

Lightning Is the Only Way

Chapter 21: Bandits

Gravis walked behind the group of hunters. His armor was one solid, so it was really difficult moving his legs and arms. He constantly had to concentrate on keeping the obsidian 'flowing'. It was draining, but he also realized that it helped him temper his will.

The hunters in front of Gravis were nervous. They felt Gravis' Will-Aura. They didn't know what a Will-Aura was, but they still felt it. It felt like a wild beast trailed them, waiting for a chance to strike.

Gravis kept walking in silence. He wanted to know more about the world and any essential towns or cities nearby. Sadly, he had to remain mysterious, so he didn't initiate a conversation. He needed to wait for them to start one.

"We will arrive in our village in about two hours. The bandits should come tomorrow. That's the best opportunity to strike them," Sarah said after hours of silence.

Gravis was happy that he could finally talk. "There will be no issue. When they arrive tomorrow, I will bestow death upon them!" Gravis sneered, but the others couldn't see it. "That the bandits exploit your village, shows their weak will and power."

They heard Gravis' disdain but kept quiet. Even if their village was weak, it was still their home. They didn't like someone calling their home weak. Yet, they knew that they lived in a different world than the Earth Spirit.

Sarah continued. "You should not underestimate them. They have three people with tempered skin. Our village, in comparison, only has two, my father and me. If you stop one, we can fight equally."

Gravis felt relief. They only had three people with tempered skin. "I said, I will bestow them death, and I will keep my word. You only need to watch," he commented. "If those bandits are so strong, why wouldn't they attack a bigger human settlement?"

Sarah laughed dryly. "You must be joking. A town has, at least, one individual with tempered skin and muscle. They wouldn't even know how they died. A city would be even scarier. The head of a city must have a fully tempered body, or they wouldn't be able to be the head of a city."

Finally, Gravis got some information about this world. There was no mention of energy gathering realm cultivators yet, so this was probably an area far away from the core of power of this world. He estimated that he could kill anyone with tempered skin. It didn't matter if they had also tempered their organs and blood or not. If the enemy didn't have a strong will, he might even be able to kill someone with tempered muscles.

He had killed a low-rank demonic beast once, and those can only be killed by people with tempered muscles, usually. Yet, with his luck, there might be an issue with those bandits. He had to be careful.

The party continued to walk and arrived outside the village after two hours. It wasn't very big. From one end to the other, it spanned about a hundred meters. The village was comprised of simple wooden huts, and all the villagers were outside their houses.

The men looked relieved when they reached their home, but Sarah furrowed her brows. "The villagers are all outside. This seems unusual, unless..."

She realized what might have happened and turned white. "The bandits arrived early!" She shouted and sprinted into the village. If the bandits arrived, and she wasn't there as intimidation, they might go beyond their usual 'rules'.

The men also blanched and quickly ran after her. Gravis watched her leave and finally got an opportunity to do something he wanted to do for a long time. He started slowly changing his armor to actually have joints. All this 'sloshing around' of the armor was really draining him. After some seconds, he did some jumps and saw no more issues.

Sarah just went beyond the village's border and continued to run into the middle. Gravis cracked his neck to relieve some tension, and also sprinted to the village. Even though the obsidian armor was heavy, he ran just as quickly as Sarah.

When he went beyond the village border, he saw a wall of villagers blocking his way. They weren't looking at him, but into the village center, where Gravis could hear a loud commotion. Gravis continued running, his steps incredibly loud due to his obsidian armor.

The villagers heard the commotion behind them and turned around. There, they saw an imposing black armor charging at them. They screamed and jumped to the side. The villagers further in front heard the screams, turned around, and also quickly jumped to the side.

A clear street appeared where Gravis charged, and he could finally see what was happening at the center. About ten people in leather armor, carrying short iron swords, watched in smugness, as three people fought Sarah and a middle-aged man.

Sarah was fighting with two of them, while the middle-aged man fought with another one. The middle-aged man was already severely injured and bled from multiple cuts across his body. He probably had to fight off all three of them at the beginning.

"Hahaha! What an opportunity you have given us, girl. We have weakened your father, and now even you won't be able to stop us!" Shouted one of the men fighting Sarah, while wearing a wide grin. "Today, you will warm our beds!" Sarah gritted her teeth but didn't say anything.

The bandits on the side started hearing loud, metallic footsteps and looked to its source. They saw a madly charging, black armor running to one of the bandits fighting Sarah. They didn't know what to do, but one extraordinarily courageous man jumped in front of Gravis and slashed his sword at him.

Gravis slashed the sword and continued charging.

BANG!

The sword broke upon hitting the saber, but that was not the end. Gravis charged through the man, breaking all his bones and throwing him several meters away. With the armor's ridiculous weight and his speed, he had built up a lot of power. Charging through the man only slowed him down a little bit.

The fighters heard the boom and turned to Gravis, but they were so engrossed in their fight that they didn't notice Gravis until he was already upon them. Gravis formed a fist and used all the accumulated power of his charge to punch the man who spoke with Sarah earlier.

The man noticed Gravis too late, and the fist hit the side of his head, the obsidian exploding from his fist. The man's skin only got a bruise, but his skull and brain were utterly destroyed. The corpse shot into the distance and completely destroyed a wooden hut. Sarah's eyes widened, and the bandits blanched. Gravis knew that the initiative was important, and didn't wait for a single second longer to start his second attack.

He used the saber in his other hand, to attack the other person fighting Sarah. The man quickly held up his sword to block.

BANG!

The sword broke since it was only a mortal iron weapon. Gravis was using a saber made out of void-stone. It wouldn't be useful in the energy gathering stage, but it was incomparable to iron swords. The saber tore through the sword and cut deeply into the side of the man's torso.

The man was shocked and couldn't believe what just happened. Since joining the bandits, he never was in this kind of battle, where the enemy outclassed him. Gravis saw his hesitation and immediately acted. He reared back and punched the back of his saber, which went deeper into the bandit and severed his spine and organs. A final kick to his saber completed the job and bisected the bandit completely.

The bandits to the side looked in shock, while the bandit, fighting the middle-aged man, turned and retreated. The man realized his chance and grabbed the bandit, and since the bandit was in a panic, he couldn't defend himself properly. The middle-aged man took the bandit's arm and threw him over his shoulder, right at Gravis.

Gravis saw this and didn't decline. He raised his saber as high as he could and used his full-strength to chop. A full-powered attack couldn't be used in an even fight since the enemy could avoid the long-winded attack or just counter-attack in the wind-up phase. The bandit did not have this chance.

Gravis chopped down with his full power, and his saber lodged itself into the middle of the bandit's head, after going through his brain. The corpse was stopped in the air, and slid down the stuck saber, leaving a long line of blood and brain.

Gravis turned to the bandits on the side. When the bandits saw him turn to them, all their hair stood up, and they fled out of the village. At least, they would have, if the villagers, angry from all the torment the bandits brought, weren't blocking them. They tried to push through, but the villagers held firm.

One bandit took out his sword, but before he could do anything, he was cut in half by a black saber. The bandits couldn't defend themselves, and Gravis took their lives as quickly as possible. He might not pity his enemies, but he didn't want to see innocents getting hurt because of him.

He finished the bandits quickly, and the villagers looked in fear at the monstrosity, which just committed a blood-bath. The middle-aged man stood protectively in front of Sarah while she sighed in relief.

After standing still for some seconds, Gravis turned to Sarah and shouted:

"Your wish has been fulfilled!"

Chapter 22: Stagnation

The villagers looked at Gravis with fear, unsure if he would slaughter them next, while the middle-aged man looked at him with a stern look. Sarah walked around the man and

towards Gravis. The man wanted to stop her but decided that she probably knew what she was doing.

Sarah arrived in front of Gravis and looked down at his hand. The armor on his hand had broken and showed his skin. Sara smirked slightly, "So, you were human after all," she lightly commented.

Gravis followed her gaze at his arm and noticed that his armor had broken. He wasn't sure how to react since he went all-in on the Earth Spirit thing. Yet, he didn't know how to continue his disguise.

Sarah chuckled lightly. "Don't worry. I was pretty sure that you were human when you said you were an Earth Spirit. Elemental spirits don't appear in human form. Also, if you were actually that strong to make the volcano explode, then why would you need our help to get your 'spirit weapon'?"

She couldn't see it, but Gravis' face went completely red under his helmet. He was going all out with his disguise, but he didn't know that he never fooled Sarah. He was basically a clown dancing in front of her. Gravis searched desperately to find a way to save his dignity.

The middle-aged man slowly pieced together what had happened. The 'Earth Spirit' had scammed the hunters, telling them that he was an 'Earth Spirit'. While the man didn't like scammers, he acknowledged that Gravis saved the village, so he wanted to help him. This situation was probably very embarrassing for the 'Earth Spirit'. The man couldn't see Gravis' face due to the helmet, but he was sure that Gravis' face was entirely red right now.

The middle-aged man walked to Gravis. "It doesn't matter what you are, but you have saved our village. For that, I must thank you sincerely." The man bowed deeply. "If there is anything we can do to repay this debt, please tell us."

Gravis felt like the man had given him coal in a cold winter. He silently cleared his throat. "I have repaid your help, and all debts have been paid. I shall leave now," Gravis shouted imposingly and turned around. He walked away but stopped suddenly. He turned around. "Where is the next town?"

The man smiled wryly. "The nearest town is Wilderness Town to the northeast. It is about a day's march away from here."

Gravis nodded and quickly fled from the village. He didn't want to remain any second longer since it was just too embarrassing. Sarah looked at his fleeing back and laughed. The middle-aged man put his hand on her shoulder. "You shouldn't humiliate our savior."

She laughed more. "He started with all this bullshit. He could've just said he was human in the first place. When we found him, he was buried in obsidian, only his head sticking out from the middle..." Sarah talked with her father and told him all about their interaction with Gravis.

Gravis was running to the northeast. He had already thrown away his useless armor a while ago. It looked nice but was useless otherwise. Now, he only wore a black shirt and some black pants. He finally got a direction for a town, and there, he could surely buy pills to temper his body.

He learned in his preparation school that the body tempering stage was mainly dependent on pills. Finding a different way to temper one's body was difficult, especially in a low-rank world. He could theoretically temper his skin by training, but that would take years.

While running, he was thinking about what happened to him in this world, up to now. He had arrived, and his 'luck' was doing its absolute very best to kill him. Yet, after that, there was silence from his lack of Karmic Luck. He met no enemies in the two days, where he was regenerating, and the enemies he sought out himself weren't even worth a warm-up.

What did Heaven plan? Gravis thought further about this issue. His lack of Karmic Luck did its best to stop him from cultivating. There were two ways to stop someone in their journey. Either kill them or stagnate them to death. Those ways were actually complete opposites. One was sending strong enemies to kill the person, while the other one was sending no enemies.

Enemies tempered one's will and heart, and if there were no enemies, one could progress higher in their realm. Yet, if they advanced higher in their realm without having any enemies, they would also be the weakest in said realm. And when you were the weakest in your realm, it would be difficult to survive and get further resources.

Gravis clenched his teeth. "So, that's your plan," he muttered to himself. "As a back-up of your volcano plan, you dumped me into some back-water area, where nearly everyone is weak. There are nearly no potential enemies, and probably just as few resources for cultivation."

That's right. Heaven wanted to stagnate him into complacency. He got dumped into an area where he was as strong as the leader of a whole town. If Gravis hadn't learned so much about Heaven's luck and plans from his brother Orpheus, he would slowly fall into complacency and lose his drive.

This was the same way Heaven stopped Orpheus from cultivating. It gave him a wife and beautiful children until he stopped desiring strength. Gravis realized the similarity.

Just when Gravis always lamented his weak strength, Heaven had sent him to a place where he was one of the strongest. That sudden shift in status could make people drunk on the sudden gain of power. Like that, they lost their feeling of helplessness, which drove them to reach higher realms. It would also remove all pressure on a person, basically boring them into mediocrity.

"What a sly and sinister scheme," Gravis commented as he thought about his situation. He couldn't allow for his drive to vanish. He had to get pills to temper his skin and then move on towards areas with stronger people.

Gravis stopped running. "And this town should help me in that," he muttered to himself as he looked at the town on the horizon. After a short pause, he continued running. He was still quite a distance away from the town, when something happened.

"HALT!" A man suddenly jumped out of a bush and stepped into Gravis' way. "I planted these trees and paved the road! Pay a toll to-"

BANG

The bandit couldn't finish his sentence as Gravis just barreled through him, throwing him back into the bush. Gravis didn't even look at him as he continued running. After a while, the man got up from the bush and looked into Gravis' direction. "Damn, at least let me finish my phrase before you do that," he grumbled to himself. "It's normal and good manners to let other people finish speaking, you dick."

Gravis tried not to think about the guy he just ran over. This was one of Heaven's attacks, sending weaker people toward him until he felt more and more powerful. If he continued fighting only weaker people, at some point, he would lose his edge and would start fearing stronger enemies. Gravis needed to keep his will sharp.

If he felt proud about winning against weaklings, his will would get exhausted to death. The longer he remained in this weak place, the more weaklings would come, and the more his will would falter.

He had to leave, fast!

Chapter 23: Weapon

Gravis closed in on the town and slowed down. Charging full-speed into a town could evoke adverse reactions. Gravis might need enemies, but attacking a town full of

innocent people was just wrong. The town had a five-meter-high, grey wall surrounding it. The big gates in front of Gravis were only opened so wide, that a human could barely squeeze through them.

The two guards beside the gate looked at him and noticed the saber on his back. They raised their halberds and shouted. "Halt! Why are you carrying a weapon?"

Gravis stopped and looked at them. "Because it's dangerous outside," he plainly explained.

The guards became a little more relaxed when they heard that but still kept up their vigilance. "We can't let you through with that weapon," the guards said imposingly.

Gravis furrowed his brows. If these were the town's rules, he had to comply, but only on one condition. "Is that true for everyone entering the town?" he asked. If this were only true for ordinary citizens, then nobles and people with 'connections' would still be able to carry their weapons. People with strength had the power, and he didn't want to bet on the possibility that no one wished to take his life in the town.

"In order to carry a weapon in the city, you require a certain amount of status, and we know all people with status. We must apologize, but we can't let you through like this," the guards continued. One of the guards looked up at the wall and waved one of his hands. The gates promptly closed completely.

Gravis narrowed his eyes at the guards and released his will-aura. The guards felt the world turn colder, and they believed they saw an illusory blade resting on their throats. They started having trouble breathing and faltered. Mortals had no resistance to Gravis' will.

"I am going into this town," Gravis stated, and all the hair on the guard's necks stood up. Gravis slowly walked forward. It was their duty to stop him, but they just couldn't summon the courage. They watched as Gravis passed between the two guards, not looking at them at all.

Gravis arrived in front of the gate and placed his right hand on it. He pressed forward with all his strength, and the gate slowly started opening. The guard's faces whitened, and they retreated a couple of steps. Only someone with tempered muscles could open the gate by hand. They hadn't even tempered their skin, so how could they possibly stop such an existence?

Of course, Gravis didn't have tempered muscles, but his organs and blood had been tempered for over 15 years. His physical strength was incomparable to an average human. His power could not reach the level of someone with tempered muscles, but it

was strong enough to open the big gate. This gave the guards the illusion that Gravis had tempered his muscles.

Their town-lord was the only individual in the town with tempered muscles, so they didn't dare say anything to Gravis anymore. They let him pass in silence. After Gravis left their sight, one of the guards looked up at the wall at another guard with a white face. "Go inform the town-lord," he commanded.

The guard straightened, looked at his commanding officer below, saluted, and ran into the town. The other guards released a sigh of relief. They felt like they had touched death. Yet, they realized that they had failed their duty. The punishment would be severe.

Gravis looked around the town. It had wide streets, and most of the buildings consisted of stone. It was definitely better than the village he was in before. Many people crowded the streets, but when they saw that Gravis was carrying a weapon in the open, they gave him a wide berth. People with weapons were either noble or affiliated with the underground.

Gravis continued walking until he arrived at an open plaza. He could see a lot of stalls placed all around the square. They peddled different wares. He saw people offering everything from medicinal herbs to martial arts. The only thing that wasn't being sold were weapons. It was probably illegal.

Gravis went up to a stall that sold medicinal herbs. He could see a long queue, went to the back, and stood in line. The onlookers looked at him unsurely. Gravis was carrying a weapon openly, so his status couldn't be ordinary. Yet, he stood obediently at the back of the queue of a stall. This felt unreal to them.

One of the onlookers walked to the person in front of Gravis and nervously tipped his shoulder. The person felt annoyed and looked at the guy who poked him. The guy just beckoned at Gravis with his eyes. The man in the line turned to Gravis, saw his weapon, and stepped back. He then gestured for Gravis to move in front. While doing that, he also gave the man in front of him a light kick to his calves.

"Who-" the man turned, saw the scene, and also moved back. This spectacle continued until Gravis was at the front of the queue, everyone else standing behind him. The stall owner looked at Gravis with a mixture of delight and nervousness.

"What does sir require?" He asked, very politely.

Gravis looked at him with his, by now, usual serious look. "Where can I buy pills for skin-tempering?"

The stall owner felt bitter. It seems like there was no money to be made here. He pointed at one of the stone buildings adorning the plaza. "This is the Medicinal Pill Pavilion. All pills in the town are sold there," he explained politely.

The building was bigger than most of the others. It had three floors and the walls were painted in a festive, red color. An ostentatious sign showed the building's name, "Medicinal Pill Pavilion", written with graceful strokes. Gravis nodded at the stall owner and walked to the building. The other people at the stall sighed in relief as Gravis left.

In comparison, Gravis felt bitter. 'Everyone is subservient. If I were not used to this subservient attitude, I would start feeling smug. I'm lucky that everyone in my home city treated me like this. Oh Heaven, what a dangerous scheme...' he thought.

Gravis went into the Medicinal Pill Pavilion and didn't see any people, except for a girl behind the counter. Probably not everyone could have the finances to buy pills. There were no display cases for pills, and the store looked rather barren. The girl was around his age and stood behind the counter with a straight back.

He walked over, and the girl who already took note of his weapon politely curtsied. "Welcome to the Medicinal Pill Pavilion! How can I help you?"

"What do I need to buy skin-tempering pills?" He asked directly.

The girl smiled. "One Skin-Pill costs 7.5 gold coins."

Gravis narrowed his eyes. The girl felt a little afraid but didn't show it. "But since it is sir that is shopping here, we can sell them for seven gold coins."

Gravis didn't narrow his eyes because of the price, but because he realized something.

He didn't have any money.

Chapter 24: The Town Lord's Action

"So, he said he is coming into the city, and then lieutenant Handers just let him walk through the gates?" An imposing man sitting on a throne inside a big hall asked. He was looking at a soldier, kneeling in front of him. The soldier was the same one that had been sent to inform the town lord. The man on the throne was obviously the town lord. He was the only individual inside the town with tempered muscles.

"Your majesty, I was on top of the wall, and when the man said that he would come into the city, I felt like a blade was resting on my throat. The lieutenant and the other guard knew what the punishment for failing our duties, was. Yet, no matter how hard we tried, we could not step forward to obstruct him. He then opened the gates and walked into town with his weapon," the guard continued.

The town lord's eyes narrowed. "He opened the gates?" Suddenly, he stood up. "Idiot! Why didn't you mention that the gates were closed, sooner?" The town lord shouted.

The guard shivered. "I apologize a million times, your majesty. This little one forgot," the guard whimpered.

The town lord wandered around his throne hall, unsure how to proceed with this situation. Only people with tempered muscles could open the gate. On top of that, the guards knew very well that failing one's duty meant death. This meant that the fear the guards held toward attacking the young man outweighed the fear of certain death for failing their duty.

This young man was, at least, as strong as him. This could be an issue, if not handled correctly. "Did the young man introduce himself?" The town lord asked while looking outside of his window into the town.

"No, he just asked if everyone had to follow the weapon-prohibition. We told him that it concerns everyone who was not of a certain status. Then he said that he was going into the town, pushed open the gate, and walked in," the guard narrated again.

The town lord rubbed his chin in thought. "Announcing his status would have made things way easier. Either he is a wanted criminal, which I doubt since he didn't hide, or he is unknown. Maybe, he is a disciple from some mysterious master. He didn't announce himself, so he is probably not interested in meeting me, or interested in my position."

"Yet, he is a young man, probably in his teens judging by how the guard described him. He must have some incredible treasures with him. Maybe, I could get them and finally temper my bones..." the town lord looked at the ceiling and continued rubbing his chin while muttering to himself. After a while, he nodded to himself and made his decision.

The guard continued kneeling, not daring to say a word. "Alright," the town lord shouted while turning back to the guard. The guard stood up and saluted. "The soldiers will not receive the death penalty since this seems to be an unusual circumstance. Yet, punishment is necessary. Return to the gate! Everyone involved in this incident will receive 40 hits of the Skin-Rod after their shift ends!"

The guard shivered slightly. The Skin-Rod was a specific rod to punish people with tempered skin. The lieutenant would survive, but he would lose a layer of skin, while the guards would have to fight for their lives. The guard saluted again. "Yes, your majesty!" shouted the guard and left.

The town lord sat back on his throne and began to drink some tea.

He had decided to let sleeping tigers lie. If the young man were not interested in meeting him, he would probably do what he came here to do, and then leave. The young man was at least as strong as the town lord himself, and the fear he instilled in the guards seemed unnatural. He never even heard of something like that. Angering him could go south, very fast. The potential treasures were not worth the risk.

As for the situation that the young man would do something illegal or kill someone? The town lord would not risk his life for that. "Just let him do what he wants, as long as it does not compromise my position."

The town lord wasn't an idiot.

Having no money was an issue. Body tempering needed a lot of money in the form of pills to progress. The following stages were easier in that requirement. Gravis had to find a way to earn money. However, it shouldn't be that hard. Being one of the strongest in the area would surely help.

"Alright. So..." Gravis began, and the girl's eyes lighted up. She was about to make lots of money. "What's the best way to earn money around here?" Gravis asked.

The girl wasn't sure if she heard him correctly. "The best way to earn money, sir?" She asked for confirmation.

Gravis nodded.

The girl felt the money glide out of her hands. This guy had no money. But then, how did this guy walk around with a weapon? Some guesses started forming in her mind. If cash or status weren't the way he got his saber in, then it could only be strength. Maybe, she actually could make some money off of him.

"Actually," she started. "There is a place where sir can earn a lot of money."

"Oh? Where?" Gravis asked.

The girl's eyes shined. The man was obviously, genuinely interested in making money. "We have a big problem with ferocious beasts and demonic beasts in the surrounding villages. The Hunting Guild has a lot of bounties and missions for killing different beasts.

Of course, one needs a certain amount of strength for that, but I think this would be no problem for sir. Sir can find the Hunting Guild outside the town."

Gravis' eyes lighted up. Making money for killing enemies? Money could increase his realm, and enemies could increase his will and experience. This was killing two birds with one stone! Gravis nodded. "Thank you. I will look for this Hunting Guild, and return with enough money." Then, he turned around and left.

"Sir, one more thing..." the girl shouted while he was leaving. Gravis turned around and looked at the girl. "I think there is a notice on the notice board on the central plaza, that sir should be interested in," the girl said.

Gravis furrowed his brows but nodded and left the store. The girl, on the other hand, rubbed her chin with a smirk. If she were right, she would earn a lot of money in the near future.

Following the girl's advice, Gravis looked for a notice board and found it quickly. He walked towards it, everyone giving Gravis a wide berth, and began to read the announcements. After a while, Gravis found an announcement that made him shiver in excitement.

It read:

"To all talented youngsters,

On the day before the summer solstice, the yearly entrance exams for the Elemental Guilds are being held!

Requirements:

Under 20 years of age

Must have tempered skin

Must have a firm will

Every youngster that fulfills the requirements is invited to Body City to participate in the entrance exams."

Further down was a list of all the Elemental Guilds, and he noticed the 'Lightning Guild' was part of them. He quickly checked the date on the top right of the notice board. The date for the entrance exams was about 90 days away.

Gravis narrowed his eyes. He had to temper his skin by then!

He quickly turned around and left the town, looking for the Hunting Guild.

Chapter 25: Senior Hunter

Gravis walked to the exit of the town. When the guards saw him, they simply opened the gate without a word. They had orders from the town lord that Gravis could do anything he wanted, but the guards had to keep the town lord up to date with news about him. When Gravis went through the gate, one guard retreated and ran to the town lord's residence.

Gravis noticed that and guessed that the town lord probably had eyes on him. He didn't care that much. If the town lord wanted to attack him, he would be an excellent test of Gravis' current combat strength. If the town lord didn't do anything, that would be fine too. Gravis left the town and searched for the Hunting Guild.

After a while, he found it. It was to the east of the town, while the gate Gravis left from, was on the south. It was a wide building made of stone, and he could see a big sign on the roof that read "Hunting Guild". Gravis could also see stalls on the side of the hall, where some beasts walked around, which were probably tamed. He could only see ferocious beasts and no demonic beasts. Demonic beasts were perhaps too strong.

Gravis went to the entrance and walked in. The Hunting Guild had no guards, apparently. They probably didn't need them since the Hunting Guild was full of strong hunters. Wanting to rob this place was pure suicide for most people.

When he went inside, he noticed that the hall also functioned as a bar. Long rows of wooden benches and tables adorned one side of a large hallway, while the other side had the bar. At the end of the hall, there was a giant noticeboard. That was probably the place where the bounties and missions were listed.

"Hey, newbie!" a guy shouted from one of the benches, a beer in front of him. "You want to register as a hunter or do you wanna set up a mission?" he asked as he stood up, and walked to Gravis.

The guy looked imposing. He was around two meters tall, and bulging muscles peeked through his brown vest, with nothing underneath. A large sword, nearly as long as the guy himself, was slung over his back.

Gravis looked at him with his typical neutral look. "I want to register as a hunter," he commented dryly, as he continued looking around the hall. The hall seemed moderately

full, but there was still some space. Nearly everyone had some kind of weapon on their backs, since this was outside the town. There were no restrictions regarding weapons out here. He could see all kinds of weapons adorning the hunters' leather armors. He could see bows, staffs, swords, sabers, spears, and many more.

The guy whistled in surprise and astonishment. "Oh? You're a little young for that. Are you sure about this? You need to be able to slay a ferocious beast, at least," the guy explained.

Gravis simply nodded. He didn't want to get too close to others due to his 'contagious luck'.

The guy simply shrugged, while leaning with his elbows on a nearby table. Another man sitting at that table looked at the guy with a disgusted look and pulled his food away from the guy's elbow. The guy talking with Gravis ignored it. "Well, it's your neck. You need to get over to the counter and register." The guy gestured with his neck to the bar.

Gravis nodded. "Thanks," and walked to the counter.

The guy looked at Gravis, walking away. "Heh, a shy guy, eh?" With that, he walked back to his table to continue drinking his beer.

As Gravis arrived, a middle-aged, grumpy-looking woman looked at him. Here, no one was intimidated by his weapon, since the Hunting Guild was outside the town. Here, everyone walked around with a weapon. "What do you want?" asked the woman, annoyed.

Gravis didn't care about her manners. He preferred direct conversation. If someone were friendly to Gravis, he would feel uncomfortable and guilty since he had to act coldly. He didn't want to infect others with his luck. "I want to register as a hunter."

"To become a junior hunter, you need to find a party that will accept you, and kill at least four ferocious beasts until you can accept missions by yourself. To become a senior hunter, you need to have tempered skin and must prove yourself by killing a ferocious beast solo," the lady narrated like it was practiced, which was probably true.

Gravis didn't wait. "I want to become a senior hunter," he stated blankly.

One of the lady's eyebrows rose. "Kid, don't joke around. You're still too green to become a senior hunter. You probably haven't even killed a chicken before," the woman laughed in disdain.

Gravis narrowed his eyes at the woman. Just when he was about to release his Will-Aura to make things easier, an old man on the side of the counter walked over.

"Margaret, you don't have the authority to stop people from registering. Give him the test," he ordered.

The lady rolled her eyes and started rustling through some paper below her counter. After some seconds, she took out a piece of paper. "Here," she threw the paper at Gravis, who promptly caught it. "A ferocious beast called 'Tree Fiend' has been spotted near a farm to the south. Just follow the instructions of the paper. If you manage to kill it, bring its corpse here. If it's too heavy, bringing us its head will be enough, but you won't get any spoils, except for the monetary reward."

Gravis calmly looked at the paper, read through it, and nodded. He shoved the paper into one of his front pockets, turned around, and left without another word.

"Tch, another crazy youngster thinking he knows how the real world works," the lady commented in disdain. The man, on the other hand, was rubbing his chin with a smile.

"I wouldn't be so sure about that. I felt something... unique from him," the man told the lady.

"Tch, you're getting sentimental. If the boy dies, that's on you!" the lady angrily remarked and went back to look through some documents.

Gravis quickly left the hall and ran towards the south. He followed the instructions and arrived at a farm, not 20 minutes later. After asking the farmer about his beast problem, he ran to the east of the farm to a close forest. The farmer saw the Tree Fiend there some hours ago. He had commissioned the hunt about two weeks ago, but since he didn't have enough money, he could only commission it as a trial mission.

A trial mission only cost about a third as an actual mission. Like the name suggested, trial missions were meant for hunters as a trial to upgrade their rank. There were multiple ranks, with Junior Hunter and Senior Hunter being the lowest and the highest, respectively.

There were not many people with tempered skin just walking around, so the Hunting Guild created some additional ranks for the hunters without tempered bodies. Just, those ranks were not accessible to new recruits. A hunter could only start at the bottom or the top. If they told someone with tempered skin, that they first had to slog through all the ranks, they might not join. They had tempered skin, after all. They could just go somewhere else.

Gravis arrived at the place where the farmer last saw the Tree Fiend. It was close to a forest on the edge of the farm. That was the place where the farmer let his animals out to eat. Of course, that would seem idiotic with a ferocious beast stalking the area. Yet,

the farmer was afraid that, if the creature didn't find any food there, it would come to the farmer instead.

Gravis jumped into a haystack and waited for the Tree Fiend. He knew the basics of tracking, but why would he risk going into the forest and searching around forever, if he could simply wait for the beast to appear on its own? So, he decided to simply wait.

About five hours later, he saw an about two-meter tall, tree-like creature stalking around the forest's edge. Its arms were thin and ended in long, thorn-like barbs. It was also walking on only two legs. This was probably the Tree Fiend. 'Fitting name,' Gravis commented in his mind.

The Tree Fiend didn't know that death had arrived.