

Lightning Is the Only Way

Chapter 8: The Cruelty of Life

After about two hours, the water receded. Gravis opened his eyes and stood up. He felt different. He had already realized that he could breathe in the water some time ago. He didn't know how that was possible but decided that when all of this was over, he would ask Forneus. Right now, there were other, more important things.

When the water completely vanished, the purple light returned in the middle of the room. After it disappeared, Gravis saw a mountain lion. Its height was around the same as the tortoise's. Thick beige fur covered its entire body, and two red eyes watched him.

Without pause, the mountain lion charged at Gravis with surprising speed. It was about as fast as Gravis himself. Gravis readied his saber and stood his ground. He felt fear again, but this time, he managed to control it. The tortoise and the water helped him shed a layer of his weaker self. Even though he was still afraid, it did not impact his judgment.

The mountain lion jumped and clawed at his torso. Gravis jumped to the other side and kept watch on the mountain lion. After it missed, it turned to him and pounced. Gravis sidestepped again. He was not attacking until he either could no longer easily evade or knew all its tricks. That he survived the initial snap of the tortoise was only luck, and he never wanted to bet his life on luck again.

The mountain lion continued attacking in different manners, but all its movements were predictable and straightforward. Running away from something was always easier than to kill something. Even though both of them had about the same speed, with Gravis always sidestepping and keeping track of the mountain lion, he never got hit once.

After about a minute of doing this, Gravis felt confident that the mountain lion had no more surprises for him. Now, he wanted to test something else. The mountain lion swiped at him again, but this time, Gravis didn't sidestep. Instead, he slashed at the incoming claw. The edge of the saber hit the middle of the mountain lion's paw and cleanly severed it. The defenses of the tortoise and the mountain lion were incomparable.

The mountain lion jumped back and roared in pain. It tried to stabilize its position with its injured front paw but immediately pulled it back because of the pain. It stopped its

barrage of attacks and just watched Gravis cautiously. It knew it was outclassed here, so it retreated and ran away. Gravis just watched it as it tried to find an exit of the cave. Unfortunately, there was no exit.

Gravis sighed. He felt a lump in his throat. It felt as if he was about to do something wrong. He felt the same when he watched the tortoise slowly die. The mountain lion was no danger anymore, so there was no real reason to kill it. The only reason would be that he was forced by circumstance. If he didn't kill the lion, he wouldn't be able to leave. He decided against killing the mountain lion for now.

Time passed, and both of them sat on different sides of the cave. Gravis no longer felt serene. Instead, he felt extremely frustrated. Again, he was forced to do something he didn't want, just because he was too weak. Before, he was forced to watch his best friend die, and now, he was forced to kill something, he didn't want to kill! If he were stronger, would he even need to go through all of this?

After a couple of hours, Gravis gritted his teeth in frustration until a trickle of blood ran down his chin.

HE!

HATED!

THIS!

He stood up and looked at the mountain lion with fiery eyes. There was no other way. He had to kill it! Gravis channeled his frustration into rage and ran at the mountain lion, which quickly stood up and ran away. In their top forms, their speed would be equal. Sadly, or fortunately, the mountain lion had half of its paw missing.

Gravis quickly reached the lion and chopped with his saber. A huge gash opened in one of its thighs. It turned around and tried to bite him, but Gravis sidestepped again. "I should, at least, make it as quick as possible." With that, Gravis slashed the middle of the mountain lions head and split it in two. It immediately died, but its corpse still twitched for a while. Gravis continued watching the twitching body until it finally stopped.

He gritted his teeth more. "I hate this, but wallowing in self-pity and frustration will not help me. First, I need strength, and only then will I gain freedom!" He pulled the corpse to the side of the cave and placed it beside the tortoise. After that, he returned to the middle and waited. "No matter what I have to do, for now, I have to bear with it. The only thing I can do is grow as strong as possible, as quickly as possible."

But when the purple light returned and vanished, Gravis' frustration grew several-fold. A couple of things appeared this time. Some wood, some weeds, some stones, and a cup of water all sat on the floor. He wondered how he should deal with the problem of starvation and dehydration. Seemed like, every couple of turns, he would get his water and food.

"Those bastards!" Gravis was seething with rage. The last thing that was sent over was a small white bunny, just looking around curiously. "I get why killing your own food is necessary, but why did the timing have to be so shitty?" he ignored the bunny for now and started a fire with the supplies. Instead of grilling the rabbit, he roasted part of the tortoise. Cat meat was tough and stringy. Tortoise definitely tasted better.

After a good meal, he continued watching the bunny hopping around. It was probably searching for food. Sadly, there was no vegetation in the cave. It would starve sooner or later. Gravis sighed. "Might as well get this over with." He stood up and picked up the bunny. He quickly grabbed its head and pulled, decapitating it. He wanted it to die as quickly as possible and didn't know how to easily and painlessly break its neck. 'This is the best alternative,' he thought.

He was not hungry anymore and placed the corpse beside the others. Slowly, the lights of the cave began to dim until they only emitted a feeble light. This was probably his intended time to sleep. This training would go on for a while, and sleep was mandatory. After waiting for 30 minutes, he was confident that no more monsters would spawn in the near future. He went to one side of the cave and lay down.

Falling asleep was hard, but after an hour, his fatigue took over, and he lost consciousness, clutching his saber between his arms.