

Lightning 281

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Chapter 281: The Changing World

Gravis stood in the middle of the crater and looked into the sky. By now, the shockwave had reached the dark clouds and parted them for the first time in centuries. Light shone onto the dead and destroyed plane. Byron was now gone, and the Darkness Sect could be counted as destroyed. Destroying a whole Sect made Gravis fall into deep thought.

'My arrival has changed this whole world,' he thought. 'When I reached the Spirit Forming Realm, the change started taking effect. The highest Heaven keeps a close eye over this world now. Probably no new Heavenborn will appear in this world again. After all, wasting resources on Heavenborn is senseless.'

Gravis then turned his gaze to the Darkness Sect. 'Byron's scheme involving me managed to kill the Sect Master of the Wind Sect, making the whole Sect relocate. People with a Will-Aura at the Body Tempering Realm will no longer be hunted down. The proliferation of the Destruction Lightning will make other Sects seek the Self Stage, while everyone in the Lightning Sect will follow.'

Gravis sighed. 'My scuffle with the Earth Sect might also result in something happening in the future. On top of that, the other, more powerful variants of the elements, have a chance to be harvested now. In total, because of me, the Heaven Sect will vanish, while every other Sect will achieve power incomparable to before.'

'Yet, the good comes with the bad. Even though the Heaven Sect is my enemy, they stop countless cultivators and powers from committing wanton slaughter. With the Heaven Sect vanishing and Heaven no longer involving itself, there won't be direct consequences to people abusing their power.' Gravis sighed again. 'This world will become stronger but also crueler.'

Gravis was still in thought. The knowledge that he had basically eradicated a power that had towered with seven others over the world made him think about the consequences of his actions. 'If I could choose my actions again, knowing what long term consequences would come, I would act exactly the same,' Gravis thought.

'A kinder world with restrictions on slaughter might make it easier for the weak to survive and live happily, but is having strength inherently unfair? In my opinion, total freedom brings total fairness. Those people with power have worked hard for their power, after all. Everyone can train their body and make advances in the Body Tempering Realm. The existence of the loose cultivators proves as much.'

Gravis sighed again. 'But people who are too young to train can't do anything about such a situation. After all, they never had the time to make their choice. Injustice and unfairness will always happen. I guess this is just how the world is. The situation and power dynamic in a world change, and if one can't adapt, they won't survive. Life and death aren't inherently fair or unfair. They just are.'

After finishing his thoughts, Gravis shook his head to regain his bearings. He checked the surroundings with his Spirit but found absolutely no loot. Byron had absorbed all the loot that had laid around, but when he died to the Lightning Crescent, the explosion destroyed all his belongings. Because of that, Gravis got absolutely no loot. He didn't even get his stolen saber back.

After realizing that, Gravis chuckled a little. "I wonder if that is due to my lack of Karmic Luck," he said to himself.

"You finished moping around?" came the voice transmission from Old Man Lightning. "You've been standing there for like five minutes, not doing anything."

Gravis smiled when he heard Old Man Lightning. His choices to destroy the Heaven Sect and make every cultivator more powerful might doom millions or even billions of people to an unjust death, but Gravis' heart was clear. As long as he did what he thought was right, he wouldn't regret anything.

With that thought, his guilt towards Gorn also completely disappeared. Gorn had made his decision back then, knowing full well about the consequences that too much lightning would cause. That he died to Gravis was not much different than someone dying to someone else in a fight.

Starting from this moment on, Gorn was just another one of his comrades who never managed to reach the peak. There was no difference between him, Skye's parent, Wendy, or Wendy's father. They were all the same. People that Gravis cared for but died. He would always remember them, but that was all. The dead had no influence over his life anymore.

Whoosh!

Out of reflex, Gravis took a step to the side, barely evading a cane.

"Tch," Old Man Lightning spat. "And here I thought I finally got my chance," he said with annoyance.

Gravis only turned to Old Man Lightning and smirked. "I need to adapt, or I won't survive," Gravis said with a laugh.

Old Man Lightning looked at the laughing Gravis like he was an idiot. What was so funny about that sentence? Was that a joke? Also, did that guy just laugh about his own joke that only he understood?

Suddenly, Gravis stopped laughing as he remembered something. He quickly looked beside Old Man Lightning and saw Lasar. Gravis was about to release a sigh of relief but noticed something peculiar.

"How did you fall back to the Tree Stage?" Gravis asked in wonder and shock.

Gravis also took a closer look at Lasar and noticed how incredibly injured he was. He couldn't even really stand on his own two feet, making Old Man Lightning support him. His whole left arm and a big chunk of his torso were missing. On top of that, Gravis could see wrinkles and fractured skin all over Lasar's body. Those things appeared when the body was out of Life Energy. Apparently, he had had a brutal fight.

Lasar coughed a little. "This was the most dangerous fight in my life," Lasar slowly said. "I was about to die when I decided to use the Energy in my Spirit for an attack. This destroyed a whole cultivation level but allowed me to come out victorious. The only reason I won was that Old Darkness hadn't expected such an attack."

BZZZ!

Gravis shot some Life Lightning at Lasar, but not much. After all, his storage wasn't even close to full. Yet, the Life Lightning was better than nothing, and Lasar's body became a bit healthier. None of the injuries healed, but that was to be expected.

After all, being injured and also having no Life Energy was an issue. The Life Lightning barely returned some of the Life Energy to Lasar. Thanks to that, his injuries wouldn't worsen anymore, and his body could slowly heal.

Life Energy only directly healed if the body was already fully saturated with Life Energy. Any excess would directly transform into healing. If one had no Life Energy for a while, the passive, nearly unnoticeable destruction of dying parts of their body couldn't be healed. The person would simply wither away.

"Thanks," Lasar said.

"So, how long will it take to reach the Self Stage again?" Gravis asked.

"I think it should take around five years," Lasar said, making Gravis' eyes widen. "But I think it's worth it. My Will-Aura should be nearly as strong as grandpa's was before his fight with the priest. With another five years of accumulation and a couple more years of increasing my strength, I think I may actually have a chance against a priest."

Gravis looked at Lasar with sympathy, then sighed. "I think that might not be possible," he said.

Lasar raised a brow. "why not?"

Gravis had an uncomfortable smile on his face. "I won't remain for so long in this world," Gravis said.

Lasar still looked with skepticism at Gravis. "So? What does that have to do with my tempering?"

Gravis sighed again. "Think about it. When I reach the Unity Realm, I will kill Heaven, and when Heaven dies, what would happen to the Heavenborn? I can tell you what will happen. The Heavenborn will lose their Heavenly Pressure and will fall from the strongest cultivators on their Stage to the weakest. After all, they wouldn't have any Will-Auras anymore. A simple activation of your Will-Aura would knock a priest unconscious."

Lasar and also Old Man Lightning looked with shock at Gravis. They had totally overlooked that fact. Yet, it actually made sense. After all, Heavenly Pressure borrowed the Will-Aura of Heaven, and without Heaven, there was no Will-Aura to borrow. A Spirit Forming expert without a Will-Aura would be weaker than everyone else on the same Stage.

Lasar and Old Man Lightning looked at each other with worry. No word was spoken for nearly half a minute. Both cultivators had to come to terms with the situation. After all, this meant that Lasar would need to wait for, at least, 50 more years to receive his tempering. He was already too powerful for the other Sect Masters and high-grade Spirit Beasts. He could only wait for the next generation to become as powerful as him.

Lasar wanted to follow his grandfather into the next world, but apparently, their roads were about to split. This was a hard blow to Lasar. Old Man Lightning, of course, also wasn't unaffected. After all, Lasar was his grandson.

"I have an idea," Gravis said.

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Chapter 282: Off to the Freya Clan

Old Man Lightning and Lasar had learned to trust in Gravis' imagination. Due to him not being raised in this world, he had a broader view, which enabled him to think outside the box.

"Oh? Now, I'm interested. Tell us!" Old Man Lightning said.

Gravis scratched his chin in thought. "Think about the situation like this. You would need 50 years to start your tempering again, so it will definitely take longer than 50 years to reach the Unity Realm for you, right?"

Lasar nodded.

Gravis lifted a finger. "Now, how long would it take you to recultivate from the Sapling Stage?" Gravis asked.

Lasar furrowed his brows. "I am halfway through the Tree Stage right now, so it will only take five years to return to my peak, but from the end of the Sapling Stage, I would probably need over ten years. The beginning of the Sapling Stage would be 20 years."

Gravis smirked. "Right, isn't that shorter than 50 years?"

Lasar still furrowed his brows. "I guess it is, but-"

WACK!

Old Man Lightning hit Lasar on the head with his cane. "Are you stupid? Don't you get it?" He asked with annoyance.

Lasar thought about this for a while. Then, after some seconds, his eyes widened, and he clapped thigh in realization. "Of course!" he shouted, and Gravis smiled. "In the Self Stage, I can only temper myself against others in the Self Stage. The same holds true for the Tree Stage. Sadly, due to me going through the tenth Stage of Magic Gathering, no one in the Tree Stage would fight me. My Unity Will would also make fighting against high-grade Spirit beasts too easy."

"But at the Sapling Stage, I could temper myself again since I would have plenty of opponents," Lasar said.

Gravis continued smiling and nodded. "Yes. With your bigger storage of Energy and your stronger will, you can probably manage to fight Tree Stage cultivators or high-grade Spirit Beasts. Though, you would have to fight one Stage higher than yourself." Then, Gravis shrugged. "After all, if I can fight two Stages above myself, you should be able to fight one Stage higher."

Whoosh!

Gravis evaded a cane. "Stop being so arrogant!" Old Man Lightning said with frustration.

Gravis smiled back at Old Man Lightning. "Why? Did I lie?" he asked with a slight laugh.

Old Man Lightning tightened the grip on his cane, harrumphed, and turned his head away from Gravis. He didn't want to get into a discussion with him.

"Becoming weaker to become stronger," Lasar muttered while scratching his stubble. "It sounds quite contradictory, but it should work. This is a good idea, Gravis."

Gravis only waved his hand dismissively. "Don't worry! I'm just giving some ideas. After all, it's you that has to make this work."

Lasar smirked and nodded. "Right you are." Then he chuckled a bit. "The new generation will always surpass the old," he said.

Gravis smirked. "Well, that may not always be true, but, right now, I couldn't put it better myself."

Whoosh!

Gravis sidestepped another cane. "I said, dial back your arrogance!" Old Man Lightning shouted in frustration.

Gravis had stopped smirking and frowned at Old Man Lightning. "I wasn't talking about myself!" he shouted back. "I was talking about all those new disciples that are getting their Destruction Lightning right now! Don't always jump to conclusions, you old shit!"

"Old shit, eh?" Old Man Lightning said evenly. Surprisingly, he didn't sound angry. "You dodged some of my canes, and now you think that you can walk all over me, is that it? I think you have forgotten all your past beatings."

Then Old Man Lightning cracked his knuckles as Gravis noticed that he had forgotten that Old Man Lightning was still way more powerful than him. "Hey, I'm sorry, okay?" he said.

Old Man Lightning only smirked. "If sorry were enough, we wouldn't have fights."

And like this, after a long time, Gravis got beaten again.

One and a half days later, the three returned to the Lightning Sect. Gravis had already healed himself and Lasar during that time. The helpless beating that he took from Old Man Lightning reminded him of his first days in the Lightning Sect. It was just as annoying now as it was back then.

'Well, I walked right into that one,' Gravis thought. 'I think it would be better not to forget the power of the people I am talking to. In other worlds, an attitude like this could cost me my life. Seems like there is always something to learn.'

Gravis wasn't really angry at Old Man Lightning. After all, this beating had shown him another one of his weaknesses. If he talked like this with other, more powerful people, they might not stop after only beating him up a little. In a sense, Old Man Lightning's beatings taught him some things about humility.

Gravis had no interest in the Darkness Sect's wealth. His Spirit couldn't be enhanced with pills and his lightning was already flowing out of his body. The only interesting thing would be body tempering pills, but he didn't want to increase his body right now. After all, if he got even more powerful, he wouldn't be able to temper himself anymore.

Surprisingly enough, the Lightning Sect also wasn't interested in the wealth. All the expensive stuff had been carried by the elders and Byron. Sadly, it all got obliterated. On top of that, the Lightning Sect thought that the Darkness Sect had paid for their crimes. Leaving them their wealth could be considered as a small help. After all, the Lightning Sect wasn't interested in completely eradicating the Darkness Sect. That would just be a waste. Like this, the Darkness Sect itself remained untouched.

Lasar was still in the Tree Stage. He first wanted to inform all the elders in the Sect about his future plan. By falling to the Sapling Stage, the Lightning Sect wouldn't have anyone at the Tree Stage anymore. On top of that, Gravis was about to leave the Sect for the resource war. He would leave in about two weeks and stay inside the Freya Clan for a month. After that, it was already time for the resource war.

As soon as Gravis would enter the resource war, Old Man Lightning would ascend to the next world. After all, Gravis would be untouchable inside the closed area for the resource war. One shouldn't forget that the resource war would stretch over multiple years. If Gravis managed to survive, he would come out with probably even more power than Old Man Lightning currently had.

This meant that in two months, both Old Man Lightning and Gravis wouldn't be there anymore. The Lightning Sect would become way weaker than before. Lasar could remain in the Tree Stage to secure the Lightning Sect's foundation, but he had decided that his own cultivation was more important. He had given enough to the Sect over the years.

Of course, the Lightning Sect wouldn't remain completely helpless. Even at the Sapling Stage, Lasar would still be as powerful as an average Sect Master. With the Wind Sect also being close-by, the Lightning Sect was safe enough for Lasar to lower his strength.

Like this, around two weeks passed.

Right now, Gravis could break into the Sapling Stage anytime he wanted. Of course, he didn't. After all, Old Man Lightning and Lasar had told him that he could only participate in the resource war as long as he remained in the Seed Stage. As soon as he officially entered the resource war, he could break into the Sapling Stage at any time.

His Will-Aura was also way more powerful than before. The tempering against the Darkness Sect helped a lot, and Gravis could now condense his Will-Aura to an area of about 13%. As soon as he would reach 1%, he would have condensed a level three Unity Will.

Priests of the Heaven Sect had a Heavenly Pressure, which corresponded to a level two Unity Will. That was the main reason why they were more powerful than ordinary Self Stage cultivators. With the current strength of Gravis' Unity Will, he had the third most powerful will in the entire world. The only beings with more powerful wills were the High Priest and Heaven itself.

Gravis stood at the front gate of the Sect. Old Man Lightning and Lasar stood opposite him with smiles on their faces. Gravis also smiled at them. He had already said his goodbyes to the only other being that he felt a connection with in the Lightning Sect. The Freya's Birch. It didn't want to see its father going, but there was no way around it.

"So, this is it, huh?" Gravis said.

Old Man Lightning nodded. "Yes. It's time to say goodbye."

Gravis sighed. "I probably won't go to your higher world," Gravis said with melancholy. "I will probably go to a completely different kind of world to further my horizon. There is basically no chance that we will ever see each other again, old man."

Old Man Lightning continued smiling. "It's alright. I have already thought as much. Friends come and go. Such is life."

Lasar also smiled. "I will still be here after you return from the resource war. I'm looking forward to your fight with Heaven," he said, encouraging Gravis.

Gravis sighed bitterly. Saying goodbye was always hard, even with a powerful will. "Thank you for everything, you two. You have shown and taught me a lot of things about myself."

Old Man Lightning waved his hand. "Don't worry about it. You did the same thing for us." Then, he gripped his cane and swung it around. "Now get going before I beat you again!"

Gravis could only smile bitterly when he heard that. Then, he looked at the sky and then back at them. "As long as you keep ascending, you will reach my homeworld at some point. Just ask anyone with similar power to you about the Opposer. As soon as you see that they are familiar with that title, you will know that you reached my homeworld."

Lasar and Old Man Lightning looked with furrowed brows at each other, then turned back to Gravis. "The Opposer? Who is that?"

"That's my father," Gravis answered with a smile. "Maybe there are other people that call themselves something similar, but only in my homeworld will the cultivators have a powerful reaction to that title."

"Your father sounds powerful," Lasar said.

Gravis nodded. "He is."

Then, he turned around. "Goodbye. I hope I will see you two again in the future."

"Goodbye, Gravis," they said.

After that, Gravis jumped onto his Lightning Board and drove away. Old Man Lightning and Lasar remained silent for a while and sighed.

After some minutes, they walked back into the Sect.

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Chapter 283: The Freya Clan

As Gravis traveled to the Freya Clan, he thought about the last time he met Joyce. Back then, he had been so naïve. He also remembered how affected he had been by the Hunting Guild's offer to help him. Right now, it was unthinkable for Gravis to be affected by something as simple as that. Well, at least not nearly as much.

It had been nearly three years since Gravis and Joyce had last seen each other. He still remembered how nervous he was while talking to her. Yet, as he thought back, she didn't seem prettier than the two twins that he had rejected when he had still been part of "the Greys".

'By the way, whatever happened to those two?' Gravis thought. 'I guess they should have been part of the Darkness Sect, but they also left after our talk. At that time, I thought that it was because they didn't want to temper themselves anymore, but I think something else happened. It's possible that our talk made them feel something for me. They probably left because they didn't want to be part of the scam anymore.'

Gravis chuckled a little. 'It doesn't matter. Our paths are different. They probably won't ever reach the Sapling Stage. After all, their fear of losing each other is too restricting. This won't allow them to take risks, which will, in turn, make it impossible for them to temper their Will-Auras. Well, right now, the strongest people of the Darkness Sect are at the Seed Stage. The twin's mindset is better than most others from the Sect, so maybe they can change the future Darkness Sect a little.'

As Gravis shot through the environment, he got sidetracked and looked around. It was currently dusk, and the orange hue bathed the surrounding trees, mountains, and clouds in a warm glow. Seeing the glow, some melancholy appeared inside Gravis.

His loneliness wouldn't break Gravis, but being alone also didn't feel good. He had been part of a community for the past one and a half years, and being alone again, reminded him of the other times where he was alone.

"Well, the old man said that friends come and go," Gravis muttered. "Just because I am feeling a little lonely right now doesn't mean that this will always be the case."

Gravis knew that he could join some organizations now. He had kept watch over Old Man Lightning's and Lasar's Karmic Luck, and surprisingly, none of their Karmic Luck had been affected by being close to him. Gravis had thought about this issue for a while and came to a conclusion.

'This whole lowering-the-Karmic-Luck-of-others thing had stopped as soon as I reached the Spirit Forming Realm. This means that something at that point has changed how Heaven looks at me. I also think it's not just this lower Heaven, but also maybe the highest Heaven,' Gravis thought as he rubbed his chin in thought.

'I guess my desperate actions back then made Heaven cautious of pushing me into a corner. The fact that my father had appeared, together with a power that I assume is the highest Heaven, shows that my breakthrough was way more serious than I had anticipated.'

Gravis looked into the sky. 'Well, the results show that the more Heaven suppressed me, the more powerful I became. Without these constant attempts at my life and the pressure surrounding me, I wouldn't have achieved my Destruction Lightning, Unity Will, or my special Spirit.'

Gravis chuckled a little. 'I guess Heaven is taking me seriously now. Yet, ironically, taking me seriously means giving me less pressure and more freedom. It's funny how contradictory some concepts seem if someone doesn't know all the information.'

Gravis shook his head to get back on track. 'Enough thinking about the past!' Gravis shouted in his mind. 'Joyce is the last thing binding me to this lower world. Everything else has been resolved. According to Lasar, this whole resource war thing will also go on for multiple years. At that point, I should already be ready to reach the Unity Realm. After all, the Self Stage needs no accumulation, just like the tenth Stage of Energy Gathering. As soon as I reach it, I can directly advance to the Unity Realm.'

After some minutes, Gravis came closer to the Freya Clan. The plants became bigger and more powerful. Gravis could even see a lot of Energy Plants. Though, surprisingly, he didn't even see a single Spirit Plant. 'The Freya Clan practices Life Lightning, which is the best nourishment for powerful plants, but I guess since the Freya Clan isn't nearly as powerful as a Sect, they probably don't have that many Spirit Forming Experts. Because of that, they probably can't spare so much of their Life Lightning for the plants.'

By now, the Freya Clan was visible in Gravis' Spirit. It basically looked like a small town. There was one light-green castle in the middle, with lots of houses strewn around the area. In comparison to a town, the houses looked a bit bigger and more expensive. The only cheap-looking buildings were some sheds in some gardens.

'Well, it makes sense. After all, a Clan is basically just one big family. Why wouldn't they give their relatives a nice place to stay? On top of that, I heard that the Freya Clan is warm and welcoming, apparently even to the degree that it's damaging the Clan. The whole world looks at the Clan like they are introverted push-overs that don't dare to raise their voice.'

Another interesting thing was that Gravis' Spirit was blocked from entering the houses. Every single house had its own Formation Array that stopped the Spirits of others from looking inside, which was quite surprising to Gravis. Typically, only cities and Sects had one such Formation Array stretching all over their whole area. Gravis was absolutely sure that deploying one Formation Array over a bigger area was way cheaper than placing many smaller ones.

'Huh, they really are nice,' Gravis thought as he scratched his chin. 'Spirit Forming cultivators live for a long time, so the youngest and oldest members are so many generations apart that any familiar feeling is already basically lost. On top of that, to keep the Clan populated, they need many people from outside their Clan to marry into it. Yet, the Spirit Forming cultivators are actually willing to spend so much money for every single family member. That's really generous.'

Gravis also noticed a gigantic tree beside the central castle. It looked identical to the Freya's Birch in the Lightning Sect, which could only mean that this was the only other Freya's Birch in this lower world. It was even a bit taller than the one in the Lightning Sect, and Gravis felt that it was a mid-grade Spirit Plant. The only one for many miles around.

Gravis also finally saw some other Spirit Plants, though all of them were low-grade. There was a thorny bush that actually stretched all around the whole Clan. They probably had that to protect themselves from attackers. Gravis also noticed something else. Something that he would have entirely missed if he hadn't been so interested in the bush.

Under the bushes, several small mushrooms could be seen. If one didn't pay attention to them, they would look like a lot of small mushrooms, but one had to remember that the actual mushroom was never just the cap above ground, but the gigantic plant underground.

Every single mushroom was connected in the underground, and all their roots met in a big clump below the middle of the Freya Clan. When Gravis saw that, he was quite surprised. 'Another mid-grade Spirit Plant,' he concluded.

One had to know that it was very difficult for one's Spirit to penetrate solid matter. The whole clump of roots was nearly ten kilometers under the ground, barely inside the range of Gravis' Spirit. Gravis' Spirit's range was vaster than the Spirit's range of Tree Stage cultivators. He could, already, barely see the clump, so it would be even more difficult for people at the Tree Stage and straight-up impossible for anyone below that.

As Gravis saw that, he lifted an eyebrow in an unsure expression. 'I thought they were so nice they were pushovers, but such an arrangement is actually very sneaky. Only Sect Masters would be able to barely

notice the dangerous mushroom while anyone weaker than that would think that the Freya Clan could be easily robbed.'

Gravis grew more interested as he realized more things. 'An incredibly rich town of people with very weak battle-strength due to their element. Who wouldn't want to rob that? Yet, as long as they didn't have someone at the Tree Stage, the attackers wouldn't even notice the mushroom. The mushroom may only be at the mid-grade, but if it gets the drop on someone, anyone below the Tree Stage will die.'

Now, Gravis smiled. 'Oh, I see. When the Clan is under attack, the bush will become bigger and create a powerful barrier. The attackers will then concentrate on the bush and attack it, but when they are only halfway through, all the mushrooms will probably release powerful spores that kill anyone near the bush.'

'Are they actually luring powerful bandit groups or similar organizations in to attack them? I mean, that would give all the plants some top-grade nourishment while the Clan gets a lot of wealth.'

Gravis chuckled a little. 'So that's how they managed to survive so long with their weak attitude. Taking them down would require power on the level of a Sect. It would probably even require the Sect Master himself to take action. On top of that, they are under the protection of the Lightning Sect.'

"Interesting," Gravis said as he walked closer to the front gate.

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Chapter 284: Fucking Misunderstandings

As Gravis approached the entrance of the Freya Clan, two guards slowly walked over to him with smiles. They were both at the initial Stage of Spirit Forming. "Welcome, friend from the Lightning Sect!" They shouted with friendliness.

Gravis was still wearing the clothing and emblem of the Lightning Sect, which allowed them to identify him as one of its disciples. "Hello, and thank you," said Gravis back. "But today, I didn't come as someone from the Lightning Sect, but just as myself."

The guards looked at each other with uncertainty. Visitors only said something like this if they didn't want to implicate the powers behind them, which would only happen if the visitor planned something nefarious. Yet, luckily, they didn't jump to conclusions.

"Then, what brings you here?" one of the guards asked with caution, stealthily readying a Jade Token. If this Jade Token were destroyed, it would probably activate a Formation Array. Of course, Gravis noticed the guard's actions.

Gravis smiled uncomfortably. "Don't worry," he said, lifting both of his arms to show that he didn't want to attack them. "You might have misunderstood. A girl named Joyce and someone she called teacher helped me around three years ago in the Outer-Continent, and I'm here to repay that favor."

When the guards heard that, they released a big sigh of relief. Seeing that Gravis was from the Lightning Sect, they knew that he wouldn't lie about something like this. The guards bowed politely. "We're sorry for the disrespect."

Gravis waved his hand dismissively with a smile. "Don't worry. I get how my words could be misinterpreted. Misunderstandings happen, and there's no reason to dwell on them. Anyway, can I meet Joyce?"

The guards smiled again. "Sure! Please enter," one of them said. After saying that, the gate opened, allowing Gravis to enter. "Someone will come soon to welcome you," one of them said. They had already informed their superiors about a powerful visitor. After all, they only had around ten people at the Seed Stage in their entire Clan. A visitor with such power would only be weaker than the Patriarch and Grand Elder, who were both at the Sapling Stage.

Gravis slowly walked through the gates. He didn't look around since he had already inspected the whole Clan with his Spirit. The guards didn't follow. A lot of people were walking around. They were trading, talking, some kids were playing, and the whole Freya Clan radiated a sense of harmony.

After some seconds passed, one of the guards transmitted something to the other one. "Huh, another one of Miss Joyce's investments. Though, this one is quite powerful. Who would have expected that one of her investments would manage to reach the Seed Stage."

The other guard nodded but then furrowed his brows. "Wait. Didn't he say that Miss Joyce had helped him three years ago in the Outer-Continent?"

The first guard shrugged. "Yeah, what about it?"

"The Outer-Continent has no one in the Spirit Forming Realm and only very few people in the Magic Gathering Realm. This means that he had to have been in the Body Tempering Realm when they met. Doesn't that mean that the visitor reached the Seed Stage from the Body Tempering Realm in only three years?" he asked with narrowed eyes.

The eyes of the other guard widened in realization and caution. "That is literally impossible! After all, it's impossible to speed up the accumulation of the Spirit in the Spirit Forming Realm." Then, the guard narrowed his eyes. "This can only mean that he's lying!"

"But he is from the Lightning Sect. People from the Lightning Sect wouldn't lie about something like this!" said the second guard unsurely.

The narrowed eyes of the first guard showed some killing intent. "What if he stole the uniform and badge from a Lightning Sect disciple that he killed?"

When the second guard heard that, he took a deep and nervous breath through his teeth. "I'll inform the elders!"

"Do that!" said the other guard.

Meanwhile, Gravis started walking to the castle, not knowing that he had been branded as a threat and a liar. Several seconds passed, but no one came to welcome him. On top of that, the busy street started becoming less busy by the second. That was because the upper echelon of the Clan informed their family to retreat stealthily into their houses.

As Gravis looked around, his eyes narrowed. "Very suspicious. Everyone was having a great day, but suddenly, all the people started walking to their houses in unison. The only thing that had changed in

that timeframe to warrant such a response was that I entered the Clan. Don't tell me that this is another misunderstanding. Fuck, I hate those!" Gravis thought.

Gravis stopped walking and put his hands behind his back. Then, he looked at the central castle. "I'm only guessing here," Gravis said, "but the fact that everyone is returning to their houses just when I entered the Clan means that you think that I want to attack you or something, right? Can we get this whole misunderstanding behind us?"

CRRRK!

Suddenly, a huge wall of thorny bush came out of the ground around him. The bush didn't touch him but enclosed him in a big cage. "Really?" Gravis commented drily, bereft of any amusement. "Are we actually doing this?"

"Why have you invaded our Freya Clan!?" came a shout from a person that just exited the central castle, who was accompanied by four others. All of them were at the Seed Stage.

Gravis looked with boredom at them. "I slowly walked through the open front door. How can that be considered invading?" he asked evenly.

One of the people stepped forward. "You have lied to gain entry. This is no different from an invasion!"

Gravis blinked a couple of times in confusion. "But I didn't lie," he said.

"Nonsense!" another one shouted as he also stepped forward. "You have said that it was only three years ago that the young miss had helped you in the Outer-Continent. This means that you have reached the Seed Stage from the Body Tempering Realm in just three years, which is literally impossible!"

"But that's exactly what happened," Gravis said with more annoyance in his voice, accompanied by an annoyed groan. "Just go ask Joyce or the person she calls teacher. They can confirm that."

One of the people harrumphed. "We already asked the Grand Elder for confirmation, and he said that he doesn't recognize you."

Gravis blinked a couple of times in confusion.

Pat!

Then facepalmed. 'I forgot that my looks changed quite a bit. Fuck, this is so annoying!'

BZZZ!

Gravis opened his hand and summoned some lightning. "See? I am from the Lightning Sect! Why would I lie about any of this? Do you believe me now?" Gravis asked, even more annoyed than before.

For a short time, the elders were taken aback. Gravis had proven that he was from the Lightning Sect, and lying didn't conform to their temperament. This made the whole thing more complicated.

They now knew that Gravis was from the Lightning Sect, which made it very unlikely for him to lie, but on the other hand, such an insane growth in power was literally impossible. Now, they didn't know what to believe anymore.

"This does make you less suspicious," one person said, "but there is still another possibility!" Then, he pointed at Gravis. "You're a Warped One!"

Gravis blinked in confusion again. "A what?"

Gravis hadn't been there when the elders in the Lightning Sect talked about these people. Old Man Lightning also never informed him. After all, they were so few and weak that the Warped Ones' existence had no relevance to Gravis.

The eyes of the other people opened widely in realization, and their eyes narrowed as their hostility towards Gravis returned. "A Warped One! A disciple or former disciple of the Lightning Sect that believes power is absolute justice and fairness. You wouldn't care about lying to us because you would think of us as weaker! Let me tell you, just because we are very welcoming to everyone doesn't mean that we will let you trample all over us!"

"Huh," Gravis said. "Never heard that one before." Then, Gravis scratched his chin in thought. "Though, that makes sense in some way." Gravis then looked at the five people again. "And you think I am such a, what did you call it, Warped One?"

The person standing at the front harrumphed again. "Stop lying! You are surrounded, and your plan has failed! The only reason why you are still alive is that you haven't attacked yet! Come quietly with us! The Patriarch will decide what to do with you!"

Gravis sighed in exasperation. "So, basically, it's impossible to talk my way out of this, right?" he asked as he rubbed the bridge of his nose in annoyance.

"No! Surrender and await judgment!" another person shouted.

'Well, I could come quietly and tell the Patriarch to just ask the Lightning Sect, but I really don't want to. I really, really, really, don't like being suppressed by others. Well, then I just have to show them that there is no reason for me to lie. After all, if I wanted to, I could flatten this whole place without much issue. I refuse to believe that the Freya Clan is more powerful than the Darkness Sect. Also, I might as well have some fun while doing so.'

"Hey," Gravis said and waited for a couple of seconds. "Hey," he said again and waited. "Hey... hey... hey."

"What?" One of the elders said in annoyance.

"What did the unconscious person say to the visitor?" Gravis asked.

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Chapter 285: Nickname

The people looked at each other with furrowed brows. They had no idea what the intruder was on about. One of them looked back at Gravis with furrowed brows.

"Wha-"

WHOOOM!

And lost consciousness before he could even finish his words. With the power of his fully concentrated Will-Aura, Gravis was now able to make Seed Stage cultivators lose their consciousness.

"Exactly!" Gravis shouted.

Before the fight with the Darkness Sect, he only had been able to stop Seed Stage experts in their tracks when he concentrated his Will-Aura. While being in the Illusion Array, he could have rotated it to not allow any Seed Stage cultivator to get close to him, but he needed to kill some of them to stop more from attacking him.

The eyes of the other people widened in shock.

"Wha-"

And another one fell unconscious.

"Hey, that joke gets old if it's repeated too many times," Gravis said in seriousness. His dry delivery made the people incredibly confused. Was the intruder annoyed? What did the intruder do? What was happening?

"Oi, bush," Gravis transmitted to the thorny bush. "I am going to walk forward now, and you better not touch me."

Before the bush could answer, Gravis started walking forward, right towards the wall of thorny bush. Unfortunately, the bush didn't retract itself.

BZZZ!

Gravis' body was surrounded by a bit of lightning, and as soon as he touched the wall, his lightning went into it, incinerating the whole cage surrounding him. The lightning traveled along the roots and destroyed a whole third of the bush. Gravis had only released around 5% of his lightning. Any more and the thorny bush would have died.

The thorny bush transmitted a scream of pain, and every root and part of itself moved as far away from Gravis as possible.

"Told you," Gravis transmitted.

The three remaining people looked with fear at Gravis. This was not how this was supposed to go! The intruder was incredibly powerful, and they were sure that they didn't have the power to stop him.

Meanwhile, Gravis just continued walking forward. When he reached the three people, he stopped for a short moment. "I have enough power to flatten your whole Clan. If I really wanted to hurt you, I wouldn't need to lie," Gravis said. Then, Gravis noticed something approaching at quite a fast speed.

BANG!

Gravis' condensed Will-Aura concentrated on the new arrival, sapping him of a lot of his power and slowing him down immensely. Then, he lifted his hands and grabbed the wrist of the attacker, who had just thrown a fist at Gravis. The attacker was an old man with fist-weapons, which encased his hands like some sort of spiky glove with a lot of Formation Arrays.

For some reason, when that attack arrived, Gravis felt an incredible surge of anger raging through him. The anger was so intense that it could only be compared to the anger that he had felt after he had newly created his Destruction Lightning. Yet, with his powerful will, Gravis buried that anger for now. Getting angry now wouldn't help.

The person's eyes widened in shock as he saw that he couldn't even get his attack through. How was that possible!? He was a whole Stage higher than the intruder! He might not have been able to upgrade his body to the Sapling Stage yet, but he was still at the Sapling Stage.

Gravis turned his head to the attacker. "Did you know," Gravis started talking, "the only reason why you are not dead right now is that you didn't unload the natural lightning in your gloves, and that I still owe you for giving me that Formation Array back in the Hunting Guild."

Gravis recognized the person. It was the person that Joyce had called teacher. The fact that he hadn't been able to upgrade his body to the Sapling Stage yet meant that he hadn't been on that Stage for long.

The older person narrowed his eyes and pulled his hand out of Gravis' grasp. "Who are you!?" he asked aggressively.

"Like I said," Gravis answered evenly, "I am the person you helped in the Hunting Guild near Wilderness Town. You know, the one with the Will-Aura? My name is Gravis."

A small glimmer of recognition appeared in the older person's eyes, but his battle intent didn't go down. "You look nothing like that young boy."

Gravis blinked with boredom. "Yeah, guess what. Shit happens. I look different now. Excuse me for my direct choice of language. I'm not used to talking to people that attack me." No amount of respect could be heard in Gravis' words.

He had come to the Freya Clan to repay his debt, yet they had immediately attacked him. The fact that he owed them something was literally the only reason why the present people were still alive. Gravis did not take kindly to people attacking him at all!

The older person jumped back a little but still remained in a battle stance. "That still doesn't explain your ridiculous power. It's impossible to become so powerful in only three years. I can't believe such an outrageous claim without proof."

"And how the fuck am I supposed to prove such a thing?" Gravis asked with annoyance. "I showed you my element. I never initiated an attack. I didn't lie. I gave you information on when and where we talked. What else do you want? Do I also need to tell you about how awkward I acted in front of you? Or how, when you opened the door to the Hunting Guild, you knocked over a hunter? What about that glimmer of understanding in your eyes when I said that I could only accept an equivalent trade? The fuck do you want to hear from me?" Gravis spat one thing after another.

The older man's eyes started losing resolution. Gravis had said a lot of details that others shouldn't know. Yet, the sheer impossibility of what he said still made this hard to accept. After all, it was physically impossible to reach the Seed Stage in only three years. It was like finding a mortal kid on top of a massive tower with the kid saying that it just flew up there. That was impossible for a mortal!

The older person took a deep breath to calm down. "If what you're saying is true, then just wait for a couple of minutes. Everything will resolve itself by then," the older person said carefully.

"Oh? That's interesting. Alright, I'll wait," Gravis said.

While they were talking, another person came closer, charging right at Gravis. Gravis had, obviously, already noticed the person and looked at him with cold eyes. Luckily, the person was stopped by the older person before he could attack. Otherwise, he might have lost an arm. Gravis had been kind enough up to now.

"Why did you stop me, Reginald? If we don't take the initiative, we might all die today," the new arrival asked with a voice transmission.

"Calm down, Marvin," Reginald, the Grand Elder, said. "I think he's maybe telling the truth. On top of that," Reginald narrowed his eyes. "I doubt that we have any chance of winning. He stopped my full-power attack without even using his weapon. His Will-Aura alone is impossibly powerful, and his lightning also feels different than any other lightning I have ever seen. Something very strange is up with this guy."

The Patriarch, Marvin, looked at Reginald with shock. The intruder was this powerful? He was able to easily handle multiple people at the Sapling Stage while being in the Seed Stage? There were cases of some people jumping a Stage to barely win against someone a Stage higher than them, but those cases were supremely rare and were always fought bitterly until both parties nearly died. Yet, this person was basically not even taking them seriously. This was unheard of!

Marvin released a shaky breath. "Then, we can only wait for the Lightning Sect. I have already informed them a couple of minutes ago that someone very powerful has attacked our Clan. They will send, at least, several elders. At that point, the intruder can only surrender."

Reginald nodded his head in agreement.

Of course, Gravis noticed that exchange of gestures and knew that those two were talking about him. Though, that didn't matter at all. The only reason why they were trying to gain some time was probably because they had already contacted the Lightning Sect.

"What's your name?" the Patriarch asked after a couple of minutes of silent waiting.

"Gravis, like I've already said," Gravis answered with annoyance.

The Patriarch remained silent for a while after he had heard that. He tried to think of an instance where he had heard that name before. Someone with such power should be famous in the Core-Continent, after all. He had also heard some big news about someone with that name recently.

When the Patriarch remembered that piece of news, his eyes widened in shock, and he stopped breathing. He had heard that about two weeks ago, someone called Gravis had annihilated the Darkness Sect, alone. At first, he hadn't connected that Gravis to the one standing in front of him. After all, when thinking about someone annihilating a whole Sect, one would think about someone in the Tree Stage, at least. Yet, wasn't Gravis showing power similar to someone at the Tree Stage right now?

"Gravis? Lightning Calamity Gravis?" the Patriarch asked with a shaky voice.

When Reginald heard that, his eyes also widened in shock, and looked more closely at Gravis. Could this really be the Lightning Calamity?

"Lightning Calamity?" Gravis asked with furrowed brows. "Where did that come from?" he asked.

"Someone with the name of Gravis annihilated the Darkness Sect around two weeks ago," the Patriarch answered. "This whole thing could be considered a calamity for the Darkness Sect. The person had also used the lightning element. Therefore, the name Lightning Calamity was born."

Gravis scratched his chin in thought and looked at the sky. "Huh, Lightning Calamity," he muttered. "It sounds a bit too cruel and overbearing, but I guess that's how I would appear to people who don't know all the details. Though, isn't a nickname or title given based on how someone else perceives someone?" Gravis asked himself. "I guess Lightning Calamity kinda fits then."

Suddenly, Gravis perked up and looked to the south. "Oh hey, Lasar's coming."

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Chapter 286: The Good Comes With the Bad

"Lasar? The Sect Master!?" The Patriarch shouted in shock. They had activated the most powerful Transmission Formation Array, but that wouldn't warrant the Sect Master coming personally. Normally, only some elders would come over.

Gravis waited until Lasar was 80 kilometers away so that he could see what was going on inside the Freya Clan. "Guess what," Gravis transmitted to Lasar while also keeping Marvin and Reginald in the loop, "apparently, I am an invader that lies about his identity to rob or annihilate the Freya Clan."

The two Sapling Stage cultivators still didn't feel Lasar, which made them skeptical. How was Gravis able to notice Lasar while they didn't? The range of their Spirits should be bigger than Gravis'.

A sigh appeared in their heads. "So, it really was you, Gravis," they heard Lasar's voice. He sounded quite tired. "Alright, what happened?"

Gravis scoffed. "So, I arrive here and enter through the front gate. I tell them that I came to repay my debt, and what do they do? They surround me with several people at the Seed Stage, call me a liar, a Warped One, and want me to await 'judgment' by the Patriarch," Gravis transmitted to everyone involved. The word judgment was pronounced with an impressive amount of ridicule.

"And you didn't explain yourself?" Lasar asked.

"Of fucking course, I did!" Gravis transmitted with anger and frustration. "But no~, it's impossible to reach the Seed Stage in only three years. Therefore, I am lying. That guy," Gravis pointed at the Grand Elder, "even attacked me. Shit, I am so frustrated and angry because of all this ridiculous shit!" Gravis basically shouted.

"Wow, Gravis, you need to calm down," Lasar transmitted. "It's obviously a misunderstanding. I know the Freya Clan, and they wouldn't plot something as nefarious as this."

Marvin and Reginald listened to the conversation, and their insides started shaking. They knew the voice and Spirit of Lasar, so they were sure that it was him who was talking to them. The fact that Lasar didn't

get angry by Gravis shouting at him showed that he considered Gravis as a friend and someone on the same level as him.

"I know that!" Gravis shouted, "but you know how it feels when someone steps on your bottom line. My lightning is mad and going crazy. The only reason why I can still keep it in check is that I owe them something. This is literally the first time in the Spirit Forming Realm and the second time in total that someone stepped on my bottom line and survived."

The first and only other time that someone didn't get killed by Gravis after stepping on his bottom line had been his encounter with Aion at the Wind Wall. Gravis had wanted Aion to attack him, and he had also felt that he owed Aion somewhat. This was enough reason not to kill him directly.

Gravis hadn't expected to feel this infuriated. His will was powerful, and keeping his emotions in check also wasn't an issue, but this thing had infuriated him beyond belief. The good came with the bad, and his unprecedented closeness with lightning also forced him to adhere to his bottom line. It was like he was having an argument with himself about why it was okay for them to stay alive after attacking him.

Another sigh appeared inside the present people's minds. "I know that," Lasar said calmly. "Just try to vent somewhere. I'll talk with them to get this whole misunderstanding resolved, okay?"

Gravis also released an angry sigh while being watched by the other two in nervousness. They could feel Gravis' rage by the trembling of his Spirit. Normally, when someone had an emotional reaction to something, their Spirit would tremble only slightly, barely noticeable to anyone. Yet, Gravis' Spirit was basically vibrating.

"Alright!" Gravis said with gritted teeth and left. He had been able to suppress his rage until Lasar arrived. Any display of rage could result in a fight, which he didn't want. That was why he had kept it suppressed until Lasar's arrival. But when Lasar had finally arrived, Gravis released all of it. Bottling it up would only hinder him in future fights. After all, blind rage was called blind rage for a reason.

Gravis charged out of the Freya Clan without being stopped by anyone. Marvin and Reginald had told the people that they couldn't get in Gravis' way under any circumstance.

When Gravis left the Freya Clan, Reginald and Marvin took some shaky breaths. "I think we really messed up this time," Reginald transmitted to Marvin.

Moments later, Lasar arrived at the Freya Clan. He looked with a complicated expression at the Patriarch and Grand Elder. "Do you actually know how lucky you are that you're still alive?"

Reginald looked with some guilt and frustration at Lasar. "What were we supposed to do?" he asked. "He claimed that he reached the Seed Stage from the Body Tempering Realm in only three years. You know that's impossible. What reason would someone have to lie to gain entry into our Clan if not for doing something nefarious?"

"But he didn't lie," Lasar said, shocking the two again. "He was telling the truth."

"But how can this be?" asked Marvin in shock.

Lasar sighed in exhaustion. This would require a long explanation.

Meanwhile, Gravis was angrily stomping around. He would have never expected that such a relatively small incident would enrage him this much. Something like this could, at best, be considered an inconvenience. But then, why was he so incredibly angry?

"Whenever something steps into the boundary of lightning, it strikes the intruder with everything it has," Gravis muttered to himself. "The misunderstanding was no problem. The thorny bush barrier and the Seed Stage cultivators also hadn't been an issue, but as soon as that guy attacked me, my rage exploded. Fuck, it was so difficult to not kill that bastard right then and there!" Gravis' muttering transformed into angry shouting by the end.

BANG!

Gravis kicked a tree and decimated it in the process. "Fuck, why am I still so fucking angry!?" Gravis shouted. "Am I really this restricted by this whole bottom line thing!? Fuck, what am I supposed to do in that case? Isn't being forced to act a certain way also a kind of suppression? Isn't my goal freedom? What difference is there between being suppressed by Heaven and being suppressed by lightning's temperament? It's the same shit!"

Usually, Gravis' thinking was very logical and rational, but his rage made it really difficult to focus. Yet, he still managed to focus somewhat. 'First of all, why is this irking me so much while the old man's beatings are only annoying? The old man's beatings could also be considered as attacks. Otherwise, I wouldn't get injured by them.'

Gravis was still frantically wandering around. "The only real difference I can think of is the intent behind the attack. The old man wants to teach me something with his beatings, even if it's only him that considers that useless shit as teaching. The bastard from before only wanted to defend his Clan from danger. Logically, I can't fault him for that. From his perspective, he acted correctly. Any onlooker would also say that his attack had been justified. After all, he hadn't intended to kill me. If he had, he would have unloaded his weapons. He only wanted to stop me."

Gravis sneered. "But from my perspective, it was an attack with the intention to injure and suppress me. The reasons behind that are irrelevant to me because I have never shown any hostility towards the Clan. I didn't even injure anyone. Well, except for that thorny bush, but I gave it a chance to pull back."

Gravis turned around and looked in the direction of the Freya Clan with fury in his eyes. "So, logically speaking, both sides acted correctly and were justified. He only wanted to defend his family while I have been subject to a hostile attack." Gravis spat to the side. "Tch, I guess this could be called bad luck, huh?"

Then, Gravis looked at the sky. "Is this another way how my lack of Karmic Luck works? It's tough to discern if this is the fault of my lack of Karmic Luck or if it's just a coincidence. But can't bad luck, theoretically, only exist in coincidences? Isn't bad luck just a coincidence outside my control that brings me into a bad situation? Fuck, this whole thing is too philosophical and abstract!"

Several minutes passed, and Gravis' anger didn't subside by even a little bit. It always remained at the same level, which surprised him. "What, will I stay this angry until I resolve this? Are you fucking serious!?" Gravis shouted.

"Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!" Gravis shouted as he kicked a mountain with every word, creating craters every time he did so.

"Alright, I need a solution for this! As for the whole bottom line suppression thing, I'll think about it after I've calmed down. Right now, I can't concentrate. I also think I know a solution that will calm me down for now. Sucks for Joyce, though. She wasn't at fault in this whole thing, yet she loses the thing she earned."

Gravis jumped onto his Lightning Board and shot back to the Freya Clan. As soon as he released his lightning to accelerate, it shot out with a way larger quantity than he wanted. The Lightning Board accelerated too fast, and Gravis fell over, landing on the ground.

"Fuck! I knew that anger is bad! I don't even have proper control over my lightning anymore!" Gravis shouted. "If I fight like this, I probably won't even be able to exhibit 50% of my power! Fuck, isn't that a huge weakness!? I really need to do something about that!"

Instead of using his Lightning Board, Gravis ran back to the Freya Clan. As he came closer, his rage finally started vanishing. That was because he had already decided what to do, which calmed his emotions and lightning down. Apparently, his solution was enough for the lightning and had been accepted.

As soon as he reached a distance of 80 kilometers from the Freya Clan, he contacted Lasar.

"Tell them that I won't kill the person that attacked me, but I also won't owe the Freya Clan anymore." Gravis' cold but calm voice appeared inside Lasar's mind. "The Freya Clan has helped me in my cultivation, and I will pay that back by saving the life of one of their peak experts today."

"Starting today, I don't owe the Freya Clan anything anymore!"

[Lightning Is the Only Way](#)

Chapter 287: Two Personalities, One Personality

"Where did that suddenly come from?" Lasar asked. "You've thought about this debt for over a year, and now you just say that everything is resolved? Sounds like a waste of time to me."

Gravis didn't get angry at that comment. By now, he had regained his calm mind. "I have no other choice," he said.

Lasar lifted a brow. "That sounds weird. What happened?"

While waiting for Gravis' answer, Lasar informed the still present Patriarch and Grand Elder that they should wait a minute. He was still in the middle of explaining how Gravis could become so strong but had to stop due to Gravis contacting him.

Gravis told Lasar everything that happened in the last couple of minutes and also his predictions regarding that situation. After Gravis was finished explaining, Lasar scratched his stubble with his fingers.

"This is interesting," Lasar said in thought. "And you say that this is basically the same feeling that you had had when you were under the influence of Lightning's Temperament in the Proxy-Lightning Guild?"

"Yes. It's exactly the same," Gravis answered.

"Huh, I think I know what's going on with you," Lasar said. "You might know more about how Heaven and the world works, but don't forget that I have been the Sect Master of the Lightning Sect for a while. I have a lot of experience in that regard, and I saw a lot of people being influenced by Lightning's Temperament. So, please take my following words seriously, okay?"

Gravis nodded. "Sure, but you didn't have to show your authority on the subject like that. I wouldn't take your words lightly either way."

Lasar smiled a little. "That's good to hear. Anyway, I think that you are constantly being influenced by Lightning's Temperament, even when you're calm."

Gravis furrowed his brows. "I'm not sure if that makes sense. After all, I don't just kill someone as soon as they look at me the wrong way."

"Let me finish," Lasar said. "Let's say we have two kinds of personalities that an elemental cultivator always has. One personality is their own, while the other is the personality of their element. This makes sense, right?"

Gravis nodded. "Sure."

Lasar lifted a finger. "So, we could say that these personalities are living in the same body, or under the same roof, if you want to call it like that. The main personality is always in charge and is the one to act, while the second personality keeps itself hidden away. Yet, when the main personality does something that the second personality is entirely against, the second personality will show its disagreement."

Lasar continued explaining. "Depending on the second personality, or depending on the element if you want, it acts in different ways. In the case of the earth element, for example, it will just leave. In the case of lightning, since it doesn't like to be restrained, it tries to take over control. That's when the person is affected by Lightning's Temperament. Makes sense up to now?"

Gravis nodded. "Yes. I think that's a pretty good analogy."

Lasar also nodded. "Now, in this case, the two personalities are two completely separate entities that can't communicate with each other. The second personality just watches the main personality and judges everything only based on action. The how and why of those actions are irrelevant to it."

"Now, in your case, I think this works differently," Lasar said. "Because your Spirit is adapted to lightning, this second personality has fused with you to some degree. I think it didn't fuse completely, but only to a certain degree. Yet, this fusion allows the two personalities to exchange concepts."

Gravis continued listening in interest. "What gave you that idea?" he asked.

"The fact that you could calm your lightning down by forgoing the debt," Lasar explained. "Think back to when you have been influenced by Lightning's Temperament. Would any rationale or reasoning have stopped you from going berserk?"

Gravis thought back and shook his head. "I doubt it. I was basically completely blinded by rage."

"Exactly!" Lasar transmitted with more enthusiasm. "Now, think about what you did just now. Did your emotions only calm down after you have officially forfeited the debt, or did they calm down when you made the decision? This is important!"

Gravis didn't even need to think about the answer. "As soon as I decided to forsake the debt, my rage quickly died down. I was already fully calm before I contacted you."

Lasar nodded. "Just as I thought. Remember how I said earlier that the second personality only cares about the actions and not the reasoning behind it? In your case, the lightning was able to understand your intent and reasoning and calmed down even before you actually acted. This is not how it works with normal people."

Gravis realized several things and fell into thought. "That makes sense. If I couldn't reason with my lightning, I wouldn't have been able to hold myself back until you arrived. I would have just killed the old man. Yet, due to my incomplete fusion, the lightning still demanded justice. It held back because it understood that being angry wouldn't help."

Gravis then furrowed his brows. "Though, any other lightning cultivator wouldn't have had such a violent reaction due to only one incident. It normally takes multiple such incidents of when the cultivator and the element don't agree with each other to create such a huge conflict. Yet, with me, it happened directly in the first instance."

Gravis took a deep breath. "So, to summarize, on the one hand, my bottom line is more flexible than others' because I have more influence over my lightning. But on the other hand, my lightning also has more influence over me, which makes a failure of following its principles that much more devastating."

Gravis looked at the sky. "The interaction between normal cultivators and their element is like the relationship between two friends or colleagues. If someone insults another, one might become annoyed or angry, but that should be it. Meanwhile, my relationship with my lightning could be compared to a close partnership. One insult could create a humongous fight since both sides take the other side's actions more seriously. Now, is that better or worse?"

Lasar had listened to Gravis' muttering. After all, Gravis wanted to keep Lasar in the loop about his thoughts. "I think that's a good comparison. In my opinion, I think this is more good than bad. In your case, you don't need to worry about your synchronicity with your lightning dropping since you two are closely communicating with each other. You can still do whatever you want."

"Think about it. Even without your lightning, would you be happy with not attacking Reginald after he attacked you? Lasar asked.

Gravis thought about this and shook his head. "Even without my lightning, I wouldn't be happy with letting this situation just slide by. It doesn't matter if he was justified in his actions or not. He has attacked me, and therefore, I am in my full right to retaliate. That is what I believe."

Lasar grinned a little. "So, by not attacking Reginald, you not only went against your lightning but also against yourself. Does that sound like a restriction to you?"

Gravis rubbed his chin in thought. "If you phrase it like that, I think I agree. I was not only acting against my lightning but also against myself. That's what made me so angry." Then, Gravis sighed in relief. "Thank you, Lasar. I was troubled by the thought that my own lightning might suppress me, yet I hadn't realized that I have also acted against myself. As long as I stay true to myself, my lightning won't interfere."

Lasar nodded. "No problem. That's what seniors are there for. We've lived longer and have seen more things. So, now that that's over, I think I have a solution that won't waste your year of thinking about your debt and also make you fine with the situation."

Gravis lifted an eyebrow. "Oh? Do tell."

Lasar smirked. "Let me talk with Reginald for a bit. Meanwhile, could you come closer? Waiting outside the Freya Clan would be alright."

Gravis nodded and came closer to the Freya Clan. After all, they were talking from quite a distance. Meanwhile, Lasar was talking with Reginald and Marvin and quickly explained a lot of things about Gravis and about his idea.

"I disagree," Marvin said. "We were acting correctly! We have not tried to kill him, and we only intended for him to await trial to find out the truth."

Reginald remained silent as he fell into thought.

Lasar crossed his arms, and his expression went from a smile to a displeased one. "You've forgotten one thing," Lasar said evenly.

Marvin was a little nervous about Lasar's shift in tone, but he fully believed that he had been acting correctly. "What?" he asked.

"If Gravis wasn't as powerful as he is right now, you would have beaten him, captured him, and maybe even punished him without asking my Lightning Sect. Could that be considered acting correctly?" he asked coldly.

Marvin gnashed his teeth. "No, but that didn't happen. It might've happened, but it didn't. I see no fault in our actions. Judging the situation based on hypotheticals is ridiculous!"

Lasar looked evenly at Marvin. "Alright, then you probably won't mind it when my Lightning Sect acts similarly to how you acted today, right?"

Marvin's eyes narrowed. "This is different! We are the weaker party-"

"Oh, and suddenly, weakness becomes important, huh?" Lasar interrupted him.

Marvin became angrier, but a hand stopped him from saying anything further.

Reginald looked at Marvin. "The Sect Master is right," he said. "We have been suppressed by other powers for so long that we desperately wanted a weaker intruder to appear just so that we could show others that we're not pushovers. We desperately wanted to prove our power by suppressing a weaker opponent. Instead of attacking, we could have talked to him and asked him to wait outside until we could verify his status with the Lightning Sect. This was an option that we didn't take."

The words of a close one penetrated deeper than the words of a stranger. When Reginald said this, Marvin started thinking about the situation, and he couldn't come up with a reason why they couldn't have done what Reginald had just proposed. Marvin realized that they had basically jumped on Gravis after they had thought of him as an enemy.

After a while, Marvin took a deep breath and released a big sigh. "I've been blinded by the Clan's status and how others perceived it. This blinded me to my actions. Today, our Clan has made a mistake." Then, he turned to Reginald. "If you want to accept the proposition, I won't stop you. Do whatever you want. I need to think about some things."

Reginald and Lasar both smiled when they heard that. It was always nice to see someone genuinely accept that they made a mistake. Something like this required a strong character.

Reginald turned to Lasar with no hesitation in his eyes. "I accept."

[Lightning Is the Only Way](#)

Chapter 288: Resolution

Gravis waited for a while in front of the gate of the Freya Clan. The guards were unsure about how to act in his presence. Were they supposed to apologize? Were they supposed to be friendly? Were they supposed to bar him from entry? The lack of communication from the Patriarch made them unsure.

After a couple of minutes, Lasar came out of the gate together with Reginald, the Grand Elder. When Gravis saw Reginald, his emotions didn't stir. This was the person that had attacked him, but by forfeiting his debt, the matter with the attack was over. Right now, they were only strangers looking at each other.

Reginald saw the uncaring neutrality in Gravis' eyes and sighed. He would be happier if Gravis were angry at him. The fact that he might have cost Joyce one of her investments due to an error from his side made him feel guilty. His error had implicated his student. This was the thing that a good master and teacher hated the most.

"Gravis," Lasar said. "I think we have a way to resolve this. After all, you have thought about your debt for over a year and even stopped your breakthrough just for the sake of repayment. All your previous work and your stopping of your breakthrough will be wasted if your plans change now. Don't you agree?"

Gravis thought about this for a while and realized that he had invested quite a bit. It would really feel like a waste. On top of that, if he returned to the Lightning Sect now, it would feel awkward to talk with Old Man Lightning again. After all, they had already emotionally said their goodbyes.

So, Gravis nodded. "What's the solution?"

"Reginald attacked you, but he didn't attack you with the intent to kill. So, let's make this simple," Lasar explained. "Just attack Reginald without the intention to kill. Reginald has already agreed."

Gravis looked at Reginald for a couple of seconds.

Reginald stepped forward and went into a battle stance. "One attack, but I will also defend. Give me your best shot!"

Gravis closed his eyes and concentrated on his emotions. As he thought about regaining his debt, his lightning became angry again, but when he decided to punch Reginald, it calmed down again. Apparently, his lightning was fine with that.

BANG! BANG!

Gravis' feet exploded with lightning as he shot forward with unreal speed. While accelerating, his Will-Aura also activated, slowing Reginald down considerably. On top of that, the attack came so suddenly that Reginald didn't even have time to react. Gravis punched him in the chest but didn't unload his lightning. After all, Reginald also hadn't used his loaded weapon in the fight.

The punch hit and destroyed several ribs. Reginald was thrown back into the Freya Clan and flew for about a hundred meters until he hit a house. The house was very stable, but it was not made to withstand attacks from Spirit Forming experts. Therefore, Reginald destroyed the house, broke several walls, and finally stopped when he hit the next one. The impacts obliterated his spine.

Gravis wiped his knuckles on his shirt. "You attacked me with your full power without your element, and I've done the same to you. The matter of your attack is now forgotten."

Lasar saw this and smiled wryly. The intent behind the attack was more important than the actual damage. Therefore, Gravis attacked with the same intent as Reginald had. Unfortunately, due to their strength difference, the result was completely different. That punch really looked like it hurt.

BZZZZ!

Some lightning appeared, and Reginald was back to full health. One shouldn't forget that the Freya Clan cultivated Life Lightning. Reginald stood up and spat a big mouthful of blood to the side. Usually, Reginald would become angry if someone attacked him with such a powerful strike, but right now, he was only relieved that his error in judgment didn't implicate his student's gains. As a good master and teacher, this was more important to him than his health.

Gravis also released a sigh. Forsaking his debt was a solution, but not one that Gravis was entirely happy with. After all, the debt had also included Joyce. Resolving the issue by forsaking his debt wouldn't have felt clean to him. This solution was way more acceptable.

"Thanks, Lasar," Gravis said.

Lasar chuckled a little. "Don't mention it. We'll see each other again in a couple of years. I'm looking forward to your fight with Heaven and what becomes of this world." Lasar didn't say this out loud because things like this shouldn't involve the Freya Clan's people.

Gravis smiled at Lasar and nodded. "Just wait for me!"

Lasar smiled, summoned his own Lightning Board, and then drove back to the Lightning Sect. "See you soon."

"See you soon," Gravis sent back.

After some seconds, Gravis turned back to the front gate. The guards were very nervous by now. They had heard the people speaking, but it still felt unfair that their Grand Elder was majorly injured while Gravis didn't even lose a hair. Should they defend their Clan's honor?

"Let him pass," Reginald said as he walked back to the front gate. He stopped in front of Gravis and looked at him. "Everything alright now?"

Gravis nodded. "I'm fine with the resolution. So, anyway, I came to repay my debt to you and Joyce. You've helped me in the past, and I owe you a big favor. I specifically came at this time because I think repaying you in the resource war is the best way."

Reginald furrowed his brows. "With your strength, this really is the best way to repay us. But originally, Joyce didn't intend to partake in this year's resource war. After all, she is still in the initial Stage of Spirit Forming. She planned on joining the resource war in ten years."

Gravis also furrowed his brows. "She is still in the initial Stage?" he asked, and Reginald nodded. "I still remember that she was inside the Energy Gathering Realm when we had met. Is my cultivation speed really that fast? It doesn't feel like it," he asked himself more than Reginald.

Reginald wasn't happy at all when he heard that. To him, it felt like Gravis was insulting his best student. If he weren't completely sure that Gravis had no such intention, he would've become very unfriendly.

"So, how am I supposed to repay my debt?" Gravis asked.

Reginald turned around and gestured for Gravis to follow him. "There are many ways on how you can do that. I think it would be best to ask Joyce herself. After all, you are indebted to her, not me."

Gravis shrugged and followed Reginald. They walked for a while and then passed some of the Seed Stage cultivators that had just regained their consciousness. When Reginald saw that, he got reminded of Gravis' Will-Aura. "How strong is your Will-Aura?" he asked.

"I can compress it to around 13%," Gravis said.

Reginald furrowed his brows in unhappiness and turned to him. "Only a compression of 13% wouldn't be enough to achieve that."

Gravis blinked in confusion. "Now you're confusing me. I am pretty sure that I have the third most powerful Will-Aura in this world, only being behind the High Priest and Heaven itself. How can that not be enough?"

Reginald's confusion increased, but then he opened his eyes wide in shock. "Wait, you meant you have a Unity Will with a 13% compression?"

"Yeah, what else?" Gravis asked.

Reginald took a shaky breath. He had thought Gravis only had a normal Will-Aura with such a compression. Gravis' Will-Aura was ridiculous! Such a Will-Aura on someone in the Seed Stage already surpassed the category of monstrous and strived into the territory of a parody or a joke. That's how unreasonable it was.

Yet, Gravis' Will-Aura would need to be about this strong to knock out someone at the same Stage as himself. The proof was right before him, so, even if it was even more ridiculous, he had to believe it.

"How did you achieve that?" Reginald asked.

"Lots of life and death fights. The fact that I charged into the Darkness Sect while still being in the Seed Stage should give you an inkling of my personality," Gravis commented.

Reginald had forgotten that Gravis was still in the Seed Stage. Right, how insane would someone have to be to fight alone against a whole Sect? Even with Gravis' power, such a fight seemed more akin to suicide than to tempering in Reginald's mind. Reginald wondered how Gravis was actually still alive. Reginald could only credit Gravis' miraculous survival to luck. After all, Gravis had to be incredibly lucky to survive so many fights.

They stopped talking as they entered the castle. Even though the situation between them had been resolved, the atmosphere around them was still a little loaded. It was hard to become friendly with someone that had just broken many of your bones.

Reginald and Gravis walked up some stairs until they stopped before a wooden door. The door had several ornaments that looked like vines around it. When Gravis looked at the door, he felt it emanate a feeling of friendliness and compassion.

"This is the room of the next Patriarch, or Matriarch in Joyce's case. As soon as she reaches the Sapling Stage, she will take over the Freya Clan's leadership. Just a quick warning from my side. Joyce has probably watched everything that happened, and with her compassionate heart, she will probably think of you as a heartless barbarian. After all, you injured her teacher," Reginald explained.

Gravis' expression didn't change. "Her feelings towards me are irrelevant. I am here to repay my debt. Friendship is not a necessity for that."

Reginald sighed when he heard that. "You're really cold, you know that? Can't you show an emotion other than rage?"

Gravis looked at Reginald, his face still unchanging. "I won't stay in this world for much longer. Building a friendship or relationship will only make it harder when I leave in about five years or so. Nothing is more important than power."

Creak!

The door creaked as Gravis opened it and entered.

Reginald remained silent for some seconds and sighed. 'I know, but you don't have to be such a cold asshole about it. Sometimes, people just want to be happy and talk to each other. Constantly reminding everyone of the cold truth of the world doesn't help and only creates a depressing atmosphere.'

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Chapter 289: Joyce's Conviction

As the door closed behind Gravis, he looked at the front, right into Joyce's eyes. She was standing in the middle of her room, watching him with cold eyes. The lively and bright décor in her room contrasted her stern look. She still had her long purple hair and wore something similar to a summer dress, which also created quite the contrast to her current mood.

They looked at each other for a couple of seconds, one with cold eyes, the other with indifferent eyes.

"It's disrespectful to enter a woman's room without knocking," she said coldly.

"The point of knocking is to announce someone's presence," Gravis said back evenly. "You are in the Spirit Forming Realm and have kept watch over everything. Knocking would just be a useless formality at this point."

Joyce harrumphed. "Customs also have the function of showing politeness and respect."

"Is your self-confidence that fragile that you need a show of respect to feel good about yourself?" Gravis asked.

Joyce felt angry when she heard those words. Yet, she didn't offer a direct rebuttal to that argument. "I don't need that, but you have shown no respect to the Freya Clan as soon as you arrived. You knocked the elders out and even injured my teacher. That you're not knocking only confirms the fact that you don't think highly of my Freya Clan."

Gravis furrowed his brows. "I have waited at the front gate and explained my reason for my visit. If I didn't respect your Freya Clan, I would have just strode in."

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"You mean like you are doing now?" Joyce asked with a ridiculing smile.

"Yes," Gravis answered, making Joyce narrow her eyes. "I only held respect for the Freya Clan before I arrived, but after being accused as a liar and invader without any proof, I have lost my respect. I came with the intention to repay my debt to you, but I have been met with accusations and even a direct attack. You also wouldn't feel any respect for the Freya Clan if you were in my position."

Joyce threw her arm out to show that she was enraged. "Ridiculous!" she shouted. "My Freya Clan has not committed any mistake! You walked through the front door after claiming something that no sane person would believe! We were in our right to act as we did!"

"Yet, I didn't lie," Gravis said. "I stepped through the front gate after it was opened for me without telling a lie. How am I in the wrong here?" Gravis asked evenly.

Joyce gnashed her teeth. Deep inside, she knew that the Freya Clan had acted incorrectly, but her anger just wouldn't calm down after she saw Gravis injure her teacher. She just wanted to make Gravis pay for that!

Joyce stared at Gravis in anger for a couple of seconds. "You are not the heroic and kind young boy I have met in Wilderness Town," she said coldly. "You are cold, disrespectful, cruel, and have no empathy! I can't believe that someone can change this much in only three years."

Gravis didn't get angry. To him, all of these words were only the rambling of a child. Joyce might be about as old as him or a little bit older, but she didn't go through even nearly as many hardships as him. While their age was similar, their experience was like night and day.

"If I'm not cold and cruel, I wouldn't have survived," Gravis said. "I can't afford compassion when there are people that are ready to attack my close ones because I spared them. I also can't afford empathy because every relationship I build in this lower world has basically zero chance of lasting."

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Joyce sneered. "This lower world? Do you even hear yourself? This whole world is everything we have ever seen, and there are still more powerful people than you in this world, but you already consider it as a mere step on your perceived staircase to power. Also, close ones?" Joyce harrumphed. "Who would want to get close to someone like you?"

Gravis' even eyes became icy after Joyce said that. She had achieved her goal and managed to push his buttons. The temperature in the room seemingly fell as Gravis became angry. Joyce had difficulty breathing as Gravis' anger filled the room. He hadn't released his Will-Aura, but his passive aura was already powerful enough to slightly influence the surroundings without his Will-Aura.

Gravis slowly stepped closer to Joyce. "I have a life and death companion who is currently tempering themselves in the Core-Continent."

Another step.

"I also consider Lasar as a close friend."

Another step.

"Old Man Lightning is like half a teacher to me, and I would risk my life for him."

With another step, Gravis stood right before Joyce and looked into her eyes. "I consider all of them my friends, and they share this sentiment with me. Additionally, I have a family I love. I have a lot of close people around me, and they share my so-called, cruel, and cold outlook."

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Joyce remained silent and felt nervous, but impressively, she didn't look away from Gravis' eyes. "All of these people are incredible talents that won't be stopped in this lower world because they are strong enough to realize the truth of the cultivation world. Coldness and cruelty are necessary to rise to power."

"They don't have the luxury to remain in an ivory tower, surrounded and worshipped by everyone around them because they don't know any hardships," Gravis said coldly, "unlike you."

WHOOOM!

Joyce released her Will-Aura, and it hit Gravis. Her Will-Aura was a fully condensed normal Will-Aura, which was very impressive for someone at the initial Stage of Spirit Forming.

"HOW DARE YOU!?" Joyce shouted in anger.

Joyce stepped forward and looked coldly into Gravis' eyes as their eyes were only ten centimeters apart from each other. "I have a Will-Aura! I went through hardships! I have also gone through a lot of pain in my life! The fact that I am very close to having a Unity Will is proof of that! I have seen more companions die than you! I am absolutely certain of that fact!"

"SO!" she shouted. "Don't talk to me like I am some little girl that knows nothing about the world! I have forged many bonds and consider many people as very close friends, yet I still managed to become this powerful! Your cruelty isn't born out of necessity, but out of choice!"

Gravis remained silent as he looked into her eyes. Her eyes didn't show even a small inkling of uncertainty or faltering. Her eyes were clear and showed her conviction. Everything that she said came from her heart and was the absolute truth.

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"Do you even know how the Freya Clan tempers their will?" She asked, still looking coldly into Gravis' eyes.

Gravis didn't answer.

"We can't fight people on the same Stage because we only have our physical body as a weapon. So, how do we temper our wills? Well, as you might already know, there are more ways to temper one's Will-Aura than simply killing others!" Joyce said.

"Enlighten me," Gravis said.

"Every person of the Freya Clan goes outside and works as a mercenary! Groups and other Sects buy our services because having someone with Life Lightning is very useful. But such a partnership is not temporary! We stay in this partnership until either everyone dies or the group disbands. We forge a deep bond of friendship and comradery with everyone! We genuinely feel for each other and grief heavily when someone dies!"

Joyce's eyes remained cold, but she stepped back a little. Apparently, she had calmed down somewhat. "We see our comrades die in their tempering. Every time someone in the group dies, we feel incredible pain. We want to never get close to anyone again because that is the only way how we can avoid such pain. But avoiding that pain would mean that we can't cultivate anymore!"

Joyce pointed to her window. "Look outside! Every single member at the Spirit Forming Realm has seen dozens of their comrades and friends die in front of them, yet their hearts still remain open and compassionate! I've also had dozens of my companions die, and I still remember their names, how they

looked, how they acted, and I can remember the scene of their deaths in minute detail! All of them were like brothers and sisters!"

After that tirade, she stepped closer to Gravis again. "Every single member of my Freya Clan managed to remain compassionate through all these deaths, yet you, who had, how many people die? Five? Ten? You say being cruel is a necessity to progress!"

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She stepped closer again and looked coldly into Gravis' eyes. "You are only justifying your escape from the pain of grief by saying that being cruel is a necessity! You flee from the eventual pain of grief while the people in my clan confront it!"

"In my opinion, you are weaker than everyone in my Freya Clan!"

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Chapter 290: More Freedom

Gravis had regained his calm by now. "You know what?" Gravis asked. "You're right."

Joyce was taken aback by the sudden surrender. Wasn't Gravis supposed to defend his point some more?

Gravis looked away and started scratching his chin in thought. "Though, not completely. I have to concede that you are right in the sense that my distant coldness is a choice, but that hasn't always been the case. Before I reached the Spirit Forming Realm, my coldness wasn't a choice but a necessity. Yet, you are right that it is wrong when I say that I have no control over my coldness in my current situation."

Joyce furrowed her brows. "What do you mean?"

Gravis turned back to her. "Do you remember how I told you that it was important that you gave me the Formation Array in an equal trade?"

Joyce nodded.

"That was because Heaven is my enemy, and it tried to force me into isolation. It killed everyone I came close to. In comparison to your way of tempering, this wasn't something like a chance of dying or tempering. In my case, it was a definite death sentence."

Joyce looked with skepticism at Gravis. "Quite a bold claim, but how are you still alive if Heaven was your enemy? After all, it could just strike you down."

Gravis sighed because he knew that this would take a while to explain. "I'm not from this world."

Joyce's eyes widened. "What do you mean?"

After that, Gravis told Joyce about how he came from a higher world and that his father had a huge enmity with Heaven. This had implicated him, and the Heaven of this lower world had tried everything

to kill him or stop him from cultivating. He didn't describe the concept of Karmic Luck and only said that Heaven would kill everyone he came close to. After all, that wasn't a lie. He also told her that it was his father that stopped Heaven from directly annihilating him.

"So, back then, I didn't have a choice but to become cruel and cold. If anyone liked me and decided to help me, it would just end with their death on Heaven's hand. Something like this isn't tempering. My only chance was to make others hate me," Gravis said.

By now, Joyce had also calmed down. She had shown that Gravis' opinion of her being a spoiled brat was wrong, and now Gravis showed her that his situation also wasn't simple. All in all, both had realized that they had judged the other without knowing all the details.

"So," Gravis continued. "You are right in the sense that my coldness is a choice, but it hasn't been an active choice from my part until I realized that nothing happened to Lasar or Old Man Lightning. I only realized the reason why nothing had happened to them after I left for the Freya Clan."

When Joyce heard that, she released a sigh. "I'm sorry for judging you without knowing all the details."

Gravis looked at her and smiled for the first time since entering the room. "The same holds true for me. I shouldn't have assumed that your life has been easy." Then, Gravis looked out of the window. "The still progressing cultivators in the Freya Clan are very powerful in their own right."

"Still progressing?" Joyce asked unamused. "Only them?"

Gravis turned to her again. "As soon as someone gives up on their cultivation path, they will never become stronger. In comparison to the higher worlds, every single person in this lower world could be considered weak. Yet, every person has the potential to become truly powerful as long as they continue on their way. But the people who have already given up will never get this chance."

"So, in the end, you only care about strength," Joyce commented dryly.

Gravis nodded. "This might only be my opinion and not the objective truth, but I believe that everyone desires freedom. This is my ultimate goal. I want to become so powerful that no one can hurt my close ones or me ever again. Yet, that goal is very far away. Until then, I have to live with the knowledge that anyone I am close to can die at any moment."

For the first time, Joyce also smiled a little. "So, in the end, your goal of freedom is not only for yourself but also for your close ones."

"Yes, it is," Gravis said. "But until then, I can't build too many relationships or connections with others."

Joyce frowned. "But you agreed that your coldness is a choice. Why do you still intend to distance yourself from others?"

"Because I have a choice," Gravis said, making Joyce furrow her brows. "If I build too many connections, Heaven might use all of them to force me to stop cultivating. Imagine the scenario where Heaven tells you that you need to stop cultivating, or it will kill everyone in your entire family. What would you do?"

Joyce thought about this, and her insides shook. She had never thought about such a scenario because such a scenario was simply too cruel to be real. Who would do such a thing? Yet, after hearing Gravis' story, she couldn't deny the possibility of something like this happening.

Joyce took a shaky breath. "I think I would stop cultivating," she said.

Gravis nodded and looked out at the Freya Clan again. "I don't know how I would choose in that situation, because I've not been in such a situation before. But the possibility that I will stop cultivating when it comes down to it is very real. I can't risk such a situation occurring."

"But something like this will only happen when you become a danger to the Heaven in your homeworld," Joyce said. "The chances of that happening are infinitely close to zero. Why go through so much pain just for the nearly non-existent chance that you will ever reach that point?"

"Because my goal is the peak, and my goal is more important than everything else," Gravis said with resolution. "That is my current belief, and even if my mindset changes in the future, I know that I will forever regret the decision to stop cultivating."

Gravis looked into her eyes. "Until recently, I have had many regrets. I have killed a close friend and mentor of mine about two and a half years ago. This has weighed heavily upon my mind, and the guilt had manifested in regret. But I have learned to accept the world as it is, and I can say with certainty that I am living without regret right now. If I don't do everything for my goal, I will live in regret again, and I don't want that to happen."

Joyce smiled bitterly. "A life without regret, huh?" she muttered sadly. "I can't imagine something like that. The faces of my dead companions still haunt me, and there is not even a second where I don't feel pain for their passing."

"That's why you have such a powerful will," Gravis said. "To be brutally honest, in my opinion, the way how you are forced to cultivate is incredibly tragic and downright masochistic. You are basically emotionally torturing yourself to become more powerful. I'm sure your companions know about the way you cultivate, and I think the knowledge that they made a close friend more powerful with their deaths doesn't make their deaths meaningless in their eyes. Their path might end, but in turn, they strengthened your path."

Gravis looked encouragingly at Joyce. "I guess the only thing you can do to get rid of that regret is to become powerful. Like this, you won't disappoint the people that died at your side. When you become powerful, you can tell them that it was them that helped you to get where you currently are. This brings meaning to their deaths."

Tears started streaming down Joyce's face. It wasn't because of the impact of Gravis' words, but the fact that she remembered all the faces of her companions when they died. Most of them had looked at her with encouraging smiles. She had also already realized all the things that Gravis had told her. After all, she knew herself and her companions the best, so she knew that she had to become powerful to get rid of her regret. Yet, hearing her thoughts spoken by another person made her relive the pain.

After some seconds, she gnashed her teeth and narrowed her eyes at Gravis. "I know! I know all that! That's why I am still cultivating!" she shouted with motivation. But then, she sighed. "But, I am glad that you can understand me that well after we've only talked for half an hour."

Joyce laughed bitterly. "I guess you actually do have empathy. Otherwise, you wouldn't have realized the motivation behind the actions of my companions and me. So, sorry that I said you lacked empathy."

Gravis only smiled and waved his hand dismissively. "Don't worry about it! I also said a couple of bad things to you. Let's just forget all that." Then, Gravis looked through the window to the sky. "And thank you. You have helped me to understand myself better. My way of acting won't change, but I, at least, now realize that I am consciously choosing to remain distant."

Gravis chuckled a little. "Previously, I felt like I had no choice and that I was forced onto this path. This made me feel frustrated and suppressed." Then, he turned to her. "But now, I know that it is my own decision. In a weird way, your words have shown me that I have more freedom than I had initially believed."

Joyce wiped her tears away and smiled genuinely at Gravis. "You're welcome!" she said as her eyes were now full of life and positivity.

"So, let's think of a way how you can repay your debt!" She said and grandly pointed at Gravis.

When Gravis saw her change of demeanor, he chuckled again.

"Sure!"