

Lightning Is the Only Way

Chapter 31: No Missions

The door of the Hunting Guild burst open. "We're back!" shouted a man at the front of a big hunting party. He had multiple scars on his face and showed a victorious smile. Behind him, a gigantic two-handed sword hung, thoroughly drenched in blood. Seven people with different weapons stood behind him.

Most people in the Hunting Guild released a loud "Heeeeyyy!" in unison and lifted their jugs of ale. The group walked in, triumphantly. The leader of the group noticed that things were a little different. Usually, everyone would stand up and cheer, but many kept quiet this time. The leader furrowed his brows.

He walked to one of the guys he knew. "Did something happen? The cheer this time seems more... subdued," he asked. The guy he asked was the same person that called Gravis a newbie on his first day.

The person smiled bitterly. "Well, something happened when you were gone, but that's not important right now. So, I take it you succeeded?" He asked with a grin.

The leader smiled again and nodded. "Yeah! The Earth Salamander has been slain!" He sat down at the table and took a swig from the man's beer. "Man, that took forever! It put up one hell of a fight. Only when it bit and devoured Mensk, did we finally have a chance to injure it majorly. It fled, and we had to track it for nearly two weeks. Sadly, Jacob got ambushed by a ferocious beast snake and died too. Someone always dies in a hunt for low-grade demonic beasts." The leader sighed.

The man in front of him also sighed. "They were good men." He took another swig of his mug, but it was empty. "Hey, you drank all my booze, Anthony!" he shouted and stood up.

The leader, Anthony, just laughed loudly and ordered more beer. "Calm down! The next one's on me. We made it big this time. The corpse is pretty complete, and we should all make a couple of gold off of it. With this, I should have enough money to buy a Skin-Pill for my son." Anthony leaned back and looked out of one of the windows. "If he can get into the Elemental Guilds, he will get much further in life than his father."

The man in front of him lifted his new mug. "Cheers to that," and he took a swig.

Anthony looked at the man and felt like something was wrong. "So, what happened? You all seem kind of downtrodden," Anthony asked the man.

The man just bitterly smiled. "Well, we have a new guy," he said as he took another swig.

"So?" Anthony asked, confused. "That sounds more like a good thing."

The man sighed. "Why don't you look at the mission board. Then you'll know."

Anthony furrowed his brows, stood up, and walked to the mission board. When he arrived, he gasped. It was empty. Why was it empty? There always were tens of missions up for grabs. Anthony walked back to the man. "Did the new guy do all this?" he asked, concerned.

The man just nodded and took another mouthful of beer. "Not only that. When everyone realized that the missions for ferocious beasts have grown sparse, a group formed to hunt a low-grade demonic beast. Guess what happened."

Anthony furrowed his brows further. "What?"

The man laughed bitterly. "That guy had finished all the low-grade demonic beasts before he finished the ferocious beasts."

"Impossible!" Anthony shouted at the man and stood up. "No one can hunt that many low-grade demonic beasts in such a short amount of time, especially when they hunt them solo. Even someone with tempered muscles only has a 50/50 chance of winning. Even less if they wanted to kill it!"

The man just laughed bitterly again. "It's true. If you don't believe me, ask Simone." The man gestured to the lady behind the counter.

Anthony didn't believe him and walked over to Simone, who just sat on a chair behind the counter and read a book. "Hey, Simone. Could you please show me the missions for low-grade demonic beasts?" he asked her politely.

The lady just waved her hand nonchalantly. "All gone," she said as she continued reading.

Anthony's face whitened. "But, it's only been two weeks!" he shouted.

Simone looked at Anthony with a frown. "Don't shout at me! It's not my fault. The Demon cleared all of them."

"The Demon?" Anthony asked with a raised eyebrow.

Simone sighed. "Yes, that's his nickname. At least, that's what we call him." She gestured toward the tables, where all the hunters sat. "Look around! Everyone's just waiting for new missions to come. It's even harder to find any ferocious beasts in the surroundings since the Demon also kills them. What else would you call someone that basically destroys a whole Hunting Guild while keeping to the rules?"

Anthony nearly couldn't believe it. He was gone for just two weeks, and now, everything had turned upside down. He walked back to his drinking buddy and sat down. He clenched his fist and hit the table. A loud boom echoed, and the hunters looked at Anthony, startled.

"Why did no one do anything about this?" He shouted at the whole guild. Everyone looked away from his eyes. When Anthony saw this, his teeth clenched. "Look at you! One guy is taking all the meat for himself, not even leaving us any soup, and you all take it like some abused kids! Does the guild not have any men left?" he shouted in rage.

Anthony's drinking buddy just smiled bitterly again. "We would if we could. You haven't seen the guy." He took another swig from his beer, emptying it. "We can only wait until he leaves. Someone like him won't be staying here for long."

Anthony sat back down with fury in his eyes. "When I'll see him, I'll-"

BANG!

The doors of the Hunting Guild opened loudly, and the whole atmosphere changed. Every hunter looked deeply into their mugs, uncomfortably. Silence descended across the entire guild, and only light footsteps could be heard coming from the man that just entered the hall.

Gravis was pissed! The deadline for the Elemental Guilds' entrance exam was coming closer, and he still needed more pills. He had finished every mission he could find, but only made around 90 gold in total. He was still missing around 50 gold! That was an equivalent of approximately three low-grade demonic beasts with missions.

He had killed four low-grade demonic beasts since joining the Hunting Guild. The first one was the tiger. The second one was a boar. The third one was a snake, and the fourth one was a wolf.

The fight with the boar was the easiest since it made its habitat near a river. Gravis could fully utilize his elemental synchronicity in the battle. The boar had to continually fight against the water that was trying to pull it down, so it had no time to evade Gravis' attacks. The fight was over in a couple of minutes.

The snake was an issue since its attacks were fast and venomous. After a long fight, Gravis decided to risk it all. He let the snake bite him in exchange for his saber to penetrate the inside of its mouth, right into its brain. Even with tempered organs and blood, he would have died to the venom. Luckily, he had a plan. He had spoken with Orpheus about it when he was still in his world, and Orpheus said that it would work.

Gravis had quickly made a fire and jumped into it. He let the heat of the fire course through his veins, changing the liquid venom into gas. The composition of the venom changed, making it less effective. He still felt enormous pain for many hours, but he had survived.

The last demonic beast, the wolf, didn't even have a mission. Gravis just saw it while hunting a ferocious beast. Wolves were faster than tigers and lions, but they mainly used their bite as an attack. Gravis got injured and nearly lost his arm, but he was able to sever a tendon of the wolf's front paw. The fight then completely went into his favor, and he had slain it after a while.

In the past couple of days, he was just running around the wilderness, trying to find any beast, even if it didn't have a mission. He still needed 50 gold, which equated to around 100 ferocious beasts. This constant searching around made him cranky.

Gravis walked to the mission board and didn't see any missions. Then he walked to the lady behind the counter. Without him even needing to say anything, the lady just shook her head. "Tch," Gravis spat and walked to the entrance, but about seven people blocked his path when he arrived.

"We need to talk!" said Anthony.

Gravis narrowed his eyes.

Chapter 32: Anthony

A young girl and an old man were walking around the town. The old man looked friendly and kind with simple robes adorning his body. He used a cane as support because of his crooked back. Long grey hair and a long grey beard showed his experience.

The girl was around 16 years old and had long purple hair bound into a ponytail. She smiled happily as she walked around the town. She was dressed in similar purple robes and was carrying a long wooden staff with a purple jewel, on her back. Everyone was stunned by the beauty she radiated, but they didn't dare get closer for some reason. The people didn't know why they didn't dare. They just didn't.

"It seemed like we found a good seedling in this town, miss. Who would have thought?" the old man commented with a polite smile.

The girl's smile brightened. "I know, right? That Jonathan had a nice heart and motivation. Maybe he'll manage to repay us in the future. So, what do you think of my idea, teacher?" she asked as she turned to the old man.

The old man laughed slightly. "It's a good idea," he nodded. "Though, they can only be of help if they grow up quickly. That Jonathan should be able to get into the Proxy-Elemental Guilds, and with some luck, he should be able to repay you." The old man smiled.

Her smile brightened further. "Alright, so let's quickly go to the next town." The girl ran excitedly to the exit of the town, and the old man followed helplessly. Even though he seemed to just be walking, he somehow kept up with the young girl.

Just when they left the town gate, the old man stopped, with shocked eyes. "Miss, wait!" he shouted. The girl stopped and looked back at her teacher, confused. Her teacher looked towards the east of the town, and the girl could see shock and excitement in his eyes.

She gasped in shock. Her teacher never grew excited or shocked, and he always acted stable and friendly. Yet, in this backwater town, he found something that excited him. The girl's emotions riled up in anticipation. This would be fun! "What is it, teacher?" she asked impatiently.

The old man continued looking to the east. After a while, he turned to the girl with a smile. "I feel a strong Will-Aura from the east," he explained.

The girl gasped in shock. "A Will-Aura? Here? Is someone from the central continent here?" she asked in shock.

The old man shook his head. "I don't think so. Judging by the power of the Will-Aura, the person should be in the Body Tempering Realm. Yet, they have a Will-Aura. Even more so, their Will-Aura seems stable. This means they have not condensed it just recently," the old man continued to explain. "Do you want to take a look, miss?"

The girl excitedly nodded. The man nodded back and began to walk towards the east, right towards the Hunting Guild. The girl eagerly followed.

Gravis initially didn't care about the hunters blocking his way. He simply continued walking like they were not there. But when they pulled out their weapons, his eyes narrowed, and he released his Will-Aura.

The whole Hunting Guild fell silent, and everyone felt an ominous, cold wind blowing lightly. They felt like a wild beast was stalking them. The hunters in front of Gravis had it even worse. They fell back, and breathing became increasingly more difficult. Cold sweat was pouring down from their whole bodies, and their hands shivered. Due to the shivering, their weapons released a continuous rattling noise.

"Move!" Gravis ordered.

All the hunters moved to the side, except Anthony. He was just as scared as the others, but he stood his ground with courage. Courage didn't mean that one was not afraid, but that one was able to persist even when they felt fear. By withstanding Gravis' Will-Aura, he showed great courage.

"E-Everyone nee-needs missions to-to survive," he managed to say through chattering teeth.

Gravis narrowed his eyes, and Anthony felt even more pressure. This continued for some seconds until Gravis sighed, and the atmosphere returned to normal. "I know," he said with a sigh. "I know that I am using up all your work. I know that you all need this money to survive. I feel ashamed by not leaving you all anything," Gravis clenched his teeth. "But I need money!"

Silence descended on the hall again, but this time, for a different reason. Gravis was no longer releasing his Will-Aura. For the first time, the hunters found something on Gravis that they could empathize with, even if it were only one thing. Just like them, he needed money. Gravis had also shown shame about what he had done, which made some hunters sigh in bitterness. Everyone needed money.

"How much do you need?" asked Anthony now more relaxed. He felt like he could understand the young man. Why was Anthony hunting low-grade demonic beasts, even though it always endangered his life? It was because he needed money for his son. Just like him, Gravis also only needed money. Maybe in all their bitterness, the hunters forgot that Gravis was a human, like them.

Gravis smiled bitterly. This was the first time the guild has seen any kind of smile from Gravis. "About 50 Gold," he stated.

A collective gasp of shock echoed throughout the guild. Why did he need so much money?

Anthony's mouth opened wide. He thought about pooling together some resources to lend Gravis some money to get this whole fiasco over, but 50 gold was impossible. Gravis had already made tens of gold by finishing all missions, yet he needed about the same amount again. This was ridiculous.

"Why do you need so much money?" asked Anthony.

Gravis sighed. Just because he was always acting coldly to other people didn't mean that he didn't feel alone. He always felt alone, but he couldn't get close to others. He might be able to survive having no karmic luck, but others won't. Yet, even though he knew that, Gravis' loneliness overpowered him, and he opened up a little today. "I need seven more Skin-Pills to temper my skin," he confessed.

Another gasp echoed throughout the guildhall, this time, for multiple reasons. First of all, Gravis was hunting low-grade demonic beasts without tempered skin. Without tempered skin, one couldn't temper their muscles. So how did he actually kill all those beasts? The other reason was the crazy amount of Skin-Pills he needed. One pill was generally enough to temper the skin. Maybe, someone would need two, but that could be replaced with some months of training.

Anthony was just as shocked, but he started to rub his chin in thought. "Hm, maybe we can do something about that," he muttered but continued thinking. After a while, he nodded and turned to Gravis. "I think we can help you, but only if you stop hunting for a while. We are a lot of people," Anthony gestured to the whole guild. "If we put our minds together, we may find a way for someone of your strength to earn some money."

Anthony smiled and offered his hand. "What do you say? Friends?" he smiled at Gravis.

For the first time in this lower world, Gravis felt a brotherly warmth. He had taken the living of tens of people, yet, Anthony was offering to help him. Anthony could have been stubborn and could've said that this had nothing to do with him. Gravis probably wouldn't be able to be so cold-blooded that he would continue. He already felt enormous shame because of his actions.

Gravis felt warmth, and his insides were shaking a little. He felt his eyes producing some tears but suppressed it. Finally, He took Anthony's hand and shook it.

BANG!

The door behind Anthony opened and smacked him in the back. He stumbled forward, but Gravis quickly supported him so he wouldn't fall.

A young girl and an old man were looking at Gravis with interest.

"This is him," the girl heard her teacher's voice appearing in her head.

"Hello, I'm here to offer you a trade," the girl said to Gravis with a smile.