

Lightning Is the Only Way

Chapter 5: Energy Gathering

"Yeah, you already have tempered organs and blood," Forneus said.

"But that's impossible! In my entire life, I have not even heard anything specific about cultivation. How could I have already tempered my body?" Gravis shook his head.

Forneus looked at him with boredom in his eyes. "Remind me, who is your father again?"

Gravis understood. So, it was his father, after all. But when? He couldn't remember any time where his father could have tempered his organs and blood.

Seeing how Gravis looked absentmindedly at the ceiling, Forneus chuckled. "You don't need to look so confused or think about a time when that happened. Your body slowly grows stronger with time with tempered organs and blood. Judging by how vigorous your blood is flowing through your veins, it probably happened around 15 years ago. You should also be around 15 years old, so it would be a miracle if you actually remembered."

Gravis' eyes widened. "But how?"

Forneus shrugged his shoulders. "Don't know. Don't ask me. Ask your father. Tomorrow, we will have a guest who will strengthen the Dantians of everyone. You can skip that one too. Your Dantian has been strengthened as well. You don't need to come tomorrow." Forneus then turned to the class and looked around the youngsters. "Alright, everyone has ingested their pills. Now, let's continue."

Forneus cleared his throat again. "Let's continue with the next cultivation realm. After you have tempered your whole body, your body will be able to resist the pressure of natural energy. That means that you can start to absorb the energy in the air. Energy is in the air, soil, water, fire, lightning, stone, ore, wood, humans, beasts, basically everywhere."

"So, the first step after tempering is feeling the energy and pulling it into your Dantian to create a swirl. The swirl will then absorb the energy automatically. Then you have officially stepped into the second major realm: The Energy Gathering realm. Just like the name says, that realm is all about gathering as much energy as possible. As you

accumulate more energy, it grows, and at some point, you will reach a situation where your energy can't grow anymore."

"That means, you are at the threshold of the next lower realm in the major Energy Gathering realm. When that happens, make a pause, get a drink, get some food, sleep a little, and simply relax for a couple of hours or days. When you are at your peak, release all your willpower and gather your energy like your life depends on it. You will need a strong enough push in order to increase the density of your energy. When you can't condense it anymore, you officially reached the next smaller realm. You do that nine times, and you have reached the tenth level of Energy Gathering. Most lower worlds only do eight condensations. You need a strengthened Dantian to do nine. You will get your very own strengthened Dantian tomorrow."

"Now, don't be confused when you hear terms like 'Qi Condensation', 'Breath Accumulation', 'Magic Whirling', or something similar to that in the lower worlds. It's all referring to the same thing. Since middle and upper worlds have no contact with lower worlds, there is no overarching terminology for natural energy in those worlds. We call it energy since it's the most straightforward definition. Also, our world is the highest, so we kinda got dibs on naming rights." Forneus chuckled.

"Other than that, you might be sent to a world where people create their energy swirl somewhere else, and not in the Dantian. Experience has shown that the most stable and most accessible part for the energy swirl is in your Dantian. By the way, for those of you not knowing where your Dantian is: It's an empty space somewhere between your intestines. As soon as you guide the energy into your body, you will find a very fitting and empty place in your gut. That's your Dantian."

Forneus walked to the front of the podium. "Now, on to the next part of the agenda. Did you know that 90% of all people with fully tempered bodies never reach the Energy Gathering realm? Well, that's at least true for the lowest worlds. The reason is that it is hard to feel the energy in the air. That's especially true for people in the lower worlds. There isn't much energy in the air, so feeling that little amount is especially hard. So, let's get that out of the way first."

Forneus opened his hand and held it out. Suddenly, a light blue stone appeared on top of it. "This is energy ore. When a huge amount of energy gathers in one place, its increasing internal pressure transforms parts of it into energy liquid. Energy liquid slowly seeps into the earth, and some natural ores can absorb it, thus creating energy ore. If energy ore leaves its natural place under the earth, it slowly gives off the energy it has accumulated over the years. We are going to use that to get you to feel the energy in the air."

Everyone looked at the shining blue ore, but before they had their fill, the stone vanished, and another stone appeared, this one black. "This is a void stone. It's one of

the very few ores that don't have any energy. None at all! Finding those in nature is extremely hard." Forneus smirked. "Good thing we can just create them artificially. When void stones come into contact with natural energy, they absorb it like crazy."

The class was focused on Forneus. Most of them have never come in contact with energy stones or void stones. This was something entirely new to them. "In the next couple of minutes, I will switch between the energy stone and the void stone every five seconds. The energy in the room will then go up and down. In a couple of minutes, everyone should be able to feel the energy freely. One thing to note: Do not, under any circumstance, try to absorb the energy into your body, or you will explode." Forneus smiled while some people in the class gasped.

"Now, let's start." With that, Forneus started alternating between the two stones. Some youngsters closed their eyes, while others looked transfixed at the rocks. Gravis closed his eyes and tried to feel.

Some time passed. Gravis was not sure how long he concentrated. He felt nothing but a slight wind in the classroom. He tried to focus harder. His eyebrows furrowed, but he felt nothing but that annoying wind. This wind was honestly driving him crazy. When he tried to drown it out, and get used to it, it suddenly changed direction and blew from the other side. Then it blew again from the other side. Gravis opened his eyes. They were already red from frustration.

He looked at Forneus and the stones. Suddenly, Gravis noticed that the wind was synchronized with the switch of the stones. Wait, was that energy? Gravis was not sure. It did not feel any different than if he were outside. He had to be sure, but how could he find out?

Gravis suddenly got an idea. Forneus said that they should not gather the energy in their bodies. He never said anything about gathering it outside their bodies. Gravis opened his palm and looked at it with concentration, willing the energy to come here. After a while, he felt more wind coming to his hand. That made him concentrate even more, and the wind increased again. After a couple of seconds, the air in his hand was emitting a very faint light blue light.

Forneus noticed this, smiled, and nodded. He walked towards Gravis and spoke in a voice only they could hear. "Gathering energy outside the body is a possibility. It's not really useful since it takes a while to concentrate it into a sufficient density, but just doing this can train one's will. You can do that more in the future if you want. It will make it easier to concentrate and helps in the training of the third major realm."

When Forneus first started speaking, Gravis lost concentration and the energy dispersed. Gravis just felt a strong wind coming from inside his palm, but strangely

enough, the 'wind' was not pushing his hand or fingers away. It felt bizarre. Gravis looked up, but Forneus had already walked back to his podium.

After about 30 minutes, everyone had signaled to Forneus that they felt the energy. Forneus took back the stones. "Alright, when you have tempered your bodies, just remember this feeling and try to imagine the energy entering your body and gathering in your Dantian. That should not be a problem in the future."

"Now, for the last part of the cultivation lesson. The third major realm is the Spirit Forming Realm. This realm is all about training your mental energy. Your mental energy is your will, your understanding of the world, and your understanding of yourself. As you progress, you get smarter, your sensitivity grows, your willpower improves, and you get more creative. You probably heard the saying that in secluded cultivation, years pass in the blink of an eye."

Forneus laughed and shook his head. "That's not true. Actually, the opposite is true. Doing the same thing over and over without any outside stimulus is dull and boring. Only our improved willpower helps us through those years of boredom. As soon as you have condensed your energy nine times and have grown your Dantian to the point where it can't grow anymore, can you step into the Spirit Forming Realm."

"It's not hard to step into the Spirit Forming Realm or train in it. Just push your energy, meaning the energy in your Dantian, into your brain. You will feel some pain, but after you emptied your Dantian once, you will start to feel different. It's hard to describe actually. It's just different. Just keep doing that. At some point, you will feel like something is growing in your head. That means you have reached the first stage of Spirit Forming: The Seed Stage."

"At that point, you can observe your own body and soul. If you peer into your soul, you can see your own small space. That is your Willspace. There, you will find a seed growing. The more energy you put into your Willspace, the further the seed will grow. It will grow to be a sapling, then a tree, and finally, it will transform into a copy of yourself. Most lower worlds don't know about the last stage. They think the tree stage is the last one."

Forneus walked around the podium and started walking to the exit. "When you have achieved the Self Stage, you will automatically know what to do. The remainder is up to you." Forneus opened the door and waved his hand. "That's all. See you tomorrow."

And just like that, Forneus left the class first. The class was confused because usually, a teacher would leave the class last. Gravis was thinking about a lot of things. Finally, he knew how to cultivate. Finally, he knew what to do. The fog in his mind had cleared. Finally, he could-

SMACK

Someone had smacked the back of his head. "Hey, you deaf? Let's go out!" Ballor shouted.

Gravis looked up and saw that they were the only ones left in the class. Gravis rubbed the back of his head. "Sorry, I was thinking about some things."

"Thinking? We got no time for thinking! We need to drink, like, right now!" Ballor laughed and started dragging Gravis out by the elbow.

"Wait! I've never touched any alc-"

"Shut up! We will not stop drinking until you call me brother!"

"But I-"

"Shut up! Drinking! Now!"