

Volume 2 - Chapter 10 - Inheritance IV

Still gesturing toward the gem at the 3-o'clock position, the Rune priest continued his rundown. "This one, we've already covered quite a bit, but for completion's sake, let's go over it again. Represented by the color *Radiant Gold*—and by far the most common Inheritance among all of them, with roughly a 16.67% occurrence—is *Aurae*."

He inclined his head slightly in an exaggerated gesture of mock humility before adding, "In my *unmatchably* humble opinion, it is the most versatile and important Inheritance of them all. Mind you, not the *most powerful*, nor necessarily the *most useful*—but *the most important*."

As he spoke, he cupped his chin thoughtfully, as if carefully considering how best to phrase his next words. "Aurae is... complicated to explain. It represents highly esoteric concepts within the Void. Officially, it governs aura, presence, or simply 'energy' in general."

He paused, then let out a small chuckle. "But I *also* understand, more than most, that this definition doesn't actually *mean* much to someone like you—someone just beginning to grasp what it means to be a Psyker."

Thea gave a slight nod in agreement. Presence? Energy? Those words felt vague, intangible—difficult to define, let alone *understand*.

The Rune priest chuckled again, this time more to himself, his eyes briefly distant, as though recalling something from long ago. "When I was just starting out as a Psyker—many, many, *many* years ago—my own teacher gave me that same definition. And I tried so *very* hard to understand."

His smirk widened, amusement lacing his voice. "She *thoroughly* enjoyed watching me twist and morph her words into something that my young self could comprehend, only to miss the tree for the forest, so to speak."

Thea watched him closely, uncertain whether this story was meant to teach her something specific or if he was simply indulging in a fond memory. Either way, it was oddly... *endearing*.

For a man so impossibly powerful, so seemingly *untouchable*, the idea of him once being just another struggling student, desperately trying to wrap his head around something he didn't yet understand, made him feel... *human*.

More so than she had ever considered him to be before.

Her gaze flickered back to the Radiant Gold gem, thoughts drifting.

'*He started out as just a recruit, like me...*' The realization settled in, heavier than she expected. '*How long must it have taken for him to reach this level of power? This level of authority...? Just how old is he, anyway...?*'

Her eyes flicked back to the Rune priest, scanning his face, his skin, his eyes—searching for any hint of apparent age. But the Allbright System's inevitable biological immortality had long

since erased whatever markers time had once left on him. There were no wrinkles, no graying hair, no signs of the passage of years, let alone decades or centuries. He was a blank slate in that regard, giving Thea no clue as to even a rough estimate of how old he truly was.

“Anyway,” the Rune priest’s voice cut through her spiraling thoughts as he turned his attention back to her. “As I was saying—those definitions don’t *really* help you. So let me make it a bit more understandable instead.”

He extended his hand, palm facing upward, and a small sphere of *Radiant Gold* energy flickered into existence above it, hovering with a steady, almost serene glow. It was unlike the fireballs he had conjured before—this wasn’t flame, nor was it raw power barely restrained.

It was something *else*.

“When Psykers talk about *aura*, *presence*, or *the energy of things*, we’re not speaking in abstract or poetic terms. As esoteric as those words may sound, they refer to something very *real*—tangible, measurable, and manipulatable.”

With a simple gesture, he motioned for Thea to take the glowing sphere from his hand.

She hesitated for only a second before carefully cupping the tiny ball of golden energy in her palms, holding it as delicately as she would a newborn puppy, secretly afraid that she might break it by accident.

The first thing that struck her was *warmth*.

It was neither hot nor cold in the conventional sense—it was *both*, and yet somehow *neither*.

The sphere had a presence that felt simultaneously sturdy yet yielding, firm yet soft.

Her fingers pressed against it, but rather than solid resistance, the energy seemed to *bend* slightly under her touch, as though it acknowledged and adapted to her interaction rather than simply *existing*.

Her brows furrowed as her senses scrambled to process the contradictory nature of what she was holding. Every logical part of her brain told her this shouldn’t be possible, yet the weight in her hands was undeniably real.

“That’s the right reaction to have,” the Rune priest chuckled, his voice breaking through her focus as she glanced back up at him. “Energy—or *aura*, *presence*, whatever term you prefer—is, at its most fundamental level, the very idea of *potential* made tangible.”

To demonstrate, he casually picked up a nearby rock, rolling it in his palm for a moment.

Slowly, a faint white glow began to emanate from the stone, soft but distinct against the natural hues of the clearing.

"A rock has an aura just like a human does. Just like a Fireball does. Just like a Void-Daemon does," he continued. "But the strength of that aura is dictated by *potential*. A rock, for instance, has very little. Its potential is simple: It may be weathered down into sand, it might become part of a landslide, or maybe—"

Without warning, he flicked his wrist, sending the stone hurtling through the air. It shot forward with unnatural speed, slamming into a tree and *shattering* on impact, fragments scattering into the underbrush. Thea flinched slightly at the suddenness of it, her grip on the golden sphere instinctively tightening.

"—it might be turned into a weapon," the Rune priest finished smoothly, as though the sudden destruction had been nothing more than a minor demonstration. "This aura—this *potential*—is what *Aurae* Psykers work with."

He turned his gaze back to Thea, gesturing briefly to the sphere still resting in her hands. "Through [*Eyes of the Void*], we see the world in colors, each one representing the *potential* of the things around us. A rock, for instance, appears *white*—pure, unchanging, simple; or in other words *True* to its nature. A weapon, however, will often glow *red* or *black*, because its potential is *destruction* or *annihilation*."

He pointed toward the correspondingly coloured gems on the Inheritance Polarity Star as he spoke, his fingers moving deliberately from one to the next.

"All twelve colors exist within an aura," the Rune priest explained, "but whichever ones are most dominant at a given moment are what we, as *Aurae* Psykers, perceive. These dominant hues shift and change constantly, reflecting the immediate potential of a person, object, or even a place."

His fingers idly gestured as he spoke, tracing unseen patterns in the air. "We can physically *touch* and *manipulate* this aura, but doing so doesn't change the fundamental nature of the thing itself. Instead, we influence its *potential*—what it can do in that *specific moment* in time."

Thea listened carefully, but as his explanation continued, she felt her grip on the concept slipping.

"*Aurae* Psykers," he went on, "despite our ability to see the potential of things, have *no* more precognitive ability than any other Psyker. That was one of the main mistakes in understanding that I made as a young Marine. I thought I was seeing a person's *fate*—that their aura told me *everything* they were capable of. But I was very, *very* wrong. What we see is *only* what their aura is willing to show *at that moment*, not the full extent of what they might become."

Thea's mind churned as she tried to compartmentalize his words, but somewhere around the halfway mark, she realized she was completely lost.

'*So much for making it easier to understand...*'

Not sensing her struggle—or perhaps simply ignoring it entirely—the Rune priest pressed on unperturbed. “Ultimately, *Aurae* is the Inheritance of energy itself. We manipulate it, interact with it, and, most importantly, we can *measure* it.”

His gaze sharpened slightly. “That’s why I said it’s the most *important* Inheritance—not necessarily the strongest, but the one that underpins everything else. While other Psykers are *aware* of energy and can *feel* it, we are the only ones who can accurately *quantify* it.”

He leaned back slightly, his arms crossing as he continued. “*Aurae* Psykers are used, for example, to determine whether a person is ready for *Integration* into the System. The very first Psyker you ever encountered in your UHF career was almost certainly an *Aurae* one—during your basic training aboard the UHF stations. They would have been present for every major evaluation, even if you never noticed them directly.”

Thea’s eyes widened slightly, a memory clicking into place.

She *did* remember those evaluations vividly—the grueling physical and psychological tests, the endless data collection, the strange, almost instinctual certainty that she was being *observed* in a way she didn’t quite understand at the time.

She had always assumed that the evaluators had been relying solely on biometric scans, simulations, and raw performance metrics.

But now, in hindsight, it made complete sense.

Simply testing physical strength and combat aptitude wouldn’t give a full picture of someone’s Attributes, like Resolve, Perception or Focus.

But an *Aurae* Psyker reading her potential?

That would provide *real* insights—an immediate and, more importantly, *accurate* measurement of how close she was to meeting the requirements for Integration.

Her gaze flickered back to the *Radiant Gold* gem on the Inheritance Star as some of the fundamental ideas behind the *Aurae* Inheritance began to take shape in her mind. It was finally starting to make *some* sense—though the sheer depth and strangeness of it still felt thoroughly overwhelming.

“And,” the Rune priest continued, seamlessly continuing his train of thought from earlier, “*Aurae* Psykers are also *critical* when it comes to identifying and quantifying the *threat level* of another Psyker. Once a Psyker has passed their Awakening, their aura inevitably shifts, aligning itself with their Inheritance.”

He gestured toward himself briefly. “Mine is *Radiant Gold*,” he stated, before pointing directly at Thea. “And yours, Thea, is *Luminous White*—the color of *Veritas*.”

He directed her attention to the *Luminous White* gem at the 11-o’clock position on the Inheritance Star. Thea followed his gesture, her mind racing as she processed the implications of what he had just said.

‘So my aura permanently reflects my *Inheritance*...?’

The Rune priest smirked slightly, as if fully aware of the thoughts running through her head.

“Now,” he continued, his tone taking on a lighter edge, “I *could* spend the next few years talking about the intricacies of the *Aurae* Inheritance and still not run out of things to explain—but I somehow doubt that would do either of us any favors. And we’ve already seen what the *Aurae* influenced Fireball will do.”

He let out a low chuckle at that, before snapping his fingers with a sharp *crack* and an *Aurae* Fireball burst into existence—the same kind he had demonstrated before.

Without even *looking* at it and with a simple flick of his wrist he sent it soaring toward the targets thirty meters away.

The results were just as devastating as before. The flames sucked the life out of the area almost instantly, the affected zone once again reduced to a desolate husk.

Thea barely flinched this time, though the sheer *efficiency* of it still left her unsettled.

“But,” the Rune priest continued, watching the aftermath with little more than passing interest, “I think I have something that will elucidate this *esoteric nonsense* a bit more effectively—or at the very least, give you a *better appreciation* for the world as *we Aurae* Psykers perceive it.”

Without warning, he took a step closer.

Thea’s muscles tensed, her body instinctively urging her to back away from the sudden invasion of her personal space. The Rune priest wasn’t moving aggressively, but there was something deeply unsettling about the way he *closed the distance*—like a predator moving in, not with malice, but with absolute certainty that there was no need for hesitation.

She forced herself to *not* move.

Backing away from a superior officer—even one as strangely informal as the Rune priest—would have been undeniably *rude*.

And yet, every instinct screamed at her that something significant was about to happen.

“I mentioned earlier,” he said smoothly, his voice quieter now, almost reverent, “how the System introduced a particular type of Ability that allowed researchers to discern the colours of the Inheritances, and how they did it.”

His hand slowly lifted toward her forehead.

“Let me show you, *firsthand*, the world that *we* perceive, my dear pupil.”

Thea barely had a moment to brace herself before his fingertips made contact with her skin.

The instant they did, her vision *exploded*.

The world she had known—its shades of greens, browns, and blues—was *gone*. In its place was something so utterly alien yet indescribably *beautiful* that her breath caught in her throat.

The first thing her eyes landed on were the trees in the distance.

Their trunks pulsed with deep, *Steely Gray* auras, while their leaves shimmered in a vibrant *Iridescent Green*, but not uniformly—some flickered with hints of *Cerulean Blue* and *Night Blue*, shifting ever so slightly as they drifted lazily toward the ground.

Even the falling leaves had their own auras, each imbued with the faintest trace of their former life before they returned to the earth.

She tried to blink, overwhelmed by it all, but she couldn't bring herself to do so.

Even the rocks at her feet glowed with dull, *Luminous White* hues, their energy stagnant yet ever-present. The very *air* around her wasn't empty but layered with the same type of *Cerulean Blue*, a faint, infinitely soft, yet omnipresent shimmer that coated *everything*—like the very fabric of the world itself was breathing, alive with previously unseen motion.

She tried to focus, tried to process everything at once, but the sheer *volume* of colour—so much *more* than she had ever known—made it almost impossible to comprehend.

She felt an instinctive urge to squeeze her eyes shut, to block out the sensory overload threatening to consume her. But at the same time, she *never* wanted to close them again.

Compared to this, her usual sight felt *empty*. *Lifeless*.

This world was so much *more*—so much more *vibrant*, *expressive*, *alive*.

It was as if she had only just *now* opened her eyes for the very first time.

A shaky breath left her lips, but she barely noticed. What she *did* notice, however, was the wetness streaking down her cheeks.

Tears.

She hadn't even realized she had started crying at some point.

A flustered heat rushed to her face, and she hurriedly wiped at her eyes, her hands moving with an urgency that felt ridiculous even as she did it.

Embarrassment flickered at the edges of her mind.

She had no idea why she was reacting like this, only that she *was*.

Swallowing hard, she darted a quick glance toward the Rune priest—only to find that he had stepped aside, watching her in silence, giving her space to *experience* rather than overwhelm her with words.

But then, her gaze landed *on him*.

And every thought in her mind *ceased*.

It was like staring directly into the very heart of a star.

His aura wasn't merely *Radiant Gold*.

It was *blinding*.

A searing, impossibly vast *presence* that drowned out *everything* else around him. The trees, the ground, the air—all the colors she had just marveled at—became nothing more than a dull, grey slush, completely *erased* in the face of his sheer magnitude.

She couldn't breathe. She couldn't even *think*.

She *stared*, her brain *grinding to a halt*, unable to process the sheer *scale* of what she was seeing.

For the first time, she *understood*—truly *comprehended*, for the first time: The Rune priest wasn't simply *powerful*.

He was *on a whole other level entirely*.

And then—*blackness*.

A rushing sensation, like wind sweeping past her ears as she lost consciousness...

—

"My, my... I suppose I *should* have warned you ahead of time."

The Rune priest's voice drifted into her awareness, distant at first, then sharpening as she slowly came back to herself.

Her body felt strangely heavy, as if she had just resurfaced from deep water.

Blinking groggily, she found herself slumped back into the cushioned armchair, the soft fabric pressing against her shoulders.

"Wha..." She tried to speak, but the word barely left her lips—her mind was still sluggish, still struggling to *catch up* to what had just happened.

She inhaled deeply and forced her eyes open, slow and cautious, grounding herself in the familiar.

The world had returned to normal.

No cascading *Cerulean Blue* air. No *Steely Gray* trees or *Night Blue* leaves shifting as they fell. No overwhelming explosion of color breathing in every direction.

Just the Rune priest, the trees, the training grounds—the world as she had always known it.

A part of her—a rather *large* part, if she were being honest—felt a severe, sharp pang of *loss*.

The sheer beauty of what she had seen, the way everything had felt *so much more alive*, was now *gone*. She hadn't realized how much she had already *loved* it until it was abruptly taken away again.

Had the Rune priest *meant* for her to feel this way?

To make her crave a sight she could *never* have on her own?

The thought left her unsettled.

"Slowly," the Rune priest urged, his tone gentle but firm as he reached out, steadying her as she shifted upright.

She let out a slow breath, pressing her palms against her knees to stabilize herself.

"I... what *happened*?"

The Rune priest gave a small sigh, rubbing the bridge of his nose before meeting her gaze. "I *apologize* for the shock. I hadn't expected it to be quite *this* bad, given how much of my aura I've been suppressing this entire time."

His mouth quirked in something between amusement and mild regret. "But I suppose I should have accounted for the fact that you are *still* a Recruit; regardless of everything else. I should have been more careful."

He inclined his head slightly, the motion almost imperceptibly small, but no less sincere. "Please accept my apologies, Thea."

Thea just stared at him for a moment, still not entirely sure what to make of what she had just experienced.

*'Did... Did I just pass out from just **looking** at him? Is that what he's telling me here?'*

Either way, she swallowed her lingering unease and bowed her head in response, keeping her voice steady. "I don't hold it against you, Rune priest. I appreciate the opportunity and the trust you put in me. I will try my best to not fail to live up to your expectations again."

It was a response that came naturally—*too* naturally.

She had more than enough experience in this kind of exchange. Apologizing for failing expectations, for not measuring up, for needing to *do better next time*.

She even felt a small flicker of pride in how smoothly she handled the situation—*until* she looked up and saw the Rune priest's expression.

His brows were slightly furrowed, his golden eyes filled with something between *confusion* and mild concern.

"I was apologizing to *you*, Thea," he said, tilting his head as if genuinely baffled. "Not *chiding* you... You *do* realize there's a difference, yes?"

She blinked. "I—"

"You didn't *fail* any of my expectations," he continued. "I made a mistake. *Me*. There was nothing *you* could have done differently, nothing to improve upon. You don't have to promise to *do better in the future* when there was *never* a failing on your part in the first place."

Thea opened her mouth, then promptly closed it, her mind grasping for a response that simply wasn't there.

Across from her, the Rune priest let out a quiet hum, his golden eyes narrowing slightly as he studied her with an expression bordering on *concerned curiosity*. He slowly cupped his chin, a gesture she had seen him do countless times when deep in thought, before muttering under his breath, "Just what kind of *stuff* did the Harbinger put her through...?"

Thea didn't hear him.

Her mind was too busy *reeling*, trying to reconcile his words with the way she had instinctively interpreted them.

*'Chiding and apologizing are **obviously** different. **Everyone** knows that.'*

The thought was immediate, reflexive—an internal truth so deeply ingrained that questioning it felt almost wrong in itself.

*'But **that** was definitely a chiding. So why is he claiming it wasn't...?'*

Her fingers curled slightly against the armrests of her chair, grip tightening unconsciously as she struggled to find a logical explanation.

*'He gave me the opportunity to see through his eyes. He trusted me with that knowledge, and I failed to hold my wits together. I lost control. That's **clearly** a failure on my part...'*

Her brows furrowed, confusion mounting as she replayed his words in her mind.

'So why is he saying it wasn't? Is this some sort of test...?'

Her eyes darted back up to meet the Rune priest's, and she startled at the sudden realization that he had been observing her this entire time.

His gaze wasn't harsh or condemning, but it was *thorough*—like he had been studying her every micro-expression, every flicker of thought that passed behind her eyes. She felt *seen* in a way that was unsettling, like he had already dissected the internal struggle she had barely begun to understand herself.

"I... I understand, Rune priest. Thank you," she forced out quickly, lowering her head in gratitude, hoping her delayed response wasn't enough to draw his ire.

A long sigh followed.

Thea instinctively tensed up at that, worried for what the Rune priest would say next, worried that she had just blown this once-in-a-lifetime chance.

“Alright, Thea—*eyes up*,” the Rune priest ordered, his voice shifting, taking on a more serious edge.

She obeyed immediately, lifting her head—only to be met with the sight of another *Fireball* hovering above the palm of the Rune priest’s right hand.

But this one was *different* once again.

The flames weren’t the erratic, twisting tongues of heat she had seen before, nor the heavy liquid-like nature of the *Discordia* variant.

These flames *rotated*, spiraling inward, devouring themselves like starving beasts fighting over oxygen. They were a singular, deep shade of orange, richer and darker than natural fire, writhing as though desperate to consume more than they were being given.

The Rune priest let the Fireball hover between them as he spoke.

“We’ll call *Aurae* finished for now, with this final note.” His tone was measured, the weight of finality clear. “*Aurae* Psykers are the most *versatile* of all Inheritance holders. We lack a singular specialty beyond information gathering, and yet we are not *limited* in the way that other Psykers are.”

His fingers subtly flicked, and the golden embers of an *Aurae* influence briefly shimmered in his left hand before vanishing.

“*Aurae* works with *any* and *all* Powers almost equally. We don’t specialize in destruction like *Perditio*, nor deception like *Obscuritas*. We don’t manipulate reality like *Mutatio*, nor reveal the Truth of the Void like *Veritas*. We aren’t the most powerful, nor do we *trump* any other Inheritance in their area of expertise...”

He paused for emphasis, letting the words settle. “But we *can do it all*. That is what it means to be an *Aurae* Psyker—not having the *right* tool for the job, but having a tool, no matter the job.”

He waited for Thea’s nod—her silent acknowledgment of understanding—before his hand turned ever so slightly, drawing attention back to the *Fireball* still hovering before them.

“So,” he continued, his tone shifting once more, back towards his more lecturer-style, “let’s move on to the next Inheritance.”

He gestured toward the twisting, orange flames.

“This,” he said, “is a *Fames* Fireball. It is represented by the color *Deep Amber*—as you can very clearly see from the flames. And it is the *manifestation* of hunger within the Void.”

The Fireball pulsed as though it had *heard* his words.

“The *unending* desire to find everything there is to find. To experience everything there is to experience. To know everything there is to know.”

Thea swallowed as she watched the swirling mass of self-devouring fire.

There was something deeply unsettling about it—more than just the *heat* or the *power*.

It was *alive*, in a way the other Fireballs hadn’t been; even *Mutatio*.

“*Fames*,” the Rune priest continued, his voice carrying a weight that matched the writhing fire in his palm, “is the Inheritance that governs pure, unadulterated *hunger* for more.”

The words sent an uneasy shiver down Thea’s spine. There was something *primal* about the way he said it—something that made the orange flames seem all the more alive.

“It is located at the *four-o’clock* position on the Star,” he went on, gesturing toward the hovering Polarity Star between them. “But for the first time, this does *not* actually correlate with the order in which you will encounter it within your Delve.”

He tapped the *Deep Amber* gem that pulsed faintly within the Star’s intricate design. “Despite its position, *Fames* is the *sixth* Inheritance you will find—not the *fifth*, as the arrangement might suggest.”

Thea frowned slightly, her brows knitting together as she processed that.

“That is because the Star is *not* meant to represent the order of Inheritances,” the Rune priest clarified, his eyes locking onto hers to ensure she was paying attention. “It exists *solely* to give a visual representation of Polarities; nothing else.”

His fingers traced an invisible line from the gems to their polar opposites across the Star, emphasizing the concept. “*Always* remember that when you reflect on these lessons later, dear pupil.”

Thea nodded vigorously, his words burning themselves into her mind. If the Rune priest *specifically* pointed something out as important, there was *zero* chance that it wasn’t.

“Now,” the Rune priest smirked, “I’ve made you wait long enough.”

Thea’s eyes immediately darted toward the *Deep Amber* ball of fire still churning in his palm, eager for the demonstration. She had no idea what this Fireball might do, but she was excited to see it first-hand regardless.

“Pay close attention.”

And then—He *released it*.

The swirling, cascading ball of flame *burst* forward, flying through the air with a speed nearly identical to the *Aurae* and *Discordia* Fireballs before it.

But something about this one felt different yet again.

The Fireball streaked through the air like a *predator locked onto prey*, its flames tumbling over themselves, clawing at the space ahead like desperate, starving things.

Then—impact.

But instead of a single, all-consuming explosion like *Perditio's* devastation, the *Fames* Fireball detonated outward as one would expect—and then *converged*.

The flames didn't just scatter in every direction. They moved together with *intent*.

A *ravenous* intent.

The majority of the eruption seemed to *seek* out the ten living targets within the clearing.

The inferno curled mid-air, adjusting its trajectory, and then *lunged* toward them with terrifying precision. It was like the fire had *sensed* where the highest concentration of life was and had decided—without hesitation—that *this* was where it would feast.

The first target barely had a second to react before the flames swarmed him, crawling up his armor like living tendrils, forcing their way into the gaps between plating. His agonized screams barely lasted a second before they cut off abruptly, his body collapsing as the fire consumed him whole.

One by one, the others followed in mere moments, as the inferno arrived like heat-seeking missiles. The flames did not waste any time.

They ignored anything and everything in their path that wasn't a living, breathing target, until they were all nothing more than ashen, molten slumps on the ground. A few stray tendrils finally peeled off, beelining straight for a cluster of dry leaves, igniting them instantly—as if the fire simply could not resist taking whatever it could get its hands on.

But even this was frighteningly efficient.

Unlike the chaotic destruction of *Perditio*, which sought to annihilate *everything*, *Fames* was *selective*.

It *wanted*. It *chose*. It ***hungered***.

It simply sought out the most viable sources of energy to consume, drawn toward life before anything else.

And then—just as suddenly as it had erupted—the hunger abruptly *stopped*.

The flames *froze*, mid-consumption, like beasts realizing they had gorged themselves too quickly.

Then, without warning, they simply fell.

Like embers snuffed out of existence, the once-ravenous inferno collapsed into dull, flickering remnants, its hunger abruptly vanishing. The remaining flames lingered on the

ground for a few seconds, still licking at the charred earth as if unsure whether they had truly finished their feast.

And finally, with one last pulse, they disappeared entirely—leaving behind nothing but the ashen remains of everything they had claimed.

The entire sequence of events lasted for less than three seconds, yet the sheer level of calamity it had wrought was closer to that of the *Perditio* Fireball than those of *Aurae*, *Mutatio* or *Discordia*.

In one word, it was *frightening*.

Thea's mouth was dry as she finally closed it, realizing—belatedly—that she had simply been staring, open-mouthed, at the hungering calamity the Rune priest—or rather, the Sovereign—had unleashed.

She swallowed, forcing moisture back into her throat, before managing, "That was... *effective*."

The words felt woefully inadequate, but she had no better way to describe what she had just seen. Only a few minutes ago, she had thought the *Fireball* Power, in its basic form, was already the height of luxury for an infantryman like herself.

Practically infinite grenades, conjured at will, requiring no weight to carry and no space in a pack? That alone was a game changer—something that could utterly redefine small-scale skirmishes and planetary warfare alike.

But now?

Now that she had seen *this*—these *horrifyingly specific* alterations that the Inheritances could apply?

Her mind floundered, struggling to even *categorize* what she was experiencing.

It felt like those early days in a newly released game at the Golden Age Arcade, when she had been so sure she understood a mechanic—only to suddenly realize she hadn't even scratched the surface of its true depth.

Like thinking she had reached the limit of her character's power—maxed out every skill, unlocked every upgrade—only to stumble into an entirely new layer of equipment, one that didn't just *stack* with what she already had, but *multiplicatively enhanced* it.

An entire hidden system that changed the very way the game was played.

"That's definitely one way to put it," the Rune priest chuckled, his voice pulling her back to the present.

With a casual flick of his hand, he gestured for the *Sovereign* to reset the area once more.

The scorched clearing flickered, and in an instant, the aftermath of the *Fames* Fireball vanished, the scene returning to its original state—pristine, untouched, as if the destruction had never happened.

“*Fames* Psykers,” he continued, “as you might expect, primarily focus on using Powers that can be targeted by their Inheritance. Physical Powers, predominantly, but even metaphysical ones aren’t beyond their reach.”

Thea’s brow furrowed slightly.

‘*Metaphysical Powers...*?’

He must have noticed her confusion, because his smirk widened ever so slightly before he elaborated.

“Your own Precognition would fall under that umbrella,” he explained. “Anything that doesn’t directly influence the physical world, like a Fireball does; things that are more brain-based. Precognition, Divination, Illusions—all of these would be considered Metaphysical in nature.”

Thea’s frown deepened slightly. She hadn’t even considered that there were formal classifications for Psychic Powers like this.

“There are three distinct types of Powers,” the Rune priest continued, effortlessly guiding the conversation forward. “Physical, Transient, and Metaphysical.”

His finger tapped lightly against his temple as he spoke, as if mentally sorting through his own words before continuing.

“*Physical* is self-explanatory. A Fireball, a Telekinetic blast, a direct, measurable impact applied to the real world.” He gestured vaguely to the now-reset clearing, where the remnants of their previous demonstrations had vanished as if they had never happened.

“*Metaphysical* is what I just mentioned—things that do not exert direct force, but instead manipulate perception, knowledge, or the intangible. Precognition, illusions, and Divination all fall into this category.”

His gaze sharpened slightly before he added, “And then there’s *Transient*.”

He let the word hang between them for a moment, letting Thea absorb it before continuing.

“*Transient* is neither, and both. A combination of Physical and Metaphysical, but belonging fully to neither category. These Powers are unique in that they can bridge the gap between the two.”

She wanted to ask for examples, but before she could, the Rune priest cut off the thought with a small wave of his hand.

“We’ll cover these in depth in future sessions,” he said, his tone *final*. “For now, just know that they exist. *Trust me*, Thea, this is the best way to introduce you to the Psyker world. If I

overload you with too much complexity too soon, you'll only end up more confused than enlightened."

Thea nodded immediately, no hesitation in her response.

She didn't need to be told *that* twice.

Her mind was already overflowing with everything she had learned today, and the mere thought of adding three more layers of complexity on top of that made her stomach churn.

The Rune priest, seeming satisfied, shifted back to his earlier train of thought, his tone regaining its previous weight. "Anything that can be Intended to search for something—to allow the Inheritance to truly *Hunger* for it—is a *Fames* Psyker's specialty."

His voice held a gravity that hadn't been there before, pressing the point home.

"They are the *bloodhounds* of the Psyker world," he stated plainly. "And they should be *feared* as such."

Then, just as suddenly—His demeanor changed.

The amusement drained from his face, replaced by something *colder*.

His gaze hardened as he added, "And also... *Fames* is *the* most *influential* Inheritance when it comes to your *Presence*."

Thea stiffened instinctively. She wasn't sure *what* he meant, but she could tell—*immediately*—that this was something severely *important*.

"Every Inheritance," the Rune priest continued, his voice slower now, more deliberate, "subtly influences a Psyker's personality over time."

He watched her carefully as he spoke, as if waiting to see her reaction.

"For most, this effect is benign—a slight leaning toward certain choices, certain behaviors. Nothing overt. Nothing drastic. It is often so minimal that most Psykers aren't even taught about this being a thing until they reach Tier 3 or 4."

Then, his voice dropped even lower and his expression darkened notably, his features momentarily unreadable, as if recalling something truly horrific.

"*Fames*, however, is **not** one of those. The more powerful a *Fames* Psyker becomes," he said slowly, as if wanting to make sure Thea understood and fully comprehended every word, "the more they succumb to the very *Hunger* they are meant to control."

His fingers tapped lightly against his chin, his gaze turning distant for a brief moment before snapping back to her. "It is both a *blessing* and a *curse*. It allows them to channel their Inheritance in ways that Psykers like you and me can only *dream* about; for they have become *one* with their Inheritance, in a way."

A breath of silence passed between them.

And then—his voice turned *grim*.

“But ultimately... the *Hunger* *always wins*, if you allow it to linger for too long...”