

Volume 2 - Chapter 101 - Motion

"I am often asked of the difference between a Wielder and a Psyker.

The answer is simple: A Psyker studied for the exam. A Wielder was born already knowing the answers—but nobody ever taught them how to read the questions..."

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[Excerpt from "Lectures on Applied Void Theory, Vol. IV" — Runepriest Sellara Vhinn, Intoresta Academic Institute, PFC 801.]

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"I want to learn as much as possible," Thea answered, her voice slowly growing steadier again. "I can keep going. However long you've got left."

The Runepriest cracked a mad, deeply satisfied grin and clapped his hands together with a chuckle.

"*Excellent!* I am extremely glad to hear that, Thea. Truly. Then let us waste no further time—we shall go straight for the first, admittedly somewhat *experimental*, idea I have..."

He held out his right hand, palm up, and concentrated.

For a moment, nothing happened.

And then something *manifested* in the palm of his hand—hovering there, impossibly, a few centimetres above his skin.

Thea's eyes were immediately drawn to it.

Her brain tried to make sense of what they were delivering, and—for what felt like the tenth time today—simply *failed*.

The thing was... dimensioned *wrong*.

It was made of clean, precise strokes of non-incandescent... *light*, for lack of a better word, almost like fine calligraphy—except the strokes folded through themselves, passing behind their own lines in directions that did not exist, connecting at angles her mind refused to hold onto.

Every time she thought she had grasped parts of its overall shape, some portion of it turned *away* from her—not left, not right, not up or down, but *away* along some fourth axis her perception had no slot for—revealing new strokes that had, apparently, been there the entire time.

It cast no shadow. It had no fixed size. It was small enough to hover above a palm and, simultaneously, structured with a depth that felt like it continued inward *forever*.

"What—" she started, mouth dry. "What is that thing?"

The Rune priest simply looked at her. *Intently*.

'...A test, then. Of course. Everything's a test with him...'

She dragged her attention back to the thing in his hand, forcing herself to think past the visual chaos of it.

'Okay... Think. What multi-dimensional bullshit have we actually dealt with today? The Warren... Obviously not that. The Paths, I guess? But that's definitely not a Path. The strange ice shard—'

It clicked almost immediately.

*'—it's really the only thing that makes sense, isn't it? It's what he said he wanted to provide me with for the end of this session: Something **usable**.'*

"It's a Voidrune," she answered with more confidence than she really had.

The Rune priest nodded, visibly satisfied.

"Very good, my dear pupil."

'Oh, thank fuck,' Thea noted quietly, with genuine relief. *'Officially back to "dear pupil" status.'*

"It is indeed a Voidrune," he confirmed. "A very *specific* one, in fact."

His eyes glittered. "Tell me, Thea—do you recognise it?"

The question caught her completely off-guard.

'Recognise it? How the fuck would I possibly recognise it?'

She had never *seen* a Voidrune before. Not *once*.

Even the one she had been carving earlier in the session—she'd never actually seen it.

She'd been feeling it out blind the entire time, tracing it based purely on the shape of what Æht had already carved into their shared Soul before her.

There was no version of events in which she could possibly—

Her eyes widened as she looked at the Voidrune hovering above his palm.

Because—for some reason—as she looked at it more closely...

She *did* recognise it.

She couldn't say why. She couldn't point at a single stroke across its entire, strange structure and name it. But somewhere underneath conscious thought, in the same wordless place the **Name** had come from, the thing in front of her registered as familiar.

Not quite right—something about it sat subtly off, like a word spelled in someone else's handwriting—but distinctly, undeniably *familiar* all the same.

"I... I do," she said slowly, almost disbelieving it herself. "I don't know why... It's not—it's not quite *right*, somehow. But I recognise it, I think?"

The Rune priest's smile grew wider. And wider.

Until it had become a big, toothy grin—and then he suddenly burst out laughing, full-bodied and *delighted*, slapping his own thigh with his free hand.

Thea just continued to look at him, thoroughly confused.

The Rune priest righted himself after a few more moments, the chimes of his armoured robe clinging softly with the movement, and wiped at the corner of one eye with his free hand.

In his typical fashion—with flair—he revealed the reason.

"Thea... I am *not* a Short-Term Precog."

His eyes met hers, and he waited, visibly savouring the moment, for her to take those words in.

Thea's eyes widened slowly as they filtered through.

'Wait. Wait, wait, wait—'

Short-Term Precognition was the *only* Path she had any Voidrunes from. The *only* one.

The one Æht had carved into their shared Soul.

If the Rune priest wasn't a Short-Term Precog—if this wasn't the [Glimpse] Voidrune, the one thing she could have plausibly recognised—

'—then what the fuck am I recognising?!'

Visibly amused and thoroughly satisfied by her reaction, he answered before she could even get the question out.

"It is the Voidrune for [Telekinesis], my dear pupil."

He leaned back in his armchair, letting the moment breathe, clearly enjoying every last second of it.

"This was, I will freely admit, a massive shot in the dark. And I am genuinely *far* too excited about it landing than I probably should be..." He chuckled, shaking his head slowly. "But it

has been so damnably long since anything has destroyed my expectations as thoroughly as you keep managing to. You simply *must* forgive this old man his indulgences..."

"But—*how*?" Thea asked, her eyes darting between him and the impossible thing still hovering above his palm. "Why would it feel familiar to me? I don't *have* [Telekinesis] as a Power—"

The Rune priest merely raised an eyebrow at her.

"Oh, *really*?"

He didn't wait for a response.

"You see, the shot in the dark was a very simple idea: If my pupil has two Paths... why wouldn't she also have two Generic Powers? Unlike Inheritances, they aren't limited to one, after all."

He gestured loosely toward her with his free hand.

"You have [Eyes of the Void]. Of that, there is no doubt whatsoever. And as it so happens, there has been exactly *one* recorded instance of you using it—just after the Assessment ended, before your conversation with Auxiliary-Legate Kanis."

Thea blinked, her memory scrambling backward, only vaguely recalling the first few moments after the Assessment had ended—accompanied by a bit of a cringe.

"It could, of course, have been nothing," he continued. "A simple mishap. Or a side-effect of whatever Ice-based Origin Rune you are carrying around inside you... But I figured it was worth a shot."

His grin returned, wide and toothy.

"And to hit it directly? On the very first try? I am *more* than happy with that. You recognising the Voidrune, my dear pupil, is essentially *proof* that you very likely possess it—alongside your [Eyes of the Void]. Somewhere within your very being. After all, where else would you have ever seen it before, to a level of detail that you could now recognize it again?"

Thea worked through the logic, piece by piece, but as far as she could understand any of this, there really wasn't another explanation that made sense but what the Rune priest had just said.

"...Okay. Yeah. I—I think I follow," she admitted. "But then—what exactly *are* Generic Powers anyway? You've mentioned them a few times now, but, like... how do they work? Why aren't they part of a Path?"

"I do not know," the Rune priest replied simply. "Nobody does. They simply *are*. Powers that exist outside the entire Path structure, unbound and unaffiliated. There are *a number* of them—" he raised a finger before she could ask, "—and the exact number, I would rather keep hidden from you."

Thea frowned.

"Not out of malice, my dear pupil," he clarified, a wry smile tugging at his mouth. "But given your rather remarkable penchant for pulling quite literally *impossible* things out of nowhere, I would rather leave you as much of a blank slate as possible... To see whether, perhaps, you simply pull out an entire new Generic Power that nobody has ever seen before. Given the way you've described your [Glimpse] to work... it might not be too far-fetched. I will, of course, answer any direct questions you have about them—which reminds me."

He tapped a finger against his armrest, mid-thought.

"*Resolve-Shielding*... It was technically on my agenda for today as well, before events rather *thoroughly* derailed us. We will defer it to a future session. But the way you attempted to shield Alpha Squad in that corridor—and I do apologise, once more, for the inconvenience of that whole affair—"

Thea shifted awkwardly in her seat.

Him apologising to *her* still felt fundamentally wrong on some level, given the sheer gulf in status between them.

"—was genuinely a good first step. But once again, I would rather see what you come up with on your own. Without direct instructions. If, in a few weeks or months, you cannot figure it out yourself, I will, of course, gladly step in. But simply *handing* you solutions would be such a waste, when you are already displaying this much aptitude for outside-the-box thinking."

'So much for wanting to give me something useful out of the session right away, huh?'

Thea nodded slowly at that regardless—she could deal with that, if reluctantly.

He waved his free hand, returning to the topic.

"Now—*Generic Powers*. They are, as the name suggests, *generic*. *Every* Psyker gets them. *All* of them, if they so choose. They do not require Delving, although Delving *does* make acquiring them considerably easier—because the only other method of gaining one is to effectively copy it from another Psyker."

He gestured at the Voidrune still hovering above his palm.

"And the problem with copying, as you can likely already appreciate simply by looking at this, is that you are attempting to copy a four-dimensional drawing, so to speak—where the fourth dimension is entirely inaccessible to you, because it exists on the *other* Psyker's Soul. Which means that copying a Generic Power from another Psyker requires a *great* deal of experimentation. And, thusly, a great deal of *time* spent together.

"They are, naturally, affected by your Inheritance—as is every Power you will ever use. But they are not bound to any given Path. And as such: Free to acquire. For anyone."

Thea took all of it in, nodding slowly—her eyes drifting back to the Voidrune hovering above his palm, staring at it with a mixture of apprehension and pure, unmitigated *need*.

'[Telekinesis]...'

It was an incredibly powerful ability. Incredibly *versatile*, too.

She'd had it in so many Arcade Games over the years that she'd genuinely lost track—every flavour of it, from gentle object-manipulation utility kits to full-on battlefield-control monsters—and now, suddenly, it made complete sense as to *why* it had been so ubiquitous over the many different games as well.

If it was a Generic Power, then practically everyone got it, the moment they Awakened—or at least had the option to obtain it. And if the System 101 had been correct, that meant practically *everyone*, full stop, by the time people hit Tier 3 at the latest.

'No wonder it was such a staple in every single damn game...'

"Now then," the Rune priest said, straightening in his armchair. "Let us see if we can turn theory into practice, hmm? Given that you are a Wielder, my dear pupil, you should—much like with your [Eyes of the Void]—not *need* to carve the Voidrune in order to use the Power. The after-Assessment incident already proved as much. The Power is *already* inside you. It has *already* fired once. All we need to do, for now, is teach you where the *trigger* is."

He closed his hand, and the Voidrune vanished.

In its place, with a small gesture toward the open floor between them, an array of items materialised—a neat row of them, arranged smallest to largest.

Feather-light foam cubes. Solid wooden blocks. Metal spheres of increasing sizes, ending in a ball that looked genuinely solid enough that Thea doubted she could even lift it with her real hands.

"We begin at the bottom," he said, nodding toward the smallest cube. "Try to affect it. With your [Telekinesis] Power."

Thea looked at the cube for a moment, then back at the Rune priest, asking the obvious question.

"... How?"

"Ah." The Rune priest smiled, a touch apologetically. "That, I am afraid, is where my instructions become a bit more vague—"

'This is where they become vague? This?! What the fuck have we been doing for the past few hours, then?! That shit was crystal clear to you, or something?! What?!'

Thea couldn't help but think it—but she kept those thoughts very closely guarded to herself.

“—and I will freely admit as much up front. Everyone's Powers work differently, Thea. Just as everyone *thinks* differently, everyone's Intent-and-Will structure is different as well. The path that leads *me* to a Power will not be the path that leads *you* to yours. I can point at the destination. The walking, you must do yourself.”

She took the instructions at face value—because what else could she really do.

She stared intently at the cube. She *willed* it to move. She furrowed her brow, clenched her jaw, extended vague mental *pushing* sensations at it. She tried imagining invisible hands. She tried imagining the cube sliding, instead.

She tried, at one point, simply getting mildly angry at it.

*‘Move you fucking shit cube! **Move!**’*

The cube did not care.

“... Nothing is happening,” she muttered, several minutes in, frustration leaking into her scratchy voice.

“Because you are skipping ahead,” the Rune priest replied calmly. “You are attempting the *output* before establishing the *connection*. Step *one* is not moving the cube. Step one is finding the Voidrune. Somewhere within you, it exists—you recognised it, which means some part of you already knows *exactly* where it is. Stop reaching for the cube. Instead, reach *inward*. Find any kind of impulse—any resonance at all—between yourself and the Rune. Wherever it might be.”

*‘You couldn’t have **led** with that...? I thought you were on a time limit here...’*

Thea exhaled slowly before closing her eyes, and turning her attention inward.

It was slow going.

Her Soul, after everything today, felt like a giant, singular bruise—tender and raw in ways she had no actual framework for—and groping blindly around inside herself for something she had only seen the *shape* of once was like searching a dark warehouse for an object she'd only ever glimpsed in a blurry image on somebody else's datapad.

Minutes crawled by.

Her concentration slipped, which she forcibly had to recover, then slipped again.

The dread at the edges of her mind kept trying to creep back in past the Staff's protection, costing her viable attention and focus, again and again.

But after a few minutes, finally, something *resonated*.

Familiar in exactly the same wordless way the Voidrune in his palm had been familiar—a quiet hum of recognition, somewhere in a part of her being that had no real anatomical address.

Her eyes abruptly snapped open as she felt it ring—after directing a certain amount of her focus in its exact direction—and, purely on instinct, she stretched her hand out toward the lightest cube—

It rattled.

Ever so slightly. A tiny, trembling shiver of motion, barely more than a vibration.

And a small portion of her Focus disappeared along with it—she felt it drain in the exact same sensation as any Allbright Ability activation, or whenever she used her [Glimpse].

Surprised, her eyes darted toward the Rune priest.

He was looking back at her with the same manic grin he'd been wearing since his shot in the dark had landed on the first try.

"See? You *do* have it," he said simply, a smug smile plastering itself over the top of the grin.

"I... I *do*!"

Thea could barely contain her excitement, the words tumbling out of her ruined throat with more energy than it should have been able to produce—the Soul Burn, the dread, the entire catastrophic session almost entirely forgotten in the span of a single rattling cube.

She locked her focus back onto the items immediately, hungry for more.

She pushed at the cube—her outstretched palm shoving forward through the air, as though physically pressing against something a metre out of reach—and it slid a few millimetres.

She pulled—her fingers curling inward, wrist dragging back toward her chest—and it scraped back toward her, wobbling.

She pushed again, harder, her whole shoulder leaning into the motion this time, feeling her Focus tick down with each attempt, mapping the edges of the Power with the same rapid, greedy experimentation she brought to every new mechanic in every new game—

"That is enough for now, Thea."

The Rune priest's voice cut through her experimentation after barely a handful of pushes and pulls—the cube having travelled, in total, maybe the width of her palm back and forth across the floor.

Thea's head *whipped* toward him, brows already furrowed, the first sharp syllable of a protest halfway up her ruined throat for being interrupted—

—and then her brain caught up with the rest of her body.

'...That's the guy who vaporised your head like a few minutes ago, Thea. For safety reasons.'

She swallowed the protest whole. Her face smoothed itself over in record time, her spine finding the backrest of the armchair as she settled into what she hoped read as calm, attentive, and entirely-without-aggression compliance.

The Rune priest simply *stared* at her.

His face was perfectly neutral and unreadable.

His eyes rested on her with a flat, patient weight, and she knew without a shadow of a doubt that he'd seen it all—the snap of her head, the furrowed brows, the half-formed bite of a retort—and that he was now watching her pretend, very hard, that none of it had ever occurred.

A few tense moments passed.

"Your *temper*," he finally said, "is definitely something we will have to work on in the future, my dear pupil."

Thea's ears went *very* hot, *very* fast.

"It was, in fact, another topic I had intended to cover in this session—before everything went, shall we say, *somewhat off-the-rails*." He tilted his head slightly, and his tone softened by a degree. "Though I do not entirely blame you, either. Soul Burn will naturally make you *more* irritable than you already are. It is, in truth, part of the *real* danger of the condition for a Psyker—because once Burnt, you become considerably more likely to push too hard again, causing further Burn. A death-spiral, when it is not properly allowed to recover. Quite literally so, in far too many cases..."

He waved a hand loosely through the air between them—a *topic for another time*.

"But the *actual* reason I stopped you is simpler: Our time. As much as I would like nothing more than to sit here and watch you experiment—and believe me, Thea, there is *very little* I would enjoy more—I can only give you a few more pointers before this session must end. And moving a foam cube a few centimetres back and forth is not, by my standards, something I am willing to call *useful*."

He leaned forward, and pointedly met her eyes.

"So, instead. Tell me—what, exactly, *is* [Telekinesis]?"

Thea blinked.

"Remember: You are a *Veritas*. You carry what is effectively the strongest multiplier to Psychic Power in the *entire known Universe*—but only so long as you actually, properly, *use* your Inheritance..."