

Lightning 391

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Chapter 391: The River Tribe's Change

And like this, everything unfolded as Gravis had predicted.

Silva wanted to leave, but after two days of trying to convince his tribesmen, he only managed to convince four. All the others thought that this was the perfect training ground for becoming Lords. They didn't have to wait for any invasions anymore, and they could simply eat another clansman after killing them in a duel.

When Silva told them that Shira was dangerous and that she would use everything to eradicate them, half of them just waved it off while the other half said something that made Silva feel incredibly frustrated. They said that they didn't need to fear Shira since Silva would lead them to power.

The Sea Camp had a crafty snake, and the Land Camp also had one. This only increased their confidence since, in their opinion, Silva was much smarter and craftier than any other snake.

After that, Silva fell into deep thought. All his tribesmen wanted to stay and wanted him to support them. Yet, he wanted to leave. What was going on with all these beasts? Didn't they realize that they were marching to their deaths!?

When Silva finished his thoughts, he went to talk to Morn. Initially, he had intended to never talk with Morn again since he saw Morn's support of the plan as a kind of betrayal of their tradition. Yet, Silva felt himself unable to decide on what to do. On one hand, he wanted to leave, but on the other hand, his tribesmen needed and depended on him.

Morn and Silva had a lengthy and heated discussion. Sadly, no one was able to convince the other one. After hours of talking, Silva and Morn agreed that Silva would stay for now. He just had to see the future of the Tribe for himself. Silva still wasn't convinced that this was the correct path, but he decided to watch how it would go.

Shira also wanted to leave. She felt thoroughly suppressed by Gravis and felt like he already knew all her schemes. This was not a place where she could rise to power. If she weren't as crafty as she was, Shira would have believed that she could overthrow Gravis in no time. Luckily for her, she was outstanding in estimating danger, and Gravis felt incredibly dangerous to her.

But after thinking about what she would do when she left, she felt herself also grow more frustrated. If she went to a close Tribe, they would sooner or later fight the River Tribe. Her predictions on such a fight looked devastating. So, this option was a no-go.

She could go to the ocean and travel around the continent to a far off Tribe. The problem with that was that she hadn't established herself there yet. On top of that, all her accumulated knowledge about this area would become worthless. Additionally, she didn't know if these areas had different rules.

She could stay in the ocean and eat enough beasts to become a Lord. Then, she could lead an invasion into another Tribe. Sadly, this would require a long time of gathering followers. On top of that, leading an army and also being the most powerful of the Tribe was an issue. She would need to fight and also lead the army at the same time.

Yet, when she thought about finding a beast to take charge of the army, she grimaced. All other beasts looked inadequate in her eyes. How could she let them lead the army?

All of these choices were before her. Yet, all of these choices had an additional danger. That danger was the possibility of suppression. If she joined another Tribe, it was possible that, as soon as she reached the power of a Lord, the leader would directly kill her to stop her from becoming a danger to their rule.

Another problem was the possibility that one or two of her followers became powerful enough to threaten her. All of this felt incredibly risky.

The choices were either very time consuming or risky. Most of them were both. After thinking about all these things, Shira started thinking about what would happen if she stayed. She would be the commander of half of a Tribe. On top of that, the three really dangerous beasts, Gravis, Morn, and Orthar, wouldn't stand in her way to become the sole ruler below Gravis.

On top of that, she already knew most of the tribesmen. She could prepare for any eventual danger. Additionally, she wouldn't fight much. So, the other tribesmen wouldn't know her fighting techniques while she could study theirs. Like this, any fight would fall in her favor.

The future of the Tribe also looked very promising. As long as she remained, she could become the commander of a Tribe with multiple Lords. This would give her more power than she could achieve in probably a hundred years.

Also, who knew what the future brought? Maybe Gravis wouldn't grow as fast, or maybe he would die to someone else? At that point, she could become the sole ruler. On top of that, Orthar and Morn were very useful with their knowledge. She could even let them lead the armies. In her mind, Morn and Orthar were adequate.

And with this, Shira decided to stay in the Tribe. After a lot of thinking for over a day, she moved her greedy eyes towards the Land Camp. At that time, Silva hadn't yet decided to stay. This would allow her to get a head-start on planning.

Three days after the creation of the River Tribe, the terrain had been successfully modified by the Common Fungus. Vast lines of water went through the whole territory, allowing the Sea Camp easy access to any spot inside the territory.

The walls at the edge of the territory had also been modified. Outside the territory, before the mountains, a vast chasm of water could now be seen. When their neighbors saw the change of the territory, they grew suspicious. Was the Sand Tribe planning something?

Yet, they started seeing sea beasts appear in these rivers. Quickly, they concluded that the ocean had annexed the Sand Tribe. The fact that the mountains remained was probably a ruse to keep it a secret until they finished converting the territory. The fact that they didn't see any land beasts anymore solidified their conclusion.

Three other Tribes surrounded the River Tribe. Yet, only the two territories to their right and left were interested in the River Clan. The Tribe further in the continent, was busy with their own war right now. They couldn't pay attention to the River Tribe right now.

Yet, from the two interested Tribes, only one of them actually noticed that something was happening.

Why was that?

That was because the chasm of water only appeared at one border of the territory. All other borders had land beasts stationed on the mountains, making it appear like nothing had changed.

This was a plan that had been created by the joint effort of Morn and Orthar. Morn knew their neighbors very well, and he had quickly started planning an attack on one of the territories. Since he wanted to talk to Orthar more anyway, he quickly contacted him and told him about his plan.

The Oracle and the Elder both had caves at the ground level. After all, both kinds of beasts were allowed to visit them. Living on top of the Spire or deep in the Abyss would make it hard for one of the camps to visit them. Like this, they were easily in each other's awareness' range. They didn't even need to leave their homes to talk.

Speaking of the Abyss, the Spire was now surrounded by water. Four bridges led to and from the Spire, positioned in every cardinal direction. At about a depth of one kilometer, the Abyss connected and led deep into the earth. They couldn't dig below the Spire since it was too heavy to be supported by these couple of bridges, so the Abyss was in a ring form.

The territory was complete, and the River Tribe had already started planning their next invasion by gaining the attention of one of their neighbors. Now, they only had to wait for them to fall into their trap.

Shira and Silva were also slowly implementing their plans of sending specific beasts against the other one's. Yet, Shira realized a problem, and even worse, she realized that Silva probably didn't have that problem.

Silva had established himself in the Land Camp, and all beasts trusted him. Even if a beast became a Lord, Silva would probably still be able to lead them. Shira didn't have that luxury. If a beast of the Sea Camp broke through, she would most likely have to concede her position.

Thus, she immediately stopped her planning and started fighting the land beasts by herself. She needed to become a Lord before using her forces to destroy the Land Camp. Yet, she also needed to be careful while fighting. If she became too exhausted after a fight, Silva might directly fight her after that or send a powerful beast.

She had to pick her battles carefully and analyze the workings of the Land Camp. Yet, Silva had already started planning countermeasures. Whenever Shira tried to spectate a fight, she realized that only mid-rank Spirit Beasts fought, which wouldn't benefit her.

Meanwhile, in a different arena, a fight between high-rank Spirit Beasts had concluded that she hadn't been able to watch. Silva was sending the beasts in such an order that Shira didn't notice most of the critical fights. He knew what she was planning, and he was already countering her plans.

After these three days, Gravis had finished most of his food. About a third was left. Yet, he didn't need to eat more.

He felt the familiar tickling of an evolution arriving.

"It's finally time, huh?" an unfamiliar looking Lord said from Gravis' side.

Gravis smirked. "It's time!"

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Chapter 392: Crafting the Perfect Body

"You are finally able to craft the perfect body," the unfamiliar Lord said from the side.

The Lord could be described as some kind of weird octopus. His head was only a meter tall, but his tentacles had five times the length. Additionally, his whole body was covered in tough scales.

Of course, this unfamiliar looking Lord was Orthar.

His tentacles ended in long and sharp claws. Yet, instead of being round, his claws had the form of a four-pronged hook. Orthar was able to move them around, and if he put them together, they would take the form of a powerful spear. After penetrating a target with that spear, he could move the hooks around inside the target to injure it or keep himself glued to its body.

He could crawl along his enemy's body, piercing them with many small hooks along the way. His tentacles also had several more hooks that he could move around. This would allow him to open holes to dig into his enemy's body and kill them from the inside.

When Gravis had first seen Orthar's new body, he was surprised by his small size. Yet, Orthar had told him that he wasn't able to truly make his body that small. When asked for an answer, Orthar told him that this was only his temporary size.

Gravis didn't exactly know what he meant. So, Orthar explained it to him. Apparently, starting at the Unity Realm, beasts were able to make themselves appear bigger or smaller. Yet, when they changed their size, they could only unleash about half their power.

Changing one's size required concentration and put the body under stress. If they wanted to fight, they needed to return to their original size. With his original size, Orthar's head had the length of about ten meters, not nearly as small as he wanted.

When Gravis asked him why he made himself appear that small, Orthar simply said that it was easier to walk around like this. On top of that, fewer beasts would notice him, and he might be able to find out some interesting information by listening to them.

When Orthar had evolved, he went to Gravis to show his new body and to watch him evolve too. Orthar wanted to see what Gravis' perfect body looked like. That's why he was currently beside Gravis.

Right now, Gravis was inside his own cave inside the Spire. Just as planned, the cave was at ground level and could only be accessed by the hole that connected the Abyss and the peak of the Spire. The cave was vast, taking up nearly half the width of the Spire. After all, Gravis needed the cave to be big enough to fit everyone if he required his officers to gather.

There was no furniture or light in the cave. Beasts didn't know the concept of furniture, and Gravis also didn't care. The only human-like thing in the cave was a door that Gravis created. He didn't like it that everyone could just look into his cave.

Right now, Orthar was watching Gravis with interest while Gravis was planning his evolution. His most critical evolution was coming up, and nothing could go wrong now.

When Gravis felt the tickling sensation, he checked his Spirit Space and summoned Heaven's body. His father told him that he should eat it when he reached the Unity Realm again.

When the black worm, filled with eyes, appeared, Orthar looked at it with a mixture of emotions. Somehow, when he looked at the body, he felt himself like an ant before an emperor. It felt holy, powerful, and awe-inspiring. It felt like something that could never be desecrated or hurt.

Crunch!

Orthar was pulled out of his thoughts as Gravis tore half of Heaven's body off with his teeth. Then, he simply swallowed the other half. Orthar somehow felt impressed that Gravis simply tore this seemingly divine thing apart without any reaction. It looked like Gravis only saw this body as more food.

As Heaven's body entered his stomach, Gravis felt himself get transported to a different world. A vision appeared in his awareness, and Gravis felt like he saw the lower world again.

Gravis looked at the world, and he felt his awareness expand until the whole world appeared before his eyes. He saw everything, including the edge of the world. At its edges, the lower world broke off into an abyss.

After seeing the whole world, Gravis finally knew how it looked like. It was a singular continent floating in a mass of chaos, protected by a barrier at the edges, top, and bottom of the world.

Gravis looked closer at the world and noticed some peculiarities. He saw all the Elemental Sects and also noticed that all the dead people had revived. He saw Byron, Old Man Lightning, Lasar, Joyce, and everyone else he knew. He also saw Aion overlooking the south-eastern branch of the Heaven Sect.

Gravis quickly realized that this was the world before he had arrived. He mostly concluded that by the fact that Joyce existed in this world but looked like a teenager.

He also felt an intimate connection with the world. It felt like he could control everything that happened. He could bestow Karmic Luck and steal it. He felt like he could form the world into any shape that he wanted.

He had complete control over this world. All the elements followed his calling. He could summon lightning, lava, wind, rain, fire, and everything else. Nothing was beyond his control.

Or, at least, that was what he had thought until he noticed something. He noticed that he couldn't control the elements of the beasts or cultivators. Their elements belonged to them, and he had no power over them.

'So this is how Heaven feels, huh?' he thought.

Gravis also felt his body changing. He hadn't noticed it until now, but he was inside this world not with his Spirit, but with his actual body. His fifty-meter-long, snake-like body hovered above the world, in the chaos.

He felt the control of the elements fusing with his body. When Gravis felt that, he immediately knew what was happening. He also realized what the choice was that his father had mentioned in the past.

He could keep his affinity towards lightning, but Gravis could also regain the Elemental Synchronicity that he had lost. At that point, he would have the best of both worlds, an unprecedented affinity towards lightning and Elemental Synchronicity.

Yet, Gravis sneered.

BANG!

All his connections with the elements broke apart until Gravis felt nothing but lightning. When he destroyed his connections to the other elements, he felt his consciousness expand. It felt like his mind was way more relaxed than before.

Apparently, keeping up the connection to these elements put pressure on his mind. He hadn't noticed that pressure until now, but as soon as it vanished, he felt its absence.

'A pressure-less feeling, huh? I'm not a fan of that,' Gravis thought with a smirk.

Whoooooom!

Gravis' mind concentrated entirely on lightning. He felt his mind becoming more strained, but at the same time, his control over lightning increased. Soon, even the lightning from the living beings was under his control.

Gravis knew that this world wasn't real, so he had no qualms about destroying it. All the cultivators and beasts with lightning affinity died as their lightning left their bodies. Additionally, the lightning storms all over the world vanished until there was no more lightning left in the world.

It had all gathered together to appear in front of Gravis as a massive ball of lightning.

BZZZZ!

A hole burned through Gravis' abdomen as his own lightning joined the massive lightning ball. Then, the massive lightning ball changed until it was fully converted into Punishment Lightning. After that, Gravis concentrated on the lightning ball and forced it to shrink.

After some minutes, the lightning ball had the size of an apple. It appeared minuscule in Gravis' humongous hand. Gravis looked at it with a smirk and felt the drain on his mind. It felt like controlling this lightning was sapping him of all his concentration.

"There is only lightning," Gravis said.

Then, he swallowed the ball.

Immediately, Gravis felt his body get destroyed by the lightning. Immense pain assaulted him, but he realized that it wasn't just mindless destruction that his lightning brought. When the lightning "ate" part of his body, it left behind an identical part.

Yet, that identical part was still lightning. All matter in the world was made out of Energy, but not these parts. There was no Energy, only lightning.

Gravis felt pain, but it also felt exciting. It was like he heard the dying cries of his inadequate body as it was replaced by something more powerful.

All matter in this world was comprised of Energy. Yet, that didn't include Gravis' body anymore.

His old body burned away as a new one took its place. The gigantic body vanished into nothingness and only left behind a seemingly small speck.

Yet, this speck was only small in comparison to Gravis' old body. This was Gravis' new body.

He was two-meters-tall, and his black scales seemingly absorbed all the light in the world. His body also had a new addition in the form of legs. Gravis had long finalized the look of his new body, and he had concluded that human legs were inadequate.

Instead, his legs were nearly identical to a raptor's legs. There were only some very minute differences that one would only notice when they searched for them.

Now, Gravis' body was complete.

He had powerful, black scales that gave him incredible defense. He had powerful and long arms that had a superior grip to a human's. His hands had long claws that he could use as an additional weapon.

His mouth was filled with fangs. His snout was like an alligator's to give him a powerful bite. His chest and neck were broad to support the power of his arms and head. His waist was flexible and allowed him to make complex motions without having to move his lower body.

His tail was long and powerful, allowing him to defend his back and use it as an additional weapon. His legs were optimized for speed and acceleration. With one jump, he could achieve ridiculous speeds in no time.

His legs covered the aspect of speed.

His scales covered the aspect of defense.

Everything else covered the aspect of offense.

He had converted his body into a powerful weapon.

Additionally, by eating Heaven's body, Gravis had achieved what he had been missing. Back then, the manifestation of lightning had converted his Spirit and Energy into lightning. Yet, his father and the highest Heaven had stopped it before it could convert the body into lightning.

Now, his Spirit was lightning, his Energy was lightning, and his body was lightning.

Gravis smirked, and then, his whole body transformed into a lightning bolt that shot out of the world, into the endless chaos.

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Chapter 393: New Body

Gravis opened his eyes as his actual body woke up. He quickly checked his body and noticed that it had changed in the same way as the one in his vision. Now, Gravis had a body size that was similar to a human's.

Slowly, Gravis stood up with his new legs and felt their power. He had missed the feeling of walking around. His upper body leaned forward instead of standing completely straight, but he had planned it like that. With an upper body that was more front-heavy, it would be harder to hit his waist and legs, and if his enemy tried to attack his torso or head, they needed to get through his weapon, arms, and teeth first.

His huge tail easily offset the gravity imbalance that his upper body brought. Cutting it off seemed like a good choice for any opponent, but Gravis had already considered that possibility. Even if his tail completely vanished, Gravis just had to use more of his back muscles to stay "straight". His massive tail could be called a decoy.

After checking the outside, Gravis checked the inside. He felt a deep connection with his body, even deeper than what he had felt when he had still been in his previous body. His Spirit and Energy had transformed into lightning, but his body hadn't in the past.

Yet, now, his body was also lightning. Gravis felt that his body was part of his Spirit and not something entirely different anymore. After achieving Unity again, Gravis also felt the connection between his centers of power return.

Whoop!

Gravis moved everything into his Spirit and noticed that it tripled in power. When he felt that, he smirked. Sure enough, all his centers of power had an equal strength now. After moving all the power into his body, he felt like he could destroy everything.

Additionally, his lightning was finally part of his body again. Currently, his lightning rested in his dantian, but he could move it around however he liked. Finally, his most powerful weapon had returned.

Lastly, his new body had several new abilities that Gravis could use. The transformation into a lightning bolt was one of them, but Gravis first needed to thoroughly test this new ability. Gravis never forgot his motto: The good comes with the bad, and the bad comes with the good.

There was a high chance that an ability like this came with a drawback. After all, there was a reason why everything was made out of Energy and not lightning. It could be possible that if he transformed into a lightning bolt and hit something, his whole being would scatter. This could be considered dying.

There was only one thing missing before Gravis would achieve his peak power again, a proper weapon. The Void-Stone Saber was hard but too small for his liking. His hands and body had become bigger, making the saber feel awkward in his hands. He would need to forge one appropriate for his body.

"You look menacing," Orthar said from the side.

Gravis forgot that Orthar was here and looked at him with a smile. "I can finally use my lightning again," Gravis said.

BZZZZ!

A small lightning ball appeared in his hand. Then, it got reabsorbed and appeared somewhere else. After that, some small snakes of lightning left his body in different places. His body showed no resistance towards the lightning.

"So, you won't shock me anymore when I slap you?" Orthar asked.

"Not involuntarily, at least," Gravis answered. "What happened while I was evolving? I couldn't keep watch over my actual body."

"Your old body burned away and left behind your new one. It looked kind of mysterious, and I was even quite a bit worried. This didn't look like a normal evolution, at all," Orthar answered.

Gravis nodded. This was about what he had expected. "How long have I been in this state?" he asked.

"Around two hours," Orthar answered.

Gravis scratched his chin in thought. "It didn't feel that long, but it doesn't matter. I should test my new abilities," Gravis said with a smirk.

"New abilities?" Orthar asked. Since when did evolutions grant new abilities?

"Yes, this one, for example."

BZZZZZ!

Gravis' body immediately transformed into a small lightning bolt, which quickly shot through the cave at impressive speeds. He circled the cave a couple of times and then returned to his previous position, in his normal body.

Orthar's brain had completely stopped working. What did he just see? Did a beast just transform into a lightning bolt? He had so many questions that he couldn't even decide what to ask first.

"What?" Orthar asked as all his questions condensed into this single word.

Gravis heard that and genuinely laughed. This was the first time he managed to confuse Orthar to this degree. Gravis found his simple question hilarious.

After that, Gravis explained to Orthar what happened inside his vision and what his new body could do. First, Orthar was shocked, but then he started thinking about many different ways how one could use this.

Yet, before that, Orthar noticed something else. "Wait, did you become weaker?" Orthar asked as he looked at Gravis.

Gravis' eyes widened, and he checked himself. What he saw made him incredibly nervous. "My Realm has slightly decreased," he said.

This wasn't just using up the saved Energy, but actually using up his cultivation. All his centers of power had been weakened by around 0.3%. This was devastating. The good mood quickly vanished, and Gravis gnashed his teeth.

"I need to test it again. There's no other way," Gravis said.

BZZZ!

Then, he transformed into lightning again and shot around the cave some more. This time, he decided to fly for three times as long. If his transformation used up his cultivation, he had to know for sure!

BANG!

As the lightning hit the floor, Gravis transformed back into his normal form. Quickly, he rechecked his centers of power.

They remained the same and were not weaker than before.

Gravis' brows furrowed. How was it possible that his Realm decreased one time but didn't decrease the other time? He quickly started thinking about what had been different.

After some seconds, Gravis got a hunch of what had happened. He grimaced. "I think I know what happened, but I need to test it just to be sure."

BZZ!

Gravis summoned a bit of lightning and threw it away. It was about 1% of his total storage. Then, he transformed into lightning and then directly transformed back.

"That was it," Gravis said as he saw his Realm weaken again by 0.3%.

"I understand," Orthar said from the side. "You told me that you have three centers of power: Lightning, Spirit, and your body. By completely transforming into lightning, your foundation gets liquidized. Then, when you manifest again, you need to create a new foundation."

"Yet, when you're not at full power, the foundation will only be as powerful as the power you currently have. So, all in all, you can only use this transformation on two occasions."

"One occasion is before a fight even starts. You charge in with your speed, transform back, and then start fighting. Like this, you wouldn't have used anything yet."

"The other occasion is when you are at your peak condition and don't intend to fight. Is that right?" Orthar asked.

Gravis nodded solemnly. "I should test if I can regain Energy while being lightning."

BZZZ!

Gravis transformed into lightning but only hovered slightly above the floor. After several minutes, he transformed back, his hand already scratching his chin. "Interesting. I can absorb the inherent Energy in the air, but only to my previous peak. This means I can regain my lost foundation."

Orthar started rubbing his tentacles together, a habit he had developed after looking at Gravis' thinking pose for too long. This pose meant that he was also thinking about something. "So, your foundation didn't completely vanish."

Orthar looked at Gravis with furrowed brows. "But that makes sense. If you truly are only lightning, you wouldn't be you anymore. There has to be something that separates you from other lightning. So, now, you can also use this ability to flee. Yet, you shouldn't play around with this too much."

Gravis nodded. "I know. The weaker I get, the less Energy I attract, and the slower my recovery will be. Going down to 50% might take me days to recover. Additionally, if I go below 33%, I would probably fall out of Unity entirely. Then, I would need to regain my Unity."

Orthar nodded. "That's what I meant," he said.

Gravis nodded back but then smiled. "Anyway, this gave me another idea. If this works, this would be a dream-come-true."

"Oh? Now I'm interested."

Gravis smirked and then transformed into lightning again.

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Chapter 394: The Hyena Tribe

"We think the neighboring territory has been taken over. That's why you five will scout out the territory," a mighty hyena transmitted to five small snakes.

"Are you sure-"

BANG!

The talking snake was slapped away by the hyena. "You lower class beasts have no right to your opinion. The only reason why you're still alive is that you look like sea beasts! Now, if you don't want to die, you will go and scout!" the hyena shouted.

The other four snakes looked at their brother with rage and pity. Yet, they weren't angry at him, but at this Tribe.

They had been born into the Hyena Tribe. Their parents had been captured sea snakes, who had been forced to reproduce. Before the snakes even understood anything, their parents had been killed. After that, they had been raised by the hyenas.

The Hyena Tribe, as its name suggested, was a Tribe led by the Hyenas. Over 90% of their population was made out of Hyenas from the same family. Describing it as a Clan was actually more accurate than describing it as a Tribe.

"You either scout or you will die right now!" the Hyena shouted. "You still have a chance to survive as long as you bring us good intelligence. We didn't put so many resources into your growth so that you can do nothing. Learn your place, trash!"

The snakes were angry. All of them were only mid-rank Spirit Beasts. Yet, in a Tribe full of high-rank Spirit Beasts, they couldn't even defend themselves. Every day, they had to endure insults from the hyenas, not being allowed to strike back.

Yet, what were they supposed to do? They were under constant supervision, making it impossible for them to flee into the sea. On top of that, fleeing to another Tribe would force them to go through the fatal Prey Process.

Becoming the Prey of another Tribe was incredibly dangerous. They would need to fight multiple beasts one-on-one, and only if they won all fights would they become part of the Tribe. On top of that, beasts that joined via the Prey Process generally had lower standings.

These five snakes were rather smart. That's why they realized that they could do nothing else but follow the tyrannical hyenas.

"Okay," the same snake from before said in defeat. There was nothing they could do.

The hyena snorted. "Good! Then, go! If you don't come back in five hours, you will receive a severe punishment."

The snakes didn't object and just traveled to the mountain range bordering the River Tribe. A small meerkat, another low-class citizen, had already dug a tunnel to the river separating the two Tribes. Without talking, the snakes entered the tunnel and entered the other territory.

Like this, nearly five hours passed.

Shortly before the five hours were up, one of the snakes returned, incredibly injured. The hyena saw that but didn't react. "Report," it demanded.

The snake had a frustrated and horrified look on its face. "My siblings have betrayed the Tribe," it said with pain.

Yet, the hyena didn't fully buy the story. "And you didn't go with them?" it asked with narrowed eyes.

The small snake shook in fear. "I... I was too afraid of dying. They decided to become Prey, but I don't want to die."

The hyena still didn't fully believe the story. "Why are you injured?" it asked.

The snake looked incredibly angry. "When I told them that I would return, they all decided to attack me."

"Why?" the hyena asked.

"If I returned, I would be forced to tell you the current state of the territory. They said that if no one returned, you wouldn't attack as quickly, giving them a chance to prepare for our invasion," the snake reported.

The hyena snorted again. "And I'm supposed to believe that you managed to escape from all four of your siblings alive?"

The snake narrowed its eyes in bitterness. "They quickly overwhelmed me and bit me. Our venom is devastating, and I played dead, knowing that they wouldn't want to eat their sibling. When they turned around, I quickly ran off."

"How did you survive the venom?" the hyena asked, more convinced now.

"We've never bit each other. Apparently, we're immune to each other's venom. I thought that I would die but quickly realized that I didn't feel as weak as I thought. That's when I realized that their venom didn't work," the snake reported. A bite mark perfectly fitting a snake's bite was visible in the middle of its body.

The hyena nodded. "Okay, and what about the territory?" it asked, not caring about the snake's injuries at all.

The snake took a deep breath to calm down. "Just as you have expected, the Sand Tribe has been annihilated. Only sea beasts are left behind the mountains. Currently, they are searching for new sea beasts in the oceans to bolster their rank. Yet, there are still many sea beasts. I estimate that they are about the double of our numbers."

The hyena thought for a bit. "Did you find out anything about their Lord?" it asked.

The small snake shook a bit. "That was the reason why my siblings didn't want me to return because, if I told you, you would decide to immediately attack."

The hyena's eyes shone. "Is their Lord dead?" it asked.

"Yes. The leader of the Sand Tribe died to the Lord, but the venom of the Sand Tribe's leader also killed the Lord. Right now, the Tribe is being led by an incredibly smart sea snake, who battles as many other beasts as it can. In probably another day or two, it will manage to become a Lord."

The hyena narrowed its eyes. "It's a normal occurrence. A Horde that occupies a valuable territory needs a powerful leader." Then, the hyena turned around. "Go back to your den. You will be rewarded with a corpse equal to your power."

The snake's eyes widened. "With all due respect, but why do you believe me so suddenly?" the snake asked.

The hyena only snorted. "The Tribe is wise and beyond your ability to comprehend. We have never told you anything specific about our neighboring Tribes. The fact that you knew that the Sand Tribe leader had venom showed me that you didn't make this up."

"Also," the hyena said as it looked with disdain at the snake. "No Tribe would accept anyone from another Tribe in under five hours. No rational beast would trust a spy from another Tribe that quickly."

The hyena let out a slight laugh. "Also, we still have your smaller siblings with us. If you betrayed us, you know exactly what would happen to them. You wouldn't dare to do anything."

The snake lowered its head. "Okay," it conceded with a small voice.

Then, the snake left for its den.

Meanwhile, the hyena quickly went to the headquarters of the Hyena Tribe. There was a huge tree in the middle of their Tribe, and all the high-ranking hyenas lived under it. A load of differently sized hyenas walked around the tree, but none of them dared to enter its shadow.

Yet, this hyena entered the shadow directly. After some seconds, it was flanked by two other hyenas that walked alongside it. Every hyena that entered the shadow was forced to meet the Matriarch, but they better had a very good reason. If they didn't, they would be killed.

After walking for a while, the three hyenas stood before a white but relatively small hyena. Nearly every other hyena massively towered over this one. Yet, no one dared to be disrespectful. This was their Matriarch.

"Yes?" she asked with a seemingly lovely smile.

The hyena that came to visit her immediately became fearful as it saw that smile. "Great Matriarch, I come to report that the ocean has annexed the Sand Tribe."

The Matriarch nodded. "Anything else?" she asked.

The hyena grew more nervous. Obviously, the information she brought wasn't enough to satisfy the Matriarch. "The invading Lord managed to kill the Sand Lord but died to his venom after that. Right now, a sea snake is quickly fighting and eating beasts to become the new Lord."

Now, the Matriarch grew interested. "Will you bet your life on that information?" she asked.

The hyena gritted its teeth. "Yes," it said. It had to bet its life. If it didn't, the Matriarch would kill it for bringing unreliable information. It was always risky to talk to the Matriarch, but if one managed to survive an encounter with her, they would receive massive rewards.

The Matriarch hummed for a bit. "Little Treasure, are you interested in that?" the Matriarch asked.

The hyena wasn't sure whom the Matriarch was referring to, but another hyena quickly spoke up. "I'm interested, mother. Ever since I've become a Lord, I thought about having my own territory. Of course, I will only pursue that thought if you allow me to," the hyena said.

This hyena was a bit bigger than the Matriarch. Yet, instead of her white color, this one was blood-red. On top of that, its teeth looked way more imposing than every other hyena.

"It's okay," the Matriarch said, "but let the Tribe practice for a bit before you kill these shrimps all by yourself. Fish is quite delicious."

"Of course, mother," the red hyena answered.

"After the fight, you can rule it in my place, but don't forget..." the Matriarch said as she smiled at her daughter, "I am the real leader. For giving this territory to you, I also demand the corpse of another Lord. You have one year to bring such a corpse to me. If you don't, you know what will happen."

"Of course, mother," the red hyena said.

The Matriarch laughed a bit. "Good, good. Then, go play with the neighbor's kids."

"Of course, mother," the red hyena said deferentially and left.

"And you," the Matriarch said as she looked at the reporting hyena again. "you will be rewarded with two corpses equal to your strength. That is, of course, only if the information was accurate. After all, you bet your life on it."

The hyena shivered a bit. It had taken the risk to report this for exactly such a reward.

"Yes, Great Matriarch. Thank you, Great Matriarch," it said.

"You can leave," the Matriarch said.

The hyena quickly scooted away while still keeping its upper body lowered.

It had survived this encounter. Investing in the small snakes had finally paid off!

Lightning Is the Only Way

Chapter 395: The Fate of the Spies

"Princess, an army of 100 hyenas of our Clan has been gathered. We are ready for your orders!" a very muscular, black hyena shouted. It currently stood in front of the blood-red hyena, and it absolutely towered over her. Yet, it didn't dare to be disrespectful. Behind the black hyena, 100 other hyenas could be seen. All of them had lowered their heads to show respect.

"Very well," the princess said. She was only 30-meters-tall, but she felt gigantic to all the present beasts. She was a Lord, something they couldn't fight. "Then, we will proceed with the attack as planned."

"Yes, princess," the black general said. Then, he turned to the army. "The Earth Movers will create a pathway on sea level. You will then fight the sea beasts and kill them however you want. This is a war, not a duel. So, you will do everything in your power to kill as many enemies as possible."

"The corpses will be shared among the participants in the fight while a third of the corpses will go to the leaders of our great Tribe! Make the Tribe proud and kill as many enemies as possible!" the black general shouted.

"For the great Tribe!" the hyenas answered in unison.

The black general looked back at the princess.

"Begin," she said.

"Begin!" the black general shouted.

The hyenas charged forward in unison. They had been over ten kilometers away from the water so that their enemies wouldn't be prepared for their invasion. The brown hyenas ran in the middle of the pack while the others ran alongside them.

Hyenas were versatile beasts and had different affinities. Except for water, wind, and lightning, every other element could be awakened by them. Of course, there were also hyenas that didn't have any affinity towards an element. Instead, these hyenas just had slightly more powerful bodies that allowed them to be faster and stronger. A slightly more powerful body made them equally as dangerous as the ones with elemental affinities.

As soon as they came close to the sea, they saw a lot of sea beasts go forward. Yet, some sea beasts also retreated. These were probably informants that would relay the information to the leaders. Yet, that would take some time. After all, the headquarter of a territory was nearly always in the middle. This gave the invaders an advantage.

CRRRR!

A vast area of land rose from the sea as the Earth Makers created a powerful and wide pathway. The hyenas didn't care about the minor flooding. Their own mountains would stop the water. The pathway was created with incredible speed, and a lot of the sea beasts couldn't retreat in time. Seeing the fleeing sea beasts close to them, the hunting instinct in some of the hyenas awoke.

Some of the hyenas quickly jumped at the closest prey in the water. Right now was the best opportunity to kill sea beasts. After all, the enemy was still confused. They would only need to become more careful later in the war.

One hyena jumped at a small and slow squid. With one attack, the hyena would kill this squid.

CLAMP!

A massive shear came out of the water behind the squid, grabbing the whole hyena. The hyena grew panicked. Crabs were slow, but their shears were powerful. Usually, it wouldn't be hard for a hyena to dodge these shears. Yet, the hyena was above water, in the air, and couldn't dodge.

Beasts didn't have Spirits. This meant that they couldn't perceive their surroundings in detail. They could only feel living presences in their surroundings. Yet, when the water was full of beasts, they couldn't discern which present had what body or shape.

The hyena thought it was about to die, but surprisingly, it only felt its body being thrown into the distance. It landed in the sea after a couple of seconds and looked around. Some sea beasts were present, but not that many. On top of that, they didn't attack.

"You, me, fight!" a barracuda transmitted from its front.

The hyena was surprised. Was this a duel?

"Duel?" it asked back.

"Yes. You win, you live," the barracuda said.

"Fight!" the hyena answered. Not all hyenas were smart. Most of them were only a little bit smarter than fish. That's why the hyena accepted its situation that quickly. It only had to win this fight!

What the hyena didn't know was that similar things were happening to its tribesmen. The seemingly retreating beasts had only been bait. After they jumped into the water, the hyenas would quickly get separated by different means. Then, they would be forced into a duel with a sea beast.

Hyenas were powerful fighters on land. They could be considered to be above average with their teeth, speed, and claws on land. Yet, in the water, they were weaker. Of course, fighting in water only reduced their Battle-Strength by a little bit. They were still quite powerful.

The princess was watching this from the land. She didn't take part in this invasion yet. After all, her mother had said that the Tribe needed some practice. Only when about half of her tribesmen died would she get involved and finish this invasion.

"The enemy is prepared for our invasion!" the black general shouted. "Stay in formation and don't jump into the water. They need to come to us!"

The hyenas followed the general's command and stayed in their positions. Sea beasts rarely used Earth Movers, in their case Water Makers, in a fight. That was because sea beasts with an earth affinity were rare.

This was not the case for land beasts. Many land beasts had earth affinities, which allowed them to use the Earth Movers more freely. Yet, the Earth Movers were still essential in a war. If they all died, the army would need to fight the enemy in a disadvantageous territory.

"Idiots," Shira said five-kilometers-away from the fighting. As soon as the five spies from the Hyena Tribe had been apprehended, she had been informed. Ever since then, she had waited here.

How did the River Tribe notice the spies?

When an enemy thought that the River Tribe was full of sea beasts and saw such a big mountain range, they would immediately assume that there were tunnels underwater that lead through the mountain range.

That case was, of course, also true for the River Tribe. Yet, what the enemy didn't know was that it was forbidden to use these tunnels. Like this, the spies would search for the tunnel and swim through them, right into an ambush.

After that, the five snakes had been put before a choice. Win a one-on-one fight and join the Tribe or die. After hearing that the snakes only had to win one fight, they grew ecstatic! Other Tribes required many fights to join them, but here, they only needed to win once!

They quickly accepted the proposal, and their enemies were determined very quickly. In actuality, the enemies had already been prepared beforehand. After all, at some point, a spy would come through the tunnel. The less time passed, the more effective Shira's plan would be.

The chosen enemies were the mid-rank Spirit Beasts that were considered the weakest in their category by Shira. Losing them wouldn't be an issue in exchange for some smart snakes. Additionally, if all five snakes died, they wouldn't be able to feed the enemy false information.

Yet, two of the five snakes died. Their enemies had been the weakest of their category, but the snakes also didn't have much fighting experience. They hadn't had many fights in their Tribe.

After the three snakes survived, they had been put before another choice. One of them had to feed the enemy false information. Yet, in exchange, they would be allowed to fight another weak beast.

Finding weak beasts wasn't so easy since the snakes had no idea how the other tribesmen fought. Yet, if Shira were the one searching for them, it would be no issue to find a weak opponent.

One of the snakes had stepped forward and had bargained. Instead of fighting a weak opponent, it was ready to report the false information for something else. Shira listened to the snake's offer. In return for delivering false information, it wanted its smaller siblings to survive.

Shira thought about it for a little bit and got an idea. After speaking to Gravis for a bit, she said that the Tribe accepted the snake's proposal. Like this, the false information had been fed to the Hyena Tribe.

"Use the sea cucumbers," Shira transmitted to the army.

Meanwhile, the army was progressing quickly. They had already covered over a third of the territory. As soon as they reached the mountain range, they would be able to use it to their advantage.

SPLASH!

Suddenly, several fish appeared close to their pathway. Yet, these fish were not alone. Every fish had a gigantic sea cucumber riding in their opened mouths. The sea cucumbers were quite big with a length of about fifty meters, but the fish were all over 200-meters-long. Directly after they appeared, the sea cucumbers shot a white and sticky substance at one hyena each.

Before their allies could save the captured hyenas, the fish bit down on the sea cucumbers, but not hard enough to injure them. Then, they shot away, pulling the hyenas into the water. Everything had happened too quickly for anyone to react.

As soon as the hyenas fell into the water, every single one of them burst into flames that burned away the sticky substances. Surprisingly, the sea cucumbers had all only targeted the hyenas with a fire affinity.

Of course, this was Shira's doing. Land beasts with fire affinities were incredibly dangerous to sea beasts while fighting on land. The main reason was that these hyenas could attack from a long range.

Yet, in the water, they were weakened even more than normal hyenas. The water in the middle world wasn't as simple as the water in a lower world. The water had more Energy, and, therefore, was also more resistant to fire. Only Unity Beasts or stronger could ignore the water.

After pulling them in, other beasts started dueling the hyenas. Of course, part of the corpses would go to the sea cucumbers.

Meanwhile, only 70% of the hyenas remained on the pathway.

"This will be troublesome," the black general said.

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Chapter 396: The Princess Attacks

The black general noticed that only the fire hyenas had been targeted, making him even more careful. He was absolutely sure that the leading snake, which the reporting hyena had talked about, led this attack. For some reason, that snake had anticipated their invasion.

"Keep the formation! Don't wildly attack!" the black general shouted. Being careful was the best option right now. Sooner or later, the sea beasts would run out of these tactics.

When Shira saw that, she sneered. "Idiot," she commented again. "Use the squid tactic," she ordered.

Quickly a lot of beasts started moving around seemingly at random. Shira had had several hours to plan for the incoming fight. Of course, she had created a lot of plans and had informed her army about them. This invasion was meant only for the sea camp.

The main reason for that was rather interesting. It had everything to do with the recruitment of new members.

A lot of sea beasts had been scouted from the ocean by their tribesmen. Hearing that they only needed to win against one enemy to join a Tribe made these sea beasts go wild with greed. Therefore, most of the fighting sea beasts were new recruits from the ocean that hadn't proven themselves yet. If they managed to kill a hyena, they would be able to join the Tribe and also eat their enemy.

The hyenas that won the fight would also join the Tribe. Of course, they would be part of the land camp. Like this, both camps would get powerful, new members.

Shira's new plan would take some minutes to come into effect. Meanwhile, the front of the pathway was blocked by a lot of hard and annoying to catch sea beasts. The blocking party was mostly comprised of shrimp that could take a hit and retreat quickly.

Because of that, the plan was ready before the enemy arrived at the 50% mark. When Shira saw that everything was ready, she ordered the army to start.

SPLASH!

A lot of gigantic fish appeared at the surface and slammed their fins into the water, creating a powerful wave that swept towards the hyenas. Of course, this was a common tactic that sea beasts used. So, the enemy's Earth Movers were prepared.

Big walls appeared around the pathway that deflected the waves. Yet...

CRK! CRK! CRK! CRK!

Holes opened up beneath the Earth Movers, and long tentacles came out of them. The hyenas had been distracted by the wave and hadn't noticed the tunnels that had been created below them.

Of course, that couldn't be blamed on the hyenas. Usually, Water Makers didn't appear in such wars. On top of that, these tunnels had been created way too fast. Something like this needed more than one Water Maker.

The responsible Water Maker was also responsible for something else. Far away, many injured hyenas were thrown to the mountains of the River Tribe together with the sea beasts they had killed.

It was Orthar doing all of this.

Whenever a hyena won, he would transmit a prepared speech to them and throw them at the land by enlarging his tentacles. Changing his body's size made him weaker, but he was still way stronger than high-rank Spirit Beasts. The transmission of information was also very fast. Like this, Orthar had collected the new members for their Tribe.

Of course, creating so many tunnels wasn't an issue for a Water Maker Unity Beast. Shira had asked him for his cooperation, and he had agreed.

The squid-tentacles wrapped around many of the Earth Movers and pulled them into the water. Then, the squids would fight the hyenas in a duel.

Losing so many Earth Movers made the creation of the pathway nearly grind to a halt. When the black general saw this, he gritted his teeth. "Retreat!" he shouted.

The formation stopped and turned around, walking back to land.

"Oracle, if you will," Shira said.

"Sure," Orthar said back.

BANG!

Their pathway was cut off before them. The hyena's Earth Movers went to work, but they couldn't outspeed Orthar. The pathway was vanishing way faster than they could create it.

"They've been weakened enough," Shira transmitted to her army. "Choose your target freely," she ordered.

All the beasts had been waiting for this. In nearly no time at all, all sea beasts not currently fighting burst out of the water and jumped on land. Then, they charged at the hyenas.

The hyenas fought against them, but all the hyenas with a fire affinity had already been dealt with. The rest of the hyenas had to fight in close quarters with their enemies.

Of course, the hyenas were still very powerful. This meant that the casualties of the sea beasts were higher than the hyenas'. Yet, that didn't stop the greedy horde of sea beasts. They only needed to kill a single opponent to join the Tribe!

Shira also sneakily grabbed a hyena with the darkness attribute. She was pretty confident in dealing with such an enemy. She just needed to avoid its darkness-covered teeth.

Meanwhile, the hyenas on land that had managed to kill a sea beast were grabbed by some sharp tentacles from below the ground and pulled away. After this had happened a couple of times, the black general noticed something.

'Is this a Lord?' he thought in panic. The tentacles were too fast and too powerful to come from a Spirit Beast. Also, the hyenas that the tentacles grabbed were only the ones that had won their fight. 'They're recruiting them! This isn't a war! The enemy is just playing with us!' he thought in panic.

"RAAAAAAAAAA!" the black general shouted with all his power, his voice echoing into the horizons. This was a signal for the princess, which said that they faced annihilation.

The princess narrowed her eyes and decided to charge forward. It was time for her to get involved!

As soon as she reached the water, she started flying. Unity Beasts could fly, just like Unity Realm cultivators. Yet, flying worked differently for them. It wasn't their own Spirit that lifted them, but the world itself. This was an advantage created by Heaven for beasts. After all, if cultivators could fly, but not beasts, the beasts couldn't act as good tempering to cultivators.

She charged at the isolated island with all her tribesmen on it with incredible speed. Yet, before she could arrive...

"You are my enemy!"

A powerful and imposing voice thundered from the mountain range of the River Tribe. The princess halted and looked over. What she saw was the biggest beast she had ever seen in her life.

It was an absolutely massive pangolin, nearly two-kilometers-long. No Spirit Beast could possibly become that big. So, the princess was sure that this was a Lord.

Morn became a Unity Beast around a day ago. As soon as the new rules had come into effect, he had quickly looked for opponents, creating some panic among the beasts. Every beast knew that they would die as soon as Morn challenged them. Morn... was just too powerful.

BOOOM!

Morn jumped off the mountain he stood on, completely decimating it in the process. He was absolutely gigantic, and his shadow nearly covered the whole island where the hyenas currently were.

At this moment, the princess knew that all the intelligence they had received from the reporting hyena was wrong. Not only was there a Lord, but the Lord was also a land beast.

No words were spoken as the two Lords charged at each other.

BOOOM!

The princess burst into flames. After that, the flames left her body and shot at the approaching Morn.

SSSSSSSS!

Morn curled into a ball and spun quickly. The sound of something burning was heard as the flames spread across his body. Yet, the princess' attack only had so much Energy. The flames were distributed across a massive surface, and the spinning quickly extinguished them.

Morn's whole back and tail were charred, but that was all. He didn't even feel any pain. This had been one of the princess's most powerful attacks, and she had expected her enemy to get injured. After all, Morn was too big and cumbersome to dodge that attack. The fact that Morn wasn't injured shocked her to no end.

Morn easily closed the distance in that short time, and the princess tried to charge to the side. Yet, Morn's gigantic tail stretched while he was spinning and came at her from above. The princess only managed to flee 100 meters to the right. That would have been enough to evade any attack. Sadly, Morn was just too massive.

BOOOM!

The tail hit her, throwing her like a bullet towards the water, and a gigantic splash of water shot into the sky as she hit it. When one hit the water at such speeds without the help of a Spirit to soften the water, it wouldn't be any different than hitting the ground.

The princess was stunned for a moment as she felt pain from all over her body. Yet, she quickly recovered and looked at the sky.

Just to see a gigantic, opened mouth engulf her.

BOOM!

She burst into flames again, but Morn bit down anyway. His mouth was burned beyond recognition, but due to his size, his brain was far enough away to not get injured by the burns. Yet, in exchange for these burns, he had killed the princess.

Typically, a huge size was a disadvantage in a fight. Yet, with good defense and intelligence, one could make use of this size. Everything had its advantages and disadvantages. Morn easily had enough experience to create a fighting style fitting for his incredible size.

When the black general saw the gigantic pangolin swallowing the princess, all hope left him.

"We surrender! Please give us a chance to survive!" he shouted.

After some seconds, the sea beasts stopped attacking and retreated into the sea.

Then, Shira poked her head out of the water and smirked at the black general. Some blood was running down her chin.

"Sure," she said with a bloodthirsty smile.

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Chapter 397: Condition

The hyenas were still ready to strike. The enemy commander had said that she would give them a chance to survive, but they couldn't just trust her like this. In case the enemy went against her word, they would die fighting.

"What is your proposal?" the black general asked.

Shira only continued smiling deviously. "Does it matter? Two Lords are surrounding you. You have no choice but to accept."

The black general gnashed his teeth. He hated it when someone talked down to him like this. Sadly, there was nothing he could do. These two Lords could eradicate all the hyenas easily.

"Okay," the black general conceded. "What will you have us do?" he asked.

"You all need to win a life and death duel. If you win, you join our Tribe. If you lose, you die," Shira said as she slowly crept on land. As soon as she came on land, the others noticed that her stomach had a huge bulge. Apparently, she had already finished eating her prey.

The black general narrowed his eyes. "This sounds too good to be true. What's the catch?" he asked.

Shira only continued smirking. "Since you're the losing party, I will decide who fights whom. That's the catch."

The black general looked at the floor with furrowed brows. This still sounded too good to be true. After all, if they would join the Tribe when they won, it would make no sense for the enemy to pull any dirty schemes. This would only weaken the force of their Tribe. No commander would weaken their own Tribe like this.

"Okay, we accept," the black general said.

Shira snickered a bit. "Very well, follow me," she ordered to the hyenas. "You're allowed to create a pathway to the mountains. Forcing you to swim is too disgraceful," she said.

The black general was a bit surprised at that. The enemy commander even considered their honor? Apparently, this commander was a rather respectful and honorable snake.

"Follow her commands," the black general said.

Surprisingly, the hyenas weren't as distraught as one would imagine. Joining a Tribe with two Lords was incredible. On top of that, they only had to win one fight. Most of the hyenas didn't care about their family back home. In actuality, now that they were forced to join another Tribe, they started getting annoyed at their old rules. Maybe, losing this war was a good thing.

The few Earth Movers that remained created a pathway to the mountains. Since they didn't need to make the pathway big or defend themselves, they reached the other side in only a minute. After that, they simply climbed over the mountains. Something like this wasn't hard for land beasts.

As soon as they reached the top of the mountains, they could finally see the River Tribe. The rivers immediately confused them. Surprisingly, the hyenas didn't know the concept of a river. After all, such rivers would give easy access to invasions from the ocean. That's why they didn't have rivers in their territory. They only had some isolated lakes for water, nothing more.

Yet, they kind of liked the look of the rivers. For some reason, they found them beautiful. They also saw something else that shocked them.

Behind the mountains was an army of around 100 land beasts. This showed them that the River Tribe didn't even attack with their full force. On top of that, they also saw their other tribesmen standing there. About 20 hyenas stood beside the army, and they all looked at an imposing-looking viper. The hyenas quickly realized that this viper was also some sort of commander.

When their tribesmen saw their siblings coming over the mountain, they felt relief wash over them. They were happy that their army didn't get destroyed. The more hyenas there were, the better they would feel.

Silva looked at the approaching hyenas, but as soon as he saw Shira leading them, he knew that the enemy was no threat anymore. Apparently, his army wasn't needed today.

"Do you want to watch your tribesmen prove themselves?" Shira asked Silva with a smirk.

Silva narrowed his eyes. Shira looked very happy right now, and that couldn't mean anything good. She was definitely plotting something. Yet, there was no benefit to running away.

"Sure," he answered. Then, he instructed his army to scatter. They weren't needed anymore.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Everyone heard powerful steps, as Morn also walked over the mountains. "Follow me. I will lead you around and introduce your new home," he transmitted to the already proven hyenas.

The hyenas were shocked. A Lord was personally showing them around the Tribe? This was an incredible honor! Most of them hadn't even seen their Matriarch in their life. Before the attack, they also hadn't seen the princess before. Lords seemed like existences that never crossed their paths. Yet, this Lord volunteered to do such menial tasks?

"I am Morn, and I'm the Elder of the River Tribe. It is my duty to answer your questions when you require guidance. The small octopus beside me is the Oracle, Orthar, and he has the same duty as me. You can visit either of us anytime you like. There is no punishment when asking for our guidance," Morn told them.

The hyenas only now noticed the small octopus beside the massive pangolin. To their shock, they also felt the power of a Lord from him. They could visit two Lords whenever they wanted? This sounded too good to be true. All of this already felt like they were dreaming.

Also, the hyenas noticed that these two Lords weren't the actual leader of the Tribe. Didn't this mean that there was a third Lord? On top of that, that Lord would need to be even more powerful. Otherwise, these Lords would never follow them. They wondered how mighty and imposing the leader was and how they were able to keep such powerful Lords under their rule.

Morn led the proven hyenas to the Spire, while Orthar followed Shira and Silva. The tribesmen only had one rule that they needed to follow, but that wasn't true for the commanders. Since the commanders had more power, they had to adhere to more rules. One of these rules stated that meaningless genocide was not permitted. There had to be a reason. Orthar followed them to keep an eye on Shira.

After some minutes, they arrived at the eastern arena, the closest one to the hyena's territory. It was a three-kilometer-wide, lowered ring. It was made out of earth with many deep rivers going through it. In total, around half was earth while the other half was water.

"As discussed earlier, I will decide the opponents. When it's your turn, you will enter the arena. After that, I will announce the start with a clap of my tail. Then, you will fight each other until only one survives. The winner gets to eat the loser and join the River Tribe," Shira explained.

Immediately, Silva noticed Shira's plan. This was not good!

"Why do you get to choose the combatants? To make it fair, the combatants should choose themselves," Silva interjected.

Shira only smirked. "Because I have won this battle, not you. Additionally, they have already agreed." Shira slithered closer to Silva and smirked at him while looking deep into his eyes. "And there's nothing you can do about it," she slowly whispered.

"Oracle!" Silva shouted as he looked at Orthar. "This is a violation of fairness!"

"She has won the battle, and they have already accepted. It's at the boundary of the rules, but still with their accordance," Orthar transmitted emotionlessly.

Silva narrowed his eyes, and his body shook in frustration. He knew exactly what Shira would do, and he knew the approximate outcome. Not many of the hyenas would survive, while many new recruits from the sea would join the Sea Camp. Shira's army would become way bigger while he would only get a few.

The black general noticed their reactions and started frowning. Had he committed a mistake by accepting Shira's conditions?

The first two combatants were quickly chosen, and the black general's suspicions were confirmed. The last fire hyena of their group was facing off against a jellyfish with the water attribute. This was clearly an unfair matchup.

The black general had a lot of battle-experience, so he knew how the fight would go. The jellyfish could easily sacrifice some of its tentacles to block the powerful but very exhausting attacks from the hyena. In his opinion, the hyena only had a 10% chance of winning.

Sadly, no miracle happened. The hyena quickly died to the jellyfish and was pulled out of the arena. After that, a hyena with an earth affinity was put against a wooden fish. Obviously, this wooden fish had an affinity for the wood element.

The hyena had an incredible defense, but the wooden fish had incredible stamina. The wooden fish easily outlasted the earth hyena. The black general already realized how all of this would go, and he grew angry and frustrated at himself. He shouldn't have accepted Shira's conditions.

The black general gnashed his teeth. Why had he been so stupid? There was a high chance that the two Lords wouldn't have gotten involved in the war. After all, they hadn't gotten involved before the princess had attacked. If they continued fighting, they could have, at least, taken a lot of enemies down with them.

Yet, by accepting this condition, nearly their whole army would get destroyed without even taking many enemies down with them. Immediately, the black general looked with blood-filled eyes at the grinning Shira.

"Don't commit a mistake," Orthar transmitted to the black general. "You have already accepted her conditions and fell into her scheme. Accept the pain of seeing your comrades die and become stronger. After you join our Tribe, you can directly challenge her and take your revenge."

The black general grew even more frustrated. That was because he had abandoned his plan of attacking Shira. If he attacked now, there would be no doubt that the Oracle would get involved. This was nothing more than a meaningless death.

"Shira is our common enemy," Silva transmitted to the black general. "Follow my commands, and we will be able to kill her quickly."

The black general looked at Silva, but he didn't trust him. He had already been fooled by a snake. He wouldn't be fooled by another one! Because of this, the black general didn't answer and ignored Silva.

Silva also grew frustrated. Shira had destroyed the black general's trust towards the Tribe. Silva already realized that he wouldn't be able to convince the black general to join his side in the short run. 'Was this also part of your scheme?' he thought angrily as he looked at Shira.

Shira was only smiling slyly as she watched the slowly ongoing massacre in the arena.

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Chapter 398: Trust

The fights continued for several hours. The death rate of the hyenas was a shocking nine out of ten. The matchups were all unfair towards them, and the hyenas that were left didn't look forward to joining the Tribe anymore. They only felt panic and fear for their lives. Would they die today?

The black general felt immense pain as he saw one of his siblings die after the other. He remembered all their faces and names, and he wouldn't forget them. This massacre increased his hatred towards the River Tribe until it reached its peak. Joining this Tribe was not a dream but a nightmare.

After another hour, the results were clear. Only five hyenas managed to survive, and the black general was one of them. Shira knew that the black general must be very powerful. After all, he was the leader of the whole army.

Because of that, she had sent the weakest beast against him. There was a high chance that the black general would win his fight, and she didn't want to risk losing a powerful new recruit. In comparison to all other fights, the black general had it incredibly easy.

Instead of being relieved, the black general only grew even angrier. All his siblings had suffered while he had been given a pass. This frustrated him to no end.

Like this, the River Tribe had gained 25 hyenas for the Land Camp and 70 beasts for the Sea Camp. Now, the power of the Sea Camp eclipsed the power of the Land Camp. This put Silva under a lot of pressure.

Another thing that put him under even more pressure was the fact that Shira had also fought one hyena personally. Because of this, she had gotten another powerful corpse. There was no doubt in Silva's mind that Shira would soon become a Lord. He had to become stronger, fast! He couldn't let Shira annihilate his tribesmen!

After the fight was finished, the upper echelon of the Tribe met for a meeting inside Gravis' cave. Most of them also saw Gravis' new body for the first time, and what they saw surprised them to no end.

Gravis felt incredibly weak! They knew that he was a Lord now, but somehow, his body felt very fragile compared to other Lords. They had no idea what was up with him, but they wouldn't dare underestimate him. Even if his body felt weak, they wouldn't entertain the thought of challenging him.

Orthar was the only one that knew why Gravis felt so weak to everyone. The others didn't know, but Gravis currently had an ability active that he called the Lightning Fork. If he wanted, he could stop this ability at any time and return to his peak. At that point, he would feel many times more powerful than now.

Yet, something quite funny had also happened. Morn couldn't fit through the hole inside the Spire. This meant that he had to take part in the discussion from outside, which made everyone feel a bit awkward.

After a lot of planning, the next steps were decided. It was decided that the Land Camp would invade the Hyena's territory, and the one fighting the Matriarch would be Orthar. The fact that the Matriarch had been able to keep the princess under her control demonstrated her power.

The reason why it was Orthar and not Morn fighting was because Morn had already conceded the fact that Orthar was more powerful. Orthar's small size and his ability to dig into an enemy's body was very powerful.

After that, Silva talked to the black general about the invasion and proposed a plan. As a show of trust, he told the black general everything about their plans. He also very emotionally showed his outrage at what Shira had done. They would be companions from now on, and they needed to be united to stand a chance against her.

After that, the black general agreed to the plan. He would return with about ten hyenas and tell the Matriarch that the snake of the River Tribe had already reached the level of a Lord. Similar to the made-up fight against the Sand Lord, the princess had killed the snake but died to her venom.

Yet, in order to make the lie more believable, they also said that there was another Lord inside the Tribe. It was a powerful octopus that had been fighting the snake for supremacy over the territory. This lowered the chance of the Matriarch attacking them, but it was more believable that way.

Then, the black general led ten of his tribesmen away towards the Hyena Tribe. Of course, while the war had been going on, there had been some hyenas watching from a distance. Yet, Shira had already silently dealt with them. On top of that, she wouldn't have been able to lie with that. After all, this was a war. If she let one hyena run intentionally, Orthar would deal with Shira.

Like this, the black general entered the hyena's territory again and quickly led his tribesmen to the Matriarch. As soon as they arrived, the Matriarch smiled warmly at them. "I presume something went wrong with the invasion?" she asked.

The black general lowered his head to show submissiveness. "Yes. The enemy is far stronger than we have thought."

"Hmm," the Matriarch hummed, "tell me."

"Yes, Matriarch," the black general said. Then, he lifted his head and looked at the Matriarch. "The enemy has captured us and forced us into unfair duels. Nearly all of our tribesmen have been killed in the duels, and I had to watch them die."

The hyenas behind the black general shivered. This was not according to the script! What was he doing!? Yet, they didn't dare to show any reaction.

"There are 15 other tribesmen that have survived, and they have joined the so-called River Tribe. The Tribe is an abomination that mixes land beasts with sea beasts," he reported.

The Matriarch grew interested. "This is contradictory to our previous information," she said. Then, she looked at one of her guards. "Deal with the reporting beast from yesterday and store its corpse."

The guard bowed and left quickly. Then, the Matriarch turned back to the black general. "And why are you here and not there?" she asked.

"Because I have been sent to tell you a lie. I was supposed to tell you that the princess has killed one of the two enemy Lords but died in the battle. This would, in their opinion, entice you to attack again. Their so-called Land Camp would then ambush our forces."

"I'm glad that you didn't forget your loyalties," the Matriarch said with a smile. "What is the true power of our enemy?"

The black general took a deep breath. "At least three Lords. They also have an undisputed leader, which means that he is much stronger than the other two. Yet, I trust in your power with all my heart and soul!" the black general said powerfully.

"By killing the ambushing Lord, you will surely be able to become a level two Lord. By then, the days of the River Tribe will be over! Just give the order, and I will give my life for the Tribe!"

The Matriarch hummed a bit. Then, she looked at the bowing hyenas behind the black general. "And what of them? Do they know about this plan?" she asked.

The black general shivered a bit. "Yes, but I have told them that we would return to our true home and that we won't be used by this River Tribe. They have all agreed to my plan. All of these powerful brothers and sisters have proven themselves in battle and are ready to die for the Tribe!"

The Matriarch looked at the black general and sighed. "What a disappointment,"

"What do you me-"

SSSSHHHHHH!

A powerful blizzard appeared that froze the black general and the ten hyenas behind him.

They were dead before even a second passed.

"You have lied to me," the Matriarch said to the ice-statue of the black general. "You might be able to hide your lie, but I could feel the shock of the others when you told me the truth. If you are all ready to die for the Tribe, then you shall. Your loyalties lie with your siblings, not with me. That has disappointed me greatly, general."

Then, the Matriarch laid down. "Let them attack," she muttered. "We have the terrain advantage. As long as a Lord doesn't get involved, our Tribe will prevail. And if we don't, then this Tribe has no reason to exist anymore," she said lazily. "I can create a new one whenever I want."

The surrounding hyenas were not shocked in the slightest. They had accompanied the Matriarch for a long time, and they knew her very well. Yet, they were still nervous and fearful of the upcoming battle. This wouldn't be easy, and the Matriarch had shown that she wouldn't get involved as long as no Lord from the enemy fought.

"You may all leave," the Matriarch said. "Plan the defenses for the Tribe."

All hyenas bowed and left, leaving the Matriarch alone. Then, she looked at the horizon. "Volra, you were my third child that reached the Lord Rank. Yet, you have also died now. Are none of my children destined to become powerful?" she asked herself.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the mountains, the Land Camp, and surprisingly Shira, were waiting there. Soon, the enemy would attack. The whole Land Camp, except for the hyenas, were ready to battle the Hyena Tribe. Silva didn't want to force the hyenas to battle their siblings.

After about an hour, the Land Camp was on high alert. The enemy should strike soon. Yet, Silva paid more attention to something else. Shira had been smirking all the time while she had been here. This was irking him to no end. He absolutely despised her smirk.

"What are you smirking about?" Silva asked aggressively. He couldn't take watching her anymore.

Shira only snickered a bit. "I'm just here to see your face," she said.

Silva narrowed his eyes. "Why?" he asked.

"Because you're a trusting fool. Do you honestly believe that this so-called black general will go through with the plan?" she asked with a smirk.

"Why not? He has accepted the terms willingly, and I have shown him my trust and companionship. He has no reason to betray us," Silva said.

Shira laughed. "That's what I meant. You are so trusting. Have you not seen the hatred in his eyes? That was not hatred towards me but towards the River Tribe. He hates the River Tribe, and he will take the first chance to tell his leader about our plan."

Silva thought about this and grimaced. He had forgotten that, to him, the River Tribe consisted of the Land and Sea Camp. Yet, that concept hadn't taken root inside the black general's mind. Now that Shira explained it, he realized that there was a genuine possibility of betrayal.

"It doesn't matter," Silva said. "Even if he has betrayed us, I will count it as repayment for his unfair treatment. When we win, I will show him mercy and give him another chance."

Shira laughed louder. "Do you honestly believe that they are still alive?" she asked with a smirk.

Silva narrowed his eyes. "What do you mean?"

"The black general is loyal to his Tribe, not his leader. As soon as I saw his reaction towards his tribesmen's death, I was sure of that."

Shira laughed a bit more. "There are only two possibilities. Either he has told his tribesmen of his plan, or he didn't. If he did, they are likely still alive, but if he didn't, they are all already dead."

Silva grew incredibly angry again. "And what makes you so sure that they are dead?"

Shira laughed some more. "Because no straggler has returned. Not every hyena wants to return to the Hyena Tribe. With the black general's mindset, he wouldn't kill them. Like this, some of them would have already returned. Yet, I see no fleeing hyena."

Shira looked with a cold smirk at Silva. "That's why I have been smiling all this time. Not only have you only received 25 new tribesmen, but you have also doomed eleven of them, including your most powerful weapon, to death. Your naïve trust has cost you more of your power."

Silva's body shook in anger. He didn't want to believe it. He wanted to trust in the black general.

Yet, deep in his mind...

He started believing Shira's words.

Had he committed a mistake?

[Lightning Is the Only Way](#)

Chapter 399: Worthless Pride

The Land Camp waited for a full day, but nothing happened. No attack was coming, and Silva had to concede the fact that he had committed a mistake. He shouldn't have trusted the black general like this.

What was going on? Ever since Shira appeared, he had continuously been suppressed by her. The River Tribe had only existed for a week, but in that short week, Shira had already increased the power of her camp to be about double the power of the Land Camp.

Silva grew incredibly frustrated because of this. He had never been suppressed like this, and it felt horrible. He was sure that Shira wasn't smarter than him. In actuality, judging by some stuff she had done, she actually appeared not as competent as him.

Yet, why was he being suppressed like this? He had outsmarted her when she had tried to find enemies from the Land Camp to increase her power, but as soon as an external force got involved, she had dealt him a vicious blow. To Silva, the world looked dark and oppressive right now.

After a long time, he had finally made his decision.

"Ten beasts of the Land Camp will keep watch over the border. The rest of you can scatter. I will call on you when it's time for the battle," Silva said.

Shira only laughed loudly, but Silva didn't pay her any attention. There was something he had to do, and Shira could wait. Like this, Silva traveled back to the Spire. He needed to talk to someone.

He quickly climbed the Spire and went into the hole connecting the peak of the Spire and the Abyss. When he reached the ground level, he took a deep breath and opened the door. Silva knew that Gravis could feel him, and Gravis had also said that they could just enter if they wanted.

He saw Gravis sitting in the middle of the cave, seemingly doing nothing. No one but Orthar knew what Gravis was doing all day. In their eyes, it just looked like Gravis was doing nothing, but they were smart enough to realize that he wasn't that simple.

"I would have expected you to come later," Gravis said as he opened his eyes to look at Silva, "but I can understand that after the heavy blow that Shira dealt you, you would want to come earlier."

Silva was a bit surprised. How did Gravis know about what had happened? His senses shouldn't be able to stretch that far, and he always only stayed in his cave. Gravis started to become more mysterious in his eyes.

"If you have expected me, you probably also know why I'm here?" Silva asked.

"Yes," Gravis said. "You want to know why Shira has been so successful in suppressing you, even though you have more unity in your camp and are just as smart. In your eyes, it doesn't make any sense."

Silva narrowed his eyes. Gravis was spot-on. "Yes. I can't find the answer myself, and I'm interested in what you think about this situation."

"I have told you all the reason why I have given Shira such a powerful position," Gravis told you. "The reason is pressure. Without pressure, you won't be able to see your own shortcomings that easily. Only when you see that the situation is slipping out of your control will you truly start reflecting on yourself."

Gravis stood up and used his Spirit to create twelve stone statues. Two of them had the appearance of Shira and Silva, while the rest were slightly smaller than these two. Half of the remaining statues depicted some sea beasts, while the other depicted some land beasts. The beasts stood behind their respective commanders as they were facing off.

Silva was impressed by Gravis' strange powers. Something like this wasn't possible for Lords.

"You and Shira are both brilliant and capable strategists. Yet, you both have different strengths and weaknesses. In total, one could say that your strengths and weaknesses have a similar weight, making you about equal."

Silva looked at Gravis deeply. "And what are these strengths and weaknesses?" he asked.

"Your combat power is about equal, and your intelligence is also about equal. So, it all depends on how you make use of your strengths and weaknesses," Gravis said as he walked between the statues representing Shira and Silva.

"Shira is ready to sacrifice her assets for the greater good, which, in her case, represents the increase of her own power. This allows her to do this..."

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Three statues exploded. One of them was a sea beast, while two of them were land beasts. "She sacrifices one part of her assets to take out two parts of your assets. You don't have this strength since you don't want to see meaningless death."

Gravis saw that Silva wanted to say something but lifted his hand to stop him from speaking. "I know that this goes against the greater good of the Tribe. I also know that morals are on your side here. By not sacrificing your assets, you keep them loyal and trusting towards you. This, obviously, is a good thing."

Silva seemed to calm down again as he watched Gravis. By now, he was ready to listen to him. He had gone against the concept that the River Tribe is based on for a whole week, thinking that his way was better.

Yet, that thinking had changed. There was a difference between arguing about eventualities and actually seeing the results. Silva had already realized that if his way were better, he wouldn't be this suppressed. So, he was ready to listen to Gravis now.

"This loyalty of your camp increases the fighting strength. If we fight against external enemies, your Land Camp would be superior to the Sea Camp as long as you have a similar amount of assets. Yet, this loyalty and teamwork won't be effective while fighting inside the River Tribe."

"So, Shira can do this again..."

BANG! BANG! BANG!

Another sea beast and two land beasts were destroyed. Now, there was only one land beast behind Silva, while there were three sea beasts behind Shira. "If it reaches this point..."

CRRRR!

The three sea beasts surrounded Silva and the last land beast. "Shira can end the game, and you lose. With only this bit of assets left, the increased loyalty won't save you or your camp. So, in this scenario, how did you and Shira use your strengths?" Gravis asked.

Silva looked at the figures with narrowed eyes. Obviously, he wasn't happy. "Shira has used her advantage of sacrificing her assets to win the game. Yet, such a representation of reality is unfair. I haven't gotten the chance to use my advantage."

CLAP!

Gravis clapped once in his hand. "And exactly that is the problem," Gravis said. "You say it is an unfair representation of reality, yet isn't this exactly how the reality currently looks? You only have around 65 to 70 beasts, while Shira has over 100. Currently, you have three figures, while Shira has five. You say it's unfair, yet it represents the reality very well."

Silva frowned but kept silent for a while as he looked at the statues. He determined that they really represented the current reality. Was Gravis right?

"What about our weaknesses?" Silva asked.

Gravis walked to the statue of Shira and leaned on it. "Before this whole invasion started, what did Shira do?" he asked.

"She tried to reach the power of a Lord as quickly as possible," Silva answered.

Gravis nodded. "Exactly. Yet, why didn't you also do that?" he asked.

"Because, if Shira isn't the most powerful beast in her camp, she will be ruthlessly suppressed by her own camp. I don't have that... problem..." Silva said as he trailed off at the end. Then, he fell into thought.

Gravis only smirked. "Exactly. Her weakness is that she can increase the power of her camp faster than you. Yet, the drawback is that she must remain the most powerful beast in the camp. You can't gain power as quickly due to your nice nature. But on the other hand, you don't have to fear a mutiny."

"Shira's path is risky, while your path is steady. She uses a high-risk, high-reward approach while you take a low-risk, low-reward approach. In a safe place, your approach would show more effect. Yet, in a dangerous place, Shira's approach is the only one that gives her a chance of survival."

Silva thought about Gravis' words for a bit. "And since the River Tribe is a dangerous place, her approach is more effective than mine," he said.

Gravis sighed and shook his head. "You still don't get it, do you?"

Silva furrowed his brows. "What do you mean?"

"The place I'm referring to is not the River Tribe, but this world," Gravis said. "In a peaceful world with fair rules for battle, your approach would be better. Yet, you are not residing in such a peaceful world."

Gravis stepped away from Shira's statue. "Why did Orthar and Morn accept my philosophy for the River Tribe with such enthusiasm? That was because it's a good representation of this world."

"Think back to the Sand Tribe. You have been continually suppressed until you could only hold a territory at the edges of the continent. Why was that? Were the methods of your enemy unfair? Were your enemies crueler than you? Maybe they banded together to fight you."

"You look down on these tactics and are proud that you are not as heartless as them. Yet, when you get suppressed like this, you and your camp will die. What will you think then? Will you be happy and have no regrets, or will you think about what you could have done better?"

Gravis chuckled a bit. "You might still be proud of your philosophy when death arrives. Yet, from an outsider's perspective, they will only see a stronger beast killing a weaker one. You might be proud. Yet, your corpse will be ruthlessly kicked by the feet of your enemy and then eaten."

Gravis looked at the statue representing Silva.

"I don't see any pride in that."

[Lightning Is the Only Way](#)

Chapter 400: New Conviction

Silva's emotions weren't calm anymore. A lot of the things that Gravis had said rung true inside his mind. On top of that, he was also sure that he would try to think of his errors in this hypothetical scenario and what he could have done better. Slowly, he started becoming more open to Gravis' words.

"What can I do to take advantage of my strength?" Silva asked.

Gravis smirked and laughed a bit. "You already did without realizing," he said.

This was not the answer that Silva had expected. "What do you mean?" he asked.

Gravis laughed some more. "You have done something that will help you become stronger than Shira won't ever do," Gravis said as he walked over and now leaned on the statue of Silva. "You've asked for help."

Silva wasn't happy with that sentence. "I asked for guidance, not help," he said.

"That's the thing," Gravis said. "When we refer to help, we don't only refer to the aspect of combat. Guidance is also a form of help. Depending on someone else's strength will be detrimental to you, but asking for guidance is learning, and learning is growing. As long as you fight your battles yourself, this kind of help will only be beneficial to you."

"Tell me," Gravis said. "Is it forbidden for Shira to ask for guidance?"

"No," Silva said.

"Do you think that if she were to ask for guidance, we wouldn't help her?" Gravis asked.

"No. I'm sure that you would answer her questions too," Silva answered.

"Yet, why doesn't she ask for guidance?" Gravis asked.

"Because she is too prideful. Asking for help would feel like she has lost against me," Silva answered.

"And that's her weakness," Gravis answered. "She can grow by asking for guidance, but she doesn't. You could sacrifice some of your assets to kill some of hers, but you don't. These are the weaknesses of both of you."

"Now," Gravis said as he stepped towards the middle of the room. "If it weren't for Shira's pressure, would you have realized these truths? If you weren't backed into a corner, would you have learned all of these things?"

Silva remained silent for a bit as he fought with his emotions. It was always hard to concede that someone else was right while you were wrong. This always felt like a loss. After a while, Silva sighed. "No, I wouldn't."

Gravis smirked. "And that's the truth of the world," Gravis said. "You can have all the morals, ways, assets, techniques, or whatever else you want. Yet, the end goal is the same for everyone. We all want to become more powerful, and when your way doesn't work, it's not wrong to modify it."

CRRRR!

Several new statues appeared. They all had the appearances of different beasts, but they were all the same size. "We all have a few close ones and a countless amount of enemies. There are not infinite resources in this world. Look at these ten statues. Imagine that these statues represent all the beasts in the world."

Silva nodded.

"All their goals are supreme power. Yet, there are only enough resources for two of them. What would happen?" Gravis asked.

"They would all become enemies while some will form teams of two," Silva answered.

Gravis nodded. "That would be true if these spots were permanent. Yet, as soon as someone achieves one of these spots, they will ascend to the next world. At that point, a new spot would open up."

"Then, we would have a complex mix of sides. Some will stay away and at the sidelines to wait for their chance. Others will form bigger teams and decide on a fixed order of ascension. Some weaker factions will target the one's keeping themselves out of the fight. After all, if they win against the strong factions, the sidelines might get involved and kill them when they are exhausted after the fight," Gravis explained.

"Your approach is similar to the people staying on the sidelines. You don't want to risk dying and try to take a safe approach. Yet, the strong will never give you a chance, while the weak will first deal with you. By not risking anything, you have already accepted that you will never achieve your goal."

"Now," Gravis said as the statues all moved to the same side. Then, another statue appeared. Yet, this one was bigger than all other statues. Another three smaller statues appeared behind the big one.

"These two groups represent Tribes. One group has a Lord and three high-rank Spirit Beasts. The other one has ten high-rank Spirit Beasts but no Lord. What would the second camp need to win against the first camp?" Gravis asked.

Silva thought for a bit. It wasn't that this was a complex solution, but that he didn't like the answer. "The second camp needs to raise a Lord," Silva said.

Gravis nodded. "And if there are no external resources?"

Silva sighed. "Then they need to battle each other until one becomes a Lord," Silva said.

"Alright," Gravis said. Then, five statues in the second camp were destroyed while one of them grew to the same size as the enemy Lord. "If the Battle-Strength of the ranks were equal, what would be the outcome of this fight?"

"The first camp would get annihilated while the second camp would have one Spirit Beast remaining," Silva answered.

Gravis nodded. "So, in the end, the second camp would have one survivor. Now, if we hadn't sacrificed the beasts to raise a Lord, how many survivors would the second camp have had?"

Silva sighed again. "None," he said.

Gravis smirked. "This course of action seems cruel to you, but that's only because you have overlooked one fact."

Silva looked with interest at Gravis. "Which is?" he asked.

"We didn't decide who the Lord was going to be. We have only allowed the camp to fight itself until the most powerful beast of the ten became a Lord. Isn't this similar to the earlier scenario where there were only two spots of supreme power open?"

Silva quickly found the similarities between the River Tribe, the world, and these scenarios. He started understanding why Orthar and Morn liked the concept of the River Tribe that much. It was basically a slightly fairer version of the wider world. Yet, it was as close to the world as a Tribe could be while still remaining a Tribe.

"We have given them the freedom to rise to power," Gravis said. "Everything else is up to them."

Then, Gravis walked closer to Silva. "You are not the father of your camp. Your camp is not your offspring that needs your protection. Just like you have decided to chase supreme power, they have made the same decision."

"You should respect that decision and allow them to chase it. Many will die, but many others will become more powerful. If you don't allow them to chase their goal, fearing that they would die, they will never be able to achieve their goal. To many, not having the chance of reaching their goal is worse than death."

"By protecting them, you have restricted their growth. Yet, most of the beasts don't have the intelligence to realize that fact. You don't need to become as cruel and self-serving as Shira, but you need to realize that when they die by their own decision, it's not on you."

Silva looked to the ground as he thought about many things. His camp was his responsibility. Yet, their survival was not his responsibility? To him, it felt contradictory. Yet, what Gravis had told him also made a lot of sense.

Seeing that Silva was still conflicted, Gravis sighed. "I will help you this once, but it won't happen a second time. For fairness' sake, if Shira asks for guidance, I will also extend my helping hand to her once. Listen carefully, and I will tell you how you can get out of your current crisis."

Silva looked at Gravis. By now, he was exhausted. This conversation had questioned his whole ideology. This wasn't something that he could accept with just a couple of minutes of talking, even if it all made sense right now. In the end, he just nodded.

"Don't restrict the fighting of your camp," Gravis said. "Let them go wild. Let them challenge whatever beast they want. In a short amount of time, the most powerful beast of your camp will reach the power of a Lord. At that point, it doesn't matter how many Spirit Beasts the Sea Camp has. One Lord is worth more than a hundred Spirit Beasts."

"Of course, you should also take part in that. If Shira becomes a Lord when you're not, it will become troublesome again. Doing this will get you out of your current crisis. Yet, if you don't keep fighting, you will reach this position again in the future."

Then, Gravis narrowed his eyes at Silva. "At that point, no one will help you, and you will die. Never let your guard down. All future fights are completely on you."

Silva looked unsure at the floor, but after a couple of seconds, he sighed in acceptance. His old way hadn't worked. He might as well try Gravis' way.

"Of course," Gravis added, "That's only after you have taken the land of the hyenas. Try to gain as many new members as possible. Then, let them all go wild. Shira can manipulate a couple of fights, but not all of them. By making the situation as chaotic as possible, none of you will be able to manipulate it."

Then, Gravis smirked. "Yet, only you have the power to end this chaos. At that time, everything is back to the status quo."

Silva thought about it, took a deep breath, and nodded with conviction. He had decided to go through with this, and when he decided to go through with something, he would use all his power to succeed. "I will."

Gravis grinned and nodded. "Good! Then go take the land of the hyenas!"

"Yes, I will. Thank you, Leader," Silva said with respect and conviction.

Then, he left.

Gravis only scratched his chin with a smile.

"Leader, huh? That doesn't sound that bad," he said.

Then, he went back to the middle of the room and closed his eyes.

No one but Orthar knew what he was doing all day.