

Lightning Is the Only Way

Chapter 12: Family

"Little brother?" Gravis asked, quite confused. He never met his siblings. He wasn't even sure if he had siblings.

The man just grinned. "Yeah, you're my little brother, and I am one of your older brothers." He stood up, walked around the desk, and patted Gravis on the shoulder. "You can call me Brother Orpheus." Seeing that Gravis still looked unsure, Orpheus laughed. "Man, this brings me back. I had the same look you have when I met my first sibling."

Gravis looked dejectedly at the floor. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize I had siblings. Father and mother never talked about their other children." Gravis realized what he said and quickly tried to correct himself. He didn't want to give his newly met brother the feeling that his parents didn't care about him. "No, no! They probably did, but I didn't notice." Gravis rubbed the back of his head. "Sorry, sorry."

Seeing this, Orpheus laughed loudly. "Haha, don't worry!" Orpheus patted Gravis' shoulder again, showing that he didn't mind. "Maybe you didn't notice, but our siblings are forbidden to talk to the center child until their way has been established."

Now, Gravis was confused again. "What do you mean with center child?"

"The center child is the newest born child from father and mother." Orpheus pointed at Gravis. "So, right now, that is you."

Gravis furrowed his brows. "Okay, but why? Also, what did you mean with 'established way'?"

Orpheus sat back down on his chair and beckoned Gravis to sit too. Gravis did just that. "This practice comes from father. He cares very much about us and wants us to find our own way in the world, without outside influence. Only a heart and will born out of itself is the strongest. If, for example, I persuaded you to start cultivating, you might not truly have the heart for it. This would be an obsession implanted by others and not born by yourself. There's a difference in that."

Orpheus continued. "And with 'finding their way' I mean, when someone internally decides which path to take in life. Some choose a quiet life. Some want to cultivate, and some want parts of both. When father sees what his child has decided to do with their life, he brings them on the right course." Orpheus took a sip from his coffee. "In your case, it's 'Becoming the strongest'."

Gravis now looked skeptical. "How are you so sure that is what I want?"

Orpheus smiled. "Because you're here." Orpheus noted that Gravis wasn't fine with that explanation, so he just laughed again and continued. "Father has chosen the hardest path for you. Even if it doesn't seem like it, he cares for all of us. If he weren't sure that you wholeheartedly wanted to become strong, he would have never allowed you to start cultivation from the bottom."

Gravis looked absentmindedly at the window. "I am also confused by that. Couldn't he just grant me strength, or give me techniques or resources? Why send me on this life and death path?"

Orpheus sighed. "Father can only give strength up to the Immortal Emperor realm. You don't need to think about how high that realm is. You only need to know that it is strong, but not very strong in this world. There are multiple major realms above that, and if you didn't forge your path with blood, calamity, and setbacks, you wouldn't have the experience or will to get much further in life. A stable palace must be built one brick at a time. If you complete it but want to expand it to multiple times its size, the foundation won't hold."

Gravis was very interested in what an immortal emperor was. An immortal emperor sounded very strong. Probably stronger than he could imagine. Yet, not even that was the end. He also remembered that his father shouted the word Star God before he fought Heaven. A God should be stronger than an immortal. There was a long way to go.

Orpheus smiled slyly and continued. "What do you think? How many siblings do we have? Give me a number."

Gravis wasn't sure, but he knew that his parents had been alive for a long time. "Don't know, maybe 50?"

"50?" Orpheus laughed loudly again. "There are thousands!"

Gravis' jaw hit the floor. "Thousands? I have thousands of brothers and sisters?"

Orpheus snickered. "Yeah, and imagine that. All those siblings have their own family."

Gravis couldn't wrap his head around the fact that he had thousands of brothers and sisters. "Where are they all?" he asked.

Orpheus took out a canteen and another cup. He filled it with coffee, and the cup moved to Gravis by itself. He beckoned Gravis to drink, and Gravis took a gulp. He had tasted coffee before, but this cup tasted like crap. He tried to hide his disgust, but Orpheus noticed and laughed again. "Do you know how many people would lick my boots just to get a sip of that? Yet, you look like you just faceplanted into a pile of shit."

Gravis went a bit red with shame. He didn't want to disrespect his brother. He opened his mouth to apologize, but Orpheus waved his hand. "Don't worry. As if my coffee can keep up with our father's. I just wanted to tease you."

Gravis sighed, but inside he felt warmth. This was family. He felt that his brother was honest with him and had only goodwill. Though, he was still unused to the fact that he had a brother... or thousands of them. He lifted his cup again and emptied it.

Orpheus slammed his desk. "Good! That's how a man should be! Even if you don't like it, do what you deem necessary without a complaint. You truly are my younger brother." He drank from his own cup and also emptied it. "Now, back to your question. You want to know where our other siblings are?"

Gravis nodded.

"Everywhere," Orpheus said. "You can find a lot of them in this city. You can find at least one sibling in every sect. You can find some of them roaming around. Many of them are in important positions around the world."

Instead of widening, Gravis' eyes narrowed. "Then why have I never met them? By your words, I established my way some months ago. That is plenty of time for them to visit or, at least, say hello."

Orpheus sighed. "Don't be angry at them. I can understand them. Look at where you are right now. You just went through two weeks of life and death battles, and in a couple of months, you will go to the lower worlds. You can only return when you ascend by yourself, and how many people actually manage to ascend from lower worlds? The answer is, pitifully few. The chance that you return alive is less than 1%."

Gravis felt a lump in his throat. He only thought about his preparation and his future journey. He didn't think about how hard it was going to be to ascend. Gravis sighed and kind of understood why his siblings didn't want to see him.

Orpheus continued and confirmed Gravis' thoughts. "Imagine meeting your new brother, only for him to vanish or die a couple of months later. If they meet you, they will get

attached to you, and if you die, they will grieve. Even though we live far longer than mortals, the death of a close one never gets easier." Orpheus sighed again. "Please don't think bad of them."

Gravis could understand his siblings. Maybe he would do the same in their shoes, though it still felt wrong. It all boiled down to the fact that he was still too weak. So weak, that his siblings feared to form any attachments to him. Well, there was at least one. "I hope you don't mind me asking, but why did you decide to meet me?"

Orpheus smiled. "Actually, because I chose the same path as you."