

Lightning Is the Only Way

- Chapter 1: Gravis |

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"Why do you want to become strong?"

The last light of dusk was shining through the open window into an enormous bedroom. A young boy, no older than 12, was sitting on the ground while looking at his father. His father also sat on the ground facing his son. The boy's usually curious black eyes seemed unsure.

The boy wore a white shirt and black cloth pants, and his build was average for a child. One could not see anything out of the ordinary, except for one thing. He wore a dark black ring on his right ring finger. The ring had a design that made it look like obsidian, which had not completely hardened yet. Other than the ring, the boy seemed incredibly plain.

His father, on the other hand, was the total opposite. His chiseled and imposing face could make anyone cower in fear and respect. He had the same black eyes as his son, but the feeling they gave was entirely different. In front of those eyes, it felt as if all secrets were laid bare. He wore imposing black and gold robes and an identical-looking ring to his son's. He looked into the boy's eyes.

After a while, the boy looked away from his father, his eyes drifting to one of the windows. "To protect the people close to me." The boy hoped that this time, the answer was good enough for his father. He looked back to his father, now, with hope in his eyes.

There was no change in the man's expression. "Is there someone that can threaten your close ones?"

"No." The boy sighed after a while.

"Then, why do you need strength?"

The boy looked uncomfortable. "I don't need strength. I want strength." The boy shook his head. "Why would you not allow me to cultivate, father? Everyone else my age is already at least two major realms higher than me. Every time I walk around the city, I feel useless. I just want to become stronger. Is that wrong?"

The man's expression slightly changed to boredom. "Instead of telling you, why don't I just show you? Go to the weapon store near the Broken Heaven Plaza. Stay in there for 30 minutes and come back. Then we can continue our conversation." With that, the door opened on its own.

The boy, Gravis, looked at the door. He sighed and walked out. Why did his dad not just explain things? He always had to send him on these journeys to discover the answer for himself.

Leaving the majestic palace with spires that pierce the sky, he walked to the Broken Heaven Plaza. The city reached over the horizon. There were so many people flying around in the sky that it reminded Gravis of an aggressive beehive. They were either shooting from A to B or just selling some wares in their flying stalls. Not everyone could afford to buy a shop in this city.

Stalls, wares, mounts, slave-beasts, buildings, and even palaces filled the sky. This scenery stretched as far as the eye could see. The Buildings and palaces in the air alone were over ten times the number of buildings on the ground. Though all these flying buildings did not officially belong to the city, they still created a congregation that stretched higher into the sky than the city was long.

Even though the community in the sky, aptly named Sky Community, was only an unimportant part of the city, Gravis always wanted to fly up there with the others.

The Broken Heaven Plaza was not very far from his father's palace. After just a couple of minutes, Gravis arrived. The buildings around the plaza looked very lavish as if all the owners wanted to compete with their money. One building stood out, not for looking especially extravagant, but for looking like a cheap two-floored stone house.

The owner had enough money to build a more prominent building. Just the fact that they owned property in the core of the city proved as much. The building simply didn't need to impress people. Every single person in the city knew it. When his father said, "Go to the weapon store near Broken Heaven Plaza." he could only have meant this building. It was the most well-known weapon store in existence, the Divine Weapon House.

Gravis walked into the Divine Weapon House and looked around. It was barren, as not everyone had the right to see the wares. The only thing worthy of interest was a simple-looking old man talking to two other people. Compared to the old man, the luxuriously clothed youngster and the well-armed guard behind him, looked like they oozed money. Gravis walked to a corner of the store and waited.

"Master Linus, please show me your bows," the youngster practically demanded from the old man in a rather direct manner. Acting like an arrogant young master in front of

the best weapon's craftsman in existence seemed inappropriate, but the old man didn't seem to mind.

"Certainly, please come to the second floor." The old man beckoned politely to the stairs.

The young man and his guard walked up the stairs without waiting for the old man, who quickly followed. Was this what Gravis' father wanted him to see? He was not sure.

"Well, father said I should only come back in 30 minutes, so I might as well wait." Gravis sighed and stood to the corner of the shop.

After a while, the people from upstairs came back. Without even saying goodbye, the youngster walked to the exit, but immediately stopped when he spotted Gravis.

"Prince, please forgive this little one for not noticing you." The youngster seemed panicked and quickly bowed deeply in front of Gravis. He seemed very nervous. The guard behind him even kneeled on one knee.

Gravis was used to this scene as it happened all the time. Instead of feeling great or powerful by the subservient attitude, he only felt annoyed. Gravis waved his hand slightly. "It's okay, don't mind me. You may continue."

"Thank you, prince." The youngster rose and quickly walked out of the store with his guard.

The old man saw the commotion and noticed Gravis. He immediately paled upon seeing him. He teleported in front of Gravis, nothing unusual in this city, and bowed. "Please forgive me, prince! I did not see you entering the store. If I knew, I would've immediately welcomed you."

Gravis sighed. "You don't have to apologize. I didn't announce myself or anything. It's okay."

The old man seemed relieved and finally dared to look at Gravis. "Thank you, prince. How can this humble self help you?"

Gravis looked around the store. "Father told me to come and stay here for a while. Though, I am not sure why."

The owner immediately paled as if he heard that his family died. "H-his exalted grace?" Why would that person take note of him? Did that person want to hint at something by sending his son here? Did he intend for his son to choose a weapon? That was unlikely. The boy couldn't even lift the lightest needle the old man forged.

Gravis casually shook his hand. "Forget it. It's nothing to worry about." Gravis looked at the exit. "My father probably wanted me to see the exchange earlier."

The old man was not sure how to answer, but he felt relieved, knowing that that person was not taking note of his shop.

"Well, it doesn't matter. I'll leave. I wish you a good day, master Linus." Gravis walked out of the store.

"Thank you, prince. I wish you a good day." The old man bowed once more.

Gravis quickly returned to the royal palace and walked to his father's bedroom, the doors all opening by themselves. His father had not moved at all. Gravis walked to his front and sat down. "It's been about 30 minutes, father. Can we continue now?"

The expression on his father did not seem to change. He simply narrated, "The young man in the shop was one of the more useless sons of the head of the Heavenly Divine Sect. The old man was the best weapon smith in the world. In your eyes, whose status is higher?" His father looked at him, waiting for his answer.

Gravis didn't even hesitate to answer. "The Heavenly Divine Sect is an upper-level sect in the world. If it were the head of the sect, their status would be equal, even though the head's power is stronger, but if it's only his son, their statuses are incomparable. There are many upper-level sects in the world, but only one 'best weaponsmith'."

As if expecting his son's answer, Gravis' father said: "Then why did he obediently do everything he was told, even though he could wipe out the young man with a wave of his hand?"

Gravis hesitated. The answer was too obvious. "Because of the head of the Heavenly Divine Sect. He could similarly wipe out the weaponsmith with a wave of his hand." Suddenly Gravis' eyes widened. He understood why his father wanted him to see this exchange.

His father chuckled lightly. "So why would you need strength if you have me as your father?"

Gravis felt torn. He wanted to retort, but couldn't. His father was the most powerful human in existence, not just in this world but in all worlds. The only thing rivaling him were the heavens themselves. Even if everything else were to die, he would still be there. But with that fact, Gravis' reasoning for becoming stronger was void. Who would dare threaten the close ones of the son of the Opposer? No one.

"Father, I asked you so many times already. I only want to become stronger. Is that too much to ask?" Gravis asked with frustration, not willing to give up.

His father didn't seem to mind his son's disrespectful tone. "Because you do not know what it means to cultivate. If you step onto the path of cultivation, you would constantly be putting your life on the line unless you reach the peak." His father looked serious. "I would not protect you on your journey, because if I were to protect you, you would never reach the peak, and without reaching the peak, you could not live without regrets. True strength is only something that you can achieve with an immense amount of willpower, luck, and climbing over mountains of corpses."

"If I were to grant you strength myself, your longevity would increase, but without the tempered willpower of the cultivation world, you would not be able to handle the seemingly unchanging unending life. You would feel empty. If there is nothing to strive for, then is there even a reason for living? As you are now, you will have a good life, with high status and no problems. Destroying that for something that you do not even need, is foolish."

Gravis was looking at the floor, his fists tightly clenched. He was only 12. He did not understand everything his father told him. Many of the concepts his father told him seemed foreign. How could he imagine how he would feel a hundred years down the line when he was just 12? Thus, he could not accept everything his father was telling him.

Nevertheless, he sighed and stood up. "I understand. I'll go."

After Gravis left, his father also sighed. "Gravis, if only you understood how it feels for me. Seeing thousands of my children dying in the cultivation world or to old age hurts. If you only want but do not need strength, you are better off not cultivating. If you do not wholeheartedly wish for what true power grants you, then you cannot live without regrets in the cultivation world. Many painful experiences taught me that." He muttered and looked out of the window.

"I have lived for far too long," he said after a long while.

Cultivation was the tempering of the body, energy, and mind. A stronger body allowed one to have a sturdier vessel for more energy. Energy allowed one to cultivate the mental realm, and the mental realm allowed one to take control of their own life. With all three combined, one would be able to achieve strength. With strength, one can take control of one's destiny and freedom. If one does not wholeheartedly wish to grasp one's destiny or strive for freedom, they would only have regrets at the end of their lives. And a life without regrets is what everyone wants, but few can achieve.

Gravis could not understand everything about cultivation. It surely did not help that there was an edict by his father that forbade people to talk about cultivation with his children if they had not started on this journey. The only thing Gravis knew was that cultivation

gave stronger people power over weaker people, and he did not like the feeling of everyone having control over him. Though, he was never in danger, thanks to his father. Gravis had this conversation with his father many times before, but for some reason, his father had never agreed to let him cultivate.

Whenever he had another failed conversation with his father, he always did the same afterward. Gravis walked along the hallway, towards another bedroom. He wanted to talk to someone that understood him. As he arrived at his goal, the door opened by itself, a graceful and divine beauty standing in the room, tending to some plants. While everyone else would be struck dumb just by seeing her, he did not react at all. She was his mother.

"Mom, why does father not let me cultivate?" Gravis said in a spoiled tone. His mother looked at him and chuckled lightly.

"Gravis, how often did we have this conversation already? Trust your father. No one else has as much experience as him. If he does not want you to cultivate, then he surely has a good reason."

Gravis groaned. "Is it so much to ask? Just giving me a cultivation technique would be enough. We have an uncountable amount of those."

His mother looked dotingly at him and caressed his head. "That's not the issue. Although I am also quite strong, I basically have no idea about cultivation, but I have seen your many older brothers and sisters embark on this journey. Nearly all of them did not have a good life, and nearly all of them had regrets at the end of their life."

Gravis looked disappointed but did not give up. "Then why doesn't he just grant me strength? It's not like father never did that before. Increasing other people's cultivation costs him nothing more than a wave of his hand."

"Is that what you truly want?" His mother asked.

Gravis was not sure. He wanted to say yes, that he was fine with bestowed strength, but somehow, he couldn't. After a while, he sighed. "No, it's not."

His mother smiled. "Oh, come on. Cheer up! Stella came earlier and was looking for you. Why don't you go visit her?"

Gravis head shot up. "Stella was here? When?"

His mother laughed lightly. "About 30 minutes ago. She should still be around the main hall."

"Thanks, mom. I'll accompany her. Bye." Gravis ran out, not even waiting for his mother's answer. His mother just continued tending to some flowers.

Gravis ran to the main hall, searching for Stella. Stella was one of his childhood friends. They practically grew up together and immediately clicked when they first met. He always felt happy when being near her. It didn't matter if they talked, walked around, or just sat in silence. He just liked being around her.

He quickly spotted her looking at some paintings. She was a cute girl, also around 12 years old, her blonde hair wrapped in two pigtails. Her eyes were shining with curiosity, just like Gravis'.

"Stella, here!" Gravis shouted as he walked to her.

She turned around and immediately smiled when she saw him. "Gravis! I had to wait for half an hour for you. What took you so long?"

Gravis rubbed the back of his neck. "Sorry! I talked with my father."

Stella sighed. "The same thing again?"

Gravis nodded. "Yes. Still no luck."

Stella rubbed her chin, thinking, and her eyes lighted up. "I know! Let's get some ice cream and watch the Sky Community."

Gravis just nodded. He didn't care what they did together. He just wanted to be near her. They held their hands and ran out the door to watch the Sky Community.