gasses?" Theodor asked with a metaphorically raised brow.

"Just some dumb stuff. Ignore what I said. My dwarf brain is acting up again," Kyle said.

Theodor just snorted.

"You see the city to the Ether Spring's east?" Theodor asked.

"Kinda hard to not see it," Kyle said, looking at the huge walls.

"Usually, the capital of the Cradle is always the closest to the Spirit Spring. If the politics haven't changed, Barons get one town to rule over. The capital counts as a city, and it can only be controlled by a Count or higher. The Count also rules over the entire Cradle."

"Anyone can technically become a Baron. You don't even need to be in the Second Realm to become one, but if you want to become a Count, you need to be in the Third Realm."

"Every Cradle needs someone at the Third Realm for safety. Sometimes, beasts from the outside come to the Cradle, and you need to deal with them quickly."

"A single beast from the outside could lay the entire Cradle to waste."

Kyle took a deep breath.

'And I am supposed to go outside on my own?!' he thought.

"Are they stronger than the Great Anaconda?" Kyle asked.

"Based on what I have seen, the Great Anaconda is a Mid Ferocious Beast. It's stronger than the average beast in the wild."

"The beasts that are to venture into the Cradles are either very weak, very stupid, or very strong. Humans have lived in the Cradles for thousands of years, and the beasts have learned to fear the Cradle."

"99.9% of all beasts will not willingly enter a Cradle."

"But when thousands of beasts find a Cradle, there is bound to be one amongst them that will attempt to enter."

Kyle remembered the stone dog dragon thing in front of Theodor's inheritance crypt.

"Hey, how strong are these beasts compared to your stone dragon?" Kyle asked.

"Hieronymus?" Theodor asked.

"Yes, that one," Kyle said.

"Most of them won't be as strong as Hieronymus. A beast with Hieronymus' power only attempts to enter a Cradle maybe once in several decades," Theodor explained.

"Could the Cradle defend from something like that?" Kyle asked.

"The Cradle will survive since not many beasts destroy Ether Springs. They just stay near it and absorb the Ether it gives off."

"As for the cities and humans, it completely depends on the Count ruling over the Cradle."

"All Counts are anywhere between the Initial and Mid Third Realm, and that is quite a large gap. There are also Counts who are very experienced in battle and some who are not."

"A strong Count will kill the beast without many issues."

"A weak Count will be killed by the beast without many issues."

Kyle was quite interested. "What if the Count fails? Will the Skysand Kingdom just give up?"

"Of course not," Theodor answered with a snort. "When the yearly taxes don't come, the Skysand Kingdom will investigate the Cradle. The scout will find the beast and report. After that, they will send a Duke and the Cradle will be rebuilt."

"Duke?" Kyle asked. "I assume Dukes are stronger than Counts? I don't know a lot about nobility."

"Dukes and Advisors are the most powerful people in the Kingdom. Every single one of them is highly experienced and has reached the Late Third Realm at the very least."

"Dukes have authority over several Cradles, while the Advisors run the Kingdom in Hieronymus' name."

"Huh," Kyle said. "What about the two Transcendents?"

"They are the Champion of Skysand and the General of Skysand. They are both in the military and busy fighting against the Winterfire Kingdom."

"What was your position?" Kyle asked.

"I was Master of Golems, which made me responsible for resource acquisition and military research. I had the position of Advisor."