

Hammer God 27

Chapter 27: Paths to Power

"The Soul is a sense that allows you to influence the Ether in your surroundings. It also allows you much more freedom in how your Ether interacts with the surroundings."

"Like Fennek rapiers?" Kyle asked.

"Fennek's rapiers, yes," Tarren answered, scouting the surroundings again.

"However, Fennek isn't actually using his Soul to infuse his rapiers. His rapiers are specially made by someone with a powerful Soul to accommodate his abilities. He can't use his flame ability with just any weapon since he's an actual Squire."

'That fucking word again! Can't you just tell me what fucking Squire means?!' Kyle thought in frustration.

"What's a Squire?" he asked.

"Squire is the official term for Knights who are in the First Realm. You remember what the four Aspects of Power are?"

"Body, mind, center, Soul," Kyle answered.

"Normal humans get their Ether distributed evenly across all of them," Tarren said. "Wait a second!"

Kyle stayed silent and waited for Tarren.

About 30 seconds later, Tarren lowered his arm. "There was a dangerous beast that we shouldn't kill. Where was I?"

"Aspects of Power. Normal people. Squires," Kyle answered.

"Right, future Knights undergo a ritual when they start their career. Young children who have a talent for Ether get scouted and undergo the ritual. The ritual is quite expensive, which is why only the best children are selected."

"The ritual for future Knights enhances their Center and Body while locking the Mind and Soul. In that way, all the Ether you gather will only enter your Center and Body, making them much stronger than normal."

'What the fuck? They are getting crippled for a future career? That sounds retarded!' Kyle thought.

"Why do that?" he asked.

"Jack of all trades, master of none. Ever heard that before?" Tarren asked.

'Earth has a similar proverb,' Kyle thought before nodding.

"Your existence has weight. You advance a level inside of a Realm whenever your existence attains a certain weight calculated in Ether."

"Since the entire weight of a Knight is focused on their Center and Body, their bodies are more than twice as strong, and they have more than twice the amount of Ether available than humans who didn't undergo the ritual."

"Doubling your power doesn't just represent being as strong as two humans. It also means you are twice as fast, are twice as resilient, and strike twice as hard. Even without combat training, a Squire can probably fight over twelve normal humans on the same level."

"Fennek is only a Mid Squire, but he can even fight Samson, who is the normal human equivalent of a Peak Squire. Sure, Fennek can never become a Sorcerer or Artificer since his Soul and mind are weak, but he doesn't have to be. He just has to be able to win in a fight, and that's what Knights are supposed to do."

"Sorcerer? Artificer?" Kyle asked.

"They are other paths to power," Tarren explained. "Sorcerers undergo a ritual that strengthens their mind and Center. Their bodies are weak, but they can use their Ether in devastating manners. Becoming a Sorcerer is even harder than becoming a Knight since it involves a looooot of studying and learning."

"A Sorcerer can transform their Ether into pure fire, amplify it, and shoot it out of a conduit, which amplifies it even further. A Mid Apprentice, which is the Sorcerer equivalent of a Mid Squire, could probably destroy the Tar Golem with only a single fireball."

Kyle's eyes widened. "Powerful!" he said.

"Yeah, but they are weak without support," Tarren said. "While they have a couple of abilities that allow them to escape, they are not very good. If a Knight manages to get close to a Sorcerer without getting hit, the Sorcerer is helpless."

"Because of that, Knights and Sorcerers work together. The Knights keep the Sorcerers safe, and the Sorcerers unleash devastation on the enemy."

"And Artificers?" Kyle asked.

"Artificers deal with magical equipment. Their ritual focuses their Ether on their Mind and Soul. In combat, they can only rely on their magical equipment. They don't have a strong body, and they can't unleash many Spells."

"However, they are the only ones that can create the advanced weaponry the Knights and Sorcerers need. You could view them as magical blacksmiths."

'Wait! Then...'

"Tar Golem made... Artificer?" Kyle asked.

Tarren's eyebrows rose in pleasant surprise. "Pretty smart for a half-dwarf. You already understood how it works."

'Great backhanded compliment, asshole,' Kyle thought, but he couldn't help feeling a bit smug.

"Golems are technically magical tools. They are machines that absorb Ether from the surroundings and transform it into more of themselves. Artificers who focus on Golemancy are called Golemancers."

"In general, powerful humans only focus on two of their four Aspects of Power, and each combination results in a different specialty."

"Body and Center makes Knights, who excel in close-quarter combat and a variety of Ether techniques."

"Body and mind makes fighters, who can fight with astonishing finesse and breathtaking quickness."

"Body and Soul makes Paladins, but we don't have those here. They are exclusive to the Duchy of the Holy Sea."

"Center and Mind makes Sorcerers, who can unleash devastating Ether-based Spells."

"Center and Soul is an interesting one since there are a couple of paths for that one. Conjurers can summon and control demons. Beast Tamers can connect their minds with beasts and control them. There are also Priests, but as with Paladins, we don't have them."

"The last one is Mind and Soul, and those are Artificers. They just make a variety of magical equipment."

"Depending on which path you take, your Realm is called differently."

"Knights in the First Realm are called Squires."

"Sorcerers in the First Realm are called Apprentices."

"Fighters are Adepts."

"Paladins are Adjutants."

"Conjurers are Summoners."

"Beast Tamers are Fledglings."

"Priests are Servants."

"And Artificers are Tinkerers."

'Wow, lots of vocabulary,' Kyle thought. 'Surprised I can remember all of that.'

"And you?" Kyle asked. "What are you?"

"Just a regular human who got some Ether," Tarren answered. "I'm the equivalent of a Late Squire, but I'm not really one."

"What's name for normal human?" Kyle asked.

"There isn't one," Tarren answered. "We just say we are in Realm One at level four. Alternatively, we just use Late Squire, even though we're not Squires."

"What am I?" Kyle thought.

"You're in Realm One at level two. You're the equivalent of an Early Squire, but since you didn't undergo the ritual, you are just like me."

"A regular human."

"Or half-dwarf."

"By the way, dwarfs put all their Ether into their bodies. That makes them physically very intimidating, but they are quite stupid and lack finesse."

Tarren sighed.

"But they don't have to search for Ether. They can just eat beasts."

"I wish I could advance by just eating beast meat."

"Dwarves are essentially just beasts in human bodies."

"They live a simple life."