

Lightning 451

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Chapter 451: Stepping Onto the Mountain

Gravis was a bit surprised by the Red King's words, and he also realized why he hadn't fully believed that the water buffalo was a false snake. Apparently, the water buffalo had been sincere in his words and had actually meant what he said.

Usually, Gravis would talk to the Red King more about his dislike for the buffalo since he was pretty sure of the reason why the Red King disliked the water buffalo, even though the water buffalo was kind in nature. Gravis was also sure that the Red King didn't even know the reason himself. Yet, since Gravis viewed the Red King as his enemy, he saw no sense in trying to convince him.

How did Gravis know the reason for the Red King's dislike even though the Red King didn't know it himself?

The reason for that was that Gravis had been in a similar situation in his past. Back in the Core-Continent, Gravis had thought kindness to be a weakness. He had looked down upon the Freya Clan due to their kind nature and thought it to be a defeatist attitude.

Yet, Joyce had shown him that he had been wrong. Gravis had thought of them as weak because he hadn't been willing to confront the emotional pain that kindness brought with it. After all, if Gravis helped others and something happened to them, Gravis would feel pain.

The Red King had a similar attitude towards the water buffalo for the same reason. The Red King tried to justify his cruelty and willingness to sacrifice everything for power by believing kind beasts to be weak. After all, if kind beasts were able to reach the top, then why had he sacrificed so much? Admitting that kindness could also result in power would force him to acknowledge that there was a better path to power.

Of course, Gravis didn't believe himself to be a kind person. He knew that he had killed a lot of innocents due to his feud with the lower Heaven. Such a person couldn't be considered kind. Yet, Gravis acknowledged that there were many paths to power, some of which didn't require one to sacrifice all feelings of empathy.

This was the difference between the Red King and him. The Red King believed that his path was the only one to power, while Gravis knew that his path was only one of many. Of course, the word "power" in "path to power" refers to different levels of strength depending on who said it.

It was very possible that only one path led to the absolute top, which was the Opposer's level, but for the current horizons of this world, one could say that many paths lead to power.

Usually, Gravis would have told the Red King all these things, but he didn't bother since he viewed him as an enemy. Instead, as soon as he heard that the water buffalo genuinely meant everything he said, Gravis simply stopped caring. It wasn't important what the Red King thought of the water buffalo. It was only important what Gravis thought of him.

Another day passed in which a lot of new beasts arrived. Some of them greeted the Red King, while others simply ignored him. The Red King didn't care about any of them, judging by his conduct towards them.

The next day, no new beasts arrived. Gravis guessed that they were probably very close to the time of the meeting. No beast would want to come late to a meeting with the Empress since that would be a sign of disrespect.

Sure enough, in the evening of the next day, the Red King suddenly looked at the mountain. "It's time," he said. "Follow behind me."

The Red King, as well as all the other gathered beasts, flew towards the mountain. They didn't dare to fly very fast, but they still reached it in a matter of seconds.

"Your candidate is not a Divine Beast," a voice suddenly said from Gravis' front. Without him noticing, a white, silverish ape with a long beard had appeared in front of them. He was only around two-meters-tall, but Gravis had already learned that size meant nothing to Kings and Emperors.

Gravis also noticed that, for the first time, the Red King suppressed his own pride and lowered his head. Due to the Red King's conduct, Gravis was pretty sure of the white ape's power.

The Red King had ignored the Emperors that they had passed, but he had completely suppressed his pride in front of this beast. The Empress probably wouldn't have another level three Emperor among her following, which meant that this white ape was probably a level two Emperor.

"Greetings, Grand Elder," the Red King said politely. "Yes, my candidate is not a Divine Beast."

The white ape looked at Gravis, but no feeling of superiority washed over Gravis' body. The white ape held his superiority back probably because he feared that he would influence the competition of the candidates.

"You know the rules," the white ape said after turning back to the Red King.

"I do," the Red King said politely.

"You're willing to bet your life?" the white ape asked.

"I am," the Red King answered immediately.

The white ape looked at Gravis again, turned back to the Red King, and nodded. "Alright," he said. Then, he seemingly vanished before Gravis' eyes.

Gravis was sure that beasts inside the Law Comprehension Realm weren't able to teleport. This meant that the white ape's speed was just too fast for him to comprehend.

Yet, Gravis had felt something interesting while the white ape had been there. Gravis had felt the powerful lightning inside the white ape's body. If he so wanted, Gravis could have killed the white ape then and there.

Gravis smirked slightly.

"Don't do anything stupid," the Red King transmitted to Gravis. "Just for your info, the Empress has a water affinity."

The Red King said this to dissuade Gravis from killing the white ape. If Gravis believed that the Empress also had a lightning affinity, he might do something unexpected.

"I'm not some brainless brute," Gravis answered evenly. "Just because you can kill someone doesn't mean that you should do it. A good example would be our relationship right now."

The Red King wanted to groan, but he stopped himself. He didn't want to appear disrespectful while being on the Mountain of Pride.

"Also, what was that about betting your life?" Gravis asked.

The Red King wanted to huff but stopped himself for the same reason. "We are only allowed to bring beasts that can confidently win against beasts one level higher than them. Just being able to fight such a beast wouldn't be enough," the Red King explained.

"If I were to bring a beast that can barely win against another beast one level higher than them, I would have disrespected the Empress' orders. Thus, I would pay with my life."

Gravis lifted an eyebrow. "And you have no problem with putting your life in my hands?" Gravis asked.

The Red King transmitted a short chuckle but remained expressionless on the outside. "Our lives are intertwined right now. If I die, you die as well."

"What if I wanted to take my revenge due to your suppression?" Gravis asked.

"Who's the one pointlessly flaunting his power now?" the Red King transmitted with a sarcastic tone. "If you were such a beast, I wouldn't have taken you with me."

"What makes you so sure?" Gravis asked.

"Because of your confidence in your power," the Red King answered. "If you had no confidence in reaching my level, you would believe that you would never be able to realize your revenge. In that case, you might just sacrifice your life to take me down with you."

"Yet, you're sure that you will kill me in the future," the Red King transmitted. "In your mind, sacrificing your life to take out mine would be stupid. After all, you believe that you will become more powerful than me."

Gravis remained silent for some seconds.

"Pretty accurate," Gravis said after that.

After that, all conversation stopped between them since they had nothing to talk about anymore.

In a couple of seconds, all the beasts reached the top of the mountain, which, surprisingly, was flat. There was no peak or anything, and it almost looked like someone had cut off the upper third of the mountain.

The beasts landed at the edge of the plateau and split apart. The Kings flew to the front while the candidates remained behind them. The Red King had also told Gravis to just stay in the back.

Yet, Gravis paid more attention to something else.

Right now, Gravis' full attention was on the Empress, sitting on the other side of the mountain top.

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Chapter 452: The Empress

It was currently dusk, and the last light of the sun appeared behind the massive throne of the Empress. The seat itself was relatively small, only about two meters wide, but the throne itself stretched over 100 meters into the sky.

On top of this throne sat the Empress. She had a long, snake-like body with ocean-blue scales covering it. Her lower body had no legs, which wasn't surprising for such a snake-like body, but her upper body was completely different from what Gravis had expected.

The Empress had a very human-like upper body, which surprised him. Her upper body had two arms, shoulders, a waist, and a chest. Yet, in comparison to human women, she lacked the additional weight on the chest. That was probably because the additional weight would only serve as a hindrance in a fight.

Her face also looked similar to a human's, but she had no hair. Instead, she had some black spines going along her head, which stretched nearly all the way to her tail.

Gravis was so surprised about her appearance because a human body generally wasn't seen as very effective regarding combat. Yes, she had her two arms that could help her use weapons and tools, but they could be longer for combat efficiency. All in all, Gravis found several things that could be improved.

Yet, exactly that was what surprised him. Someone as powerful as the Empress should be able to see these deficiencies. So, why did she choose this particular body? Gravis saw no advantage in having a human-like upper body if it wasn't paired with the other strengths of a human, like powerful legs for acceleration.

A human-like upper body with a snake-like lower body created several problems in regards to speed and acceleration. Sure, a snake body was flexible, but if one weren't fast enough to make use of this flexibility, it would all be wasted.

'There must be a reason for her to choose this kind of human-like appearance,' Gravis thought. 'This can't be pure coincidence.'

Right now, the Empress had her eyes closed, but not for long. Soon after everyone stopped moving around, the Empress opened her snake-like eyes and looked upon her visitors.

WHOOOOOOM!

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Gravis felt an incredible feeling of pride wash over him, and it became incredibly hard for him to remain rational. His feelings told him that she was superior. His feelings told him that nothing could possibly kill such a powerful being.

WHOOOOM!

Gravis activated his Will-Aura but kept it only around his body. Like this, no one else would be able to know what he was doing.

'This was close,' Gravis thought with some nervousness. 'Her pride has nearly infected me. It almost made me believe that I would never be able to reach her level. Luckily, for once, my Will-Aura can fight against this feeling.'

Gravis' eyes narrowed.

'This is different from the inherent superiority of a beast. Her feeling of power and pride has manifested and can manipulate the world around her. This is probably the effect of the Law of Pride that she has comprehended,' Gravis thought.

Suddenly, the Empress smirked. She wasn't looking at anyone in particular, but Gravis felt like she was focusing entirely on him.

Gravis felt his insides shake a little. 'Has she found out that I can resist her? How?' he thought.

Yet, as he looked at his surroundings with his Spirit, he noticed something. Every beast had lowered their head a little and looked with shame onto the ground. Gravis was the only beast that didn't look down at the floor. Not only that, but Gravis' eyes were also narrowed.

Surprisingly, no other beast noticed Gravis' situation. Gravis guessed that they, including the white ape, were all concentrating on the Empress instead of each other.

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"Rise," the Empress said with a quiet voice that seemed to stretch over the entire world.

Immediately, all the beasts recovered and raised their heads. The pressure of pride vanished, and everything was back to normal again. It was almost like this moment had never happened. Only the white ape and Gravis remembered the moment while everyone else completely forgot the last couple of seconds.

Gravis watched the other beasts and noticed that they weren't different than before. Based on how they appeared, Gravis was rather sure that this situation had no impact on them. The Empress probably only wanted to play around and test her powers.

"23 level five Lords, 64 level four Lords, and 147 level three Lords," the Empress commented.

These were all the candidates that were present. Gravis had already known the numbers as soon as they had all gathered.

"Which level five Lord can fight a King?" the Empress asked.

Everyone remained silent for a couple of seconds.

The Empress seemed to have expected this. Theoretically, the power difference between a level five Lord and a level one King were two levels. Sadly, that only considered the power of the body. As soon as a beast became a King, they received a gift from the world, which increased their Battle-Strength immensely.

There might be beasts present that could fight two levels above themselves, but none of them dared to say that they could fight a King.

"Is there a level five Lord that can't fight a Half-Step King?" the Empress asked.

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A couple of seconds passed in silence.

"I can't," a beast shouted from the back. It was a grey wolf whose whole body shook in rage and fear. It had taken all of his power to say this.

At the front, one of the Kings felt his world crumble. This couldn't be real! This was a nightmare! He knew for a fact that his candidate could win against a Half-Step King! Why was his candidate lying!?

The King turned around and looked at the hateful eyes of his chosen candidate. The King lost his control and shouted. "Why are you lyi-"

SHING! SHING! BANG! BANG!

Two ice spears appeared out of nowhere and penetrated the wolf and the King. Then, their bodies froze, and they exploded into a shower of ice.

"And that's why I wouldn't have taken you if you didn't have confidence in your future," the Red King transmitted over to Gravis. "Because that could have been me."

Even though the Empress was much more powerful than anyone here, her power wasn't strong enough to intercept Voice Transmissions. To do that, one needed to be an Immortal, at least. That's why the Red King wasn't afraid of appearing disrespectful by talking with Gravis.

"I'm guessing that the wolf was forced into this scenario and wanted to take revenge?" Gravis transmitted back.

"Definitely," the Red King transmitted. "Some Kings want to receive the reward for finding a powerful beast and ignore the mindset of their candidate. All these beasts fulfill the Battle-Strength requirement, which was why this other King was so shocked when he heard the wolf's words. The wolf was obviously lying about his Battle-Strength."

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No other beast moved while they talked.

"This makes both of them unqualified," Gravis transmitted. "A participant that uses schemes to kill their opponent doesn't value true power while a King that doesn't notice such a flaw dug their own grave. Therefore, the Empress killed both of them, right?"

"Exactly," the Red King answered with a Voice Transmission.

After some more seconds in silence, the Empress continued. "All level five Lords go to the side together with their respective Kings. If there is no outstanding candidate among the other Lords, I will take you into consideration."

The level five Lords, as well as their respective Kings, flew over to the side of the mountain, away from everyone else. While all this was going on, Gravis had another question.

"What's a Half-Step King?" Gravis asked the Red King with another Voice Transmission.

"In terms of Realm, Half-Step Kings don't exist," the Red King answered. "As you know, a level one King can be considered as two levels stronger than a level five Lord. This leaves a full level unaccounted for. We refer to beasts that can fight on this level as Half-Step Kings. You are one of them."

Gravis took that in and realized that it made sense. He also realized that he should be able to fight someone on that level. After all, he was a level three Lord now.

After some seconds, all the level five Lords had flown to the side and were waiting for the Empress to call them.

Then, the Empress looked back at the gathered participants in the middle.

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"Every beast with the power of a Half-Step King will go to the other side, together with their Kings," the Empress said.

One had to pay attention to a specific fact right here. A level four Lord who was able to beat level five Lords easily didn't necessarily have a Half-Step King's power. It just meant that they were very powerful compared to level five Lords. A Half-Step King was an entire level higher.

All level three Lords stayed, while seven of the level four Lords walked to the side.

Yet, no one paid attention to these Lords because they were all focused on Gravis since he was also walking to the side.

The beasts weren't able to believe what they saw right now. Did this level three Lord really claim that he had the power of a Half-Step King? On top of that, this beast was the only participant that wasn't a Divine Beast!

A level three Lord Divine Beast that had the power of a Half-Step King was unheard of, but a normal beast claimed to be that powerful? What was happening!?

The whole mountain remained silent as Gravis walked over. No beast dared to say anything while in the presence of the Empress. After a while, Gravis stood together with the other level four Lords, who sent disdainful gazes towards Gravis. In their minds, Gravis was only another beast that tried to get its King killed.

Pack!

Yet, the sound of two feet hitting the stone surprised everyone.

That was because the Red King had taken his position in front of Gravis, which showed that he agreed with Gravis' claim that he was a Half-Step King.

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On top of that, the Red King smirked victoriously, something no other beast dared to do right now.

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Chapter 453: Opponents Chosen

None of the Kings were sure how to even react to this current situation. The Red King supported Gravis' claim of power? Yet, how was that even possible!? He was a level three Lord!

None of the Kings dared to say anything and just waited for the Empress' judgment on this matter.

Meanwhile, the Empress looked at the Red King and then at Gravis.

WHOOOM!

Her pride came out of her body and concentrated entirely on Gravis. None of the other beasts, except the white ape, noticed what the Empress was doing. The pride washed over Gravis with more power than before, but he had already experienced this. Without waiting another second, he released his Will-Aura to withstand the feeling of pride.

Yet, the feeling was many times stronger than before, and Gravis had to use the entirety of his concentration to keep his Will-Aura steady. His Will-Aura deformed into multiple shapes as the pride pressed into it.

Some seconds later, the feeling of pride became even more powerful, and Gravis had to grit his teeth. He wasn't willing to admit her superiority and accept her as his ruler.

The other beasts looked at Gravis and wondered why he looked so distressed right now. What was going on with him?

The power increased more, but just before Gravis' Will-Aura broke, it vanished. Of course, Gravis knew why that was. The Empress was only testing him.

After all of this had passed, the Empress showed an interested smirk. To her, it was incredibly interesting that a Lord was able to withstand so much of her pressure. She realized that Gravis had some peculiar techniques and powers. After all, the other Kings didn't even notice her pride, while he was able to withstand it. Of course, she hadn't used her full power.

"What is your name?" she asked Gravis.

The beasts almost couldn't believe what was happening. The Empress only asked the names of beasts she found worthy. She didn't even bother to learn the names of the Kings and only referred to them with their titles.

"Gravis," Gravis said directly with some spite in his voice. Withstanding the Empress' pressure felt to him like she was trying to suppress him, which he didn't like one bit.

The Red King felt a bit nervous when he heard Gravis' tone. This beast was even ready to show disrespect to the Empress! He only hoped that he would not be dragged into this mess.

Meanwhile, the other beasts almost went crazy. Gravis hadn't called the Empress as Empress and even sounded like a rebellious prisoner. Not even the beasts that were ready to die dared to be disrespectful towards the Empress. The feeling of the Empress' power gave the beasts the illusion that disrespecting her was worse than dying.

"Interesting," the Empress mused with a grin. It had been a while since someone had talked to her that way. Usually, she would just kill the offending beast. After all, if someone dared to disrespect her, it meant that they hadn't felt her power before. As soon as they felt her power, they wouldn't dare to disrespect her.

Yet, Gravis had felt her power and still dared to talk to her in this tone. Other Emperors on her level or above her level also acted like this, but they were Emperors. It was wholly different when a Lord did the same. The fact that Gravis managed to somewhat resist her Law of Pride earned him some respect in her eyes. After all, power was everything.

"Gravis," she said with a calm voice. For some reason, when Gravis heard his name spoken by her, his whole body shook. To him, it felt like the Empress' power had been fully released and pressed down on him. Yet, that feeling had nothing to do with the Empress.

It was just that when she spoke his name, his emotions and body finally realized that an impossibly powerful beast had taken note of him. Earlier, it had still felt like they were in two different worlds, but now, it felt like her power came into his world.

"Choose one of the seven beasts beside you to be your opponent," the Empress said. "If you win, you will become my mate."

At first, the Kings weren't happy when they heard that. After all, this wouldn't allow their candidates to prove themselves. Yet, when they remembered that Gravis would be able to fight three levels above himself, they understood the Empress' reasoning. If Gravis' claim proved to be true, it would be a waste of time for their candidates to even try to prove themselves. The Battle-Strength between the two parties couldn't even be compared.

"I will," Gravis said, "but I want to fight one of the level five Lords after that. These level four Lords aren't even a challenge," Gravis said evenly like it was obvious.

Nearly all the present beasts exploded in rage. This arrogant little level three Lord said that these outstanding contestants weren't even a challenge. Did this little shit's arrogance know no bounds!?

The Red King furrowed his brows. It wasn't that he thought that Gravis couldn't win against such a level five Lord. It was just that putting his life on the line like that felt kind of not-worth-it. Gravis wasn't ready to understand a new Law, so why would he put his life on the line like this?

Gravis also knew that he wasn't ready to understand a new Law yet, but he had something that needed tempering, which the Red King didn't know about: His Will-Aura.

The fight with the Golden Dragon had increased his Will-Aura tremendously. Right now, Gravis' Will-Aura was more powerful than ever before when compared to his Realm. With this more powerful Will-Aura, Gravis had already created a plan for some excellent tempering.

Right now, Gravis was too powerful for normal level five Lords. The only level five Lords that were a genuine challenge were these incredible candidates. As soon as he killed one of them, he wouldn't be able to temper himself anymore for a while. After all, the next level would be a King.

And that's where his new and improved Will-Aura came into play. As it stood right now, Gravis would be able to fight a King when he would reach the power of a level five Lord. Yet, Gravis didn't want that. He wanted to fight one when he was a level four Lord. For that, he needed to improve his Will-Aura even further.

After hearing Gravis' demand, the Empress grew more interested in him. It was already hard to believe that he could kill a powerful participant one level above him, but he even dared to go two levels above him?

The Empress was even a bit confused as she realized that Gravis wasn't ready to learn a new Law. Just like the Red King, the Empress was also able to tell when someone was about to understand a new Law. She wondered if Gravis knew about this.

Then, her eyes wandered to the Red King and inspected him. After some seconds, she concluded that the Red King would have told him already. This meant that Gravis was ready to bet his life anyway. 'Interesting,' she thought.

"Alright, I'll grant your wish," the Empress said, "but first, you need to win against your current opponent."

Gravis nodded and inspected the other level four Lords. They all seemed incredibly eager to fight him. They refused to believe that Gravis was so powerful, and they wanted to kick his teeth in for what he had said... and maybe kill him too.

"You," Gravis said as he pointed at a lion, "you will be my opponent."

The lion showed a malicious smirk while the others looked with envy at him. Gravis had chosen this lion because he didn't have any elemental affinity. This meant that his body was more powerful than usual and, therefore, had more power, which Gravis could consume. The more his lightning improved right now, the better his chances against the level five Lord after this.

The Empress looked at the lion and saw that it was rather big. It was about three-kilometers-long. Normally, she would make them move to a different area since her mountain was only so wide. Yet, since Gravis was rather small, she didn't see the need to make them move.

The mountain-top was around ten-kilometers-wide, and if two big beasts fought, the fight might become awkward due to the limited space. Yet, since Gravis was so small, it should work out.

"Everyone, move away from the middle. The two beasts will fight right here," the Empress ordered.

The beasts all moved to the side of the mountain, leaving a wide, open space in the middle. Gravis walked into the middle of the arena without paying the lion any attention. Meanwhile, the lion felt disrespected by the fact that Gravis wasn't even looking at him.

'I will enjoy tearing you limb from limb!' the lion thought with disdain and hate.

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Chapter 454: Unfair Advantage

The lion and Gravis stood in the middle of the mountain, merely looking at each other. The lion was absolutely gigantic compared to Gravis, and if Gravis wanted to look at the lion's face with his eyes, he would need to crane his neck quite a bit to look upwards. Yet, since he had his Spirit Sense, this was unnecessary.

"Hey," Gravis suddenly said, "want to see a trick?" he asked.

The lion simply looked at Gravis with disdain. "No," he said.

"Too bad, you're going to see it anyway," Gravis answered.

BZZZZZZ!

Suddenly, a powerful ball of lightning appeared in front of Gravis. Yet, just as quickly as it appeared, it vanished again. Right now, Gravis was not wearing his armor. He also didn't have his saber in his hands. Because of that, he appeared just like any other beast.

The lion was first shocked about the appearance of this powerful ball of lightning but grew even more shocked when it simply vanished. Where did the powerful lightning ball go? It looked around, but it couldn't see the ball anywhere.

The other level four Lords also hadn't noticed what had happened. Yet, the level five Lords and everyone more powerful than them had seen what had happened. Gravis had summoned some kind of long and sharp stick, which absorbed the lightning ball. Then, the sharp stick simply vanished again.

This sharp stick was Gravis' saber, obviously. He had created a Lightning Bomb with around 50% of his power. The lion's body was only around ten times as powerful as his, and a Lightning Crescent with 50% of his power was enough to kill it.

All the powerful beasts were surprised by this display, but one beast, in particular, was shocked beyond comparison. It almost couldn't believe what it had just seen.

Why was this beast so surprised?

It was because of Gravis' lightning. None of the other beasts were able to feel the peculiarity of Gravis' lightning, but it knew this lightning very well.

The shocked beast was the white ape. He almost couldn't believe it, but Gravis had just summoned Punishment Lightning! Their Empire had an area where Punishment Lightning gathered, and only Emperors were able to withstand this lightning.

The white ape had tried for many years to understand the Law of Punishment Lightning, but it hadn't managed to understand it. Yet, this mere level three Lord managed to summon the powerful lightning that the ape wasn't able to understand.

The white ape took a deep breath in shock, surprising the Empress. Usually, her Grand Elder never lost his calm. Yet, now, she noticed that he was incredibly distressed. She didn't have a lightning affinity, so she couldn't feel the peculiarity of the lightning.

"Why are you so distressed?" the Empress asked the white ape with a Voice Transmission.

"Empress," the white ape transmitted back with a shaky voice, "this was Punishment Lightning."

If the Empress hadn't had so many years of experience, her eyes would have widened. Yet, her shock was just as strong as the shock of the white ape. This level three Lord was able to summon Punishment Lightning? If she didn't trust her Grand Elder fully, she wouldn't have believed him.

Then, the Empress looked at Gravis with burning eyes. 'No wonder he's so confident in his power,' she thought. 'Punishment Lightning is incredibly powerful.'

Gravis hadn't met anyone that was able to understand his lightning in the middle world until today. He had comprehended the Punishment Lightning by fighting the lower Heaven, and for the lower world, Punishment Lightning basically didn't even exist.

Yet, the more powerful one became, the more normal extraordinary elements became. There had been no way to come into contact with this lightning in the lower world, but that wasn't true for the middle world. In this world, Punishment Lightning was a natural phenomenon and could, therefore, be comprehended by beasts.

Of course, only the most powerful Emperors were able to withstand the Punishment Lightning, and even fewer were able to comprehend it. Yet, there were some Emperors in this world that understood Punishment Lightning. Gravis was no longer the only one in the entire world that could use Punishment Lightning.

"You can start," the Empress said.

Gravis only smirked as he simply stood casually on his spot. When the lion saw that, it grew even angrier. This level three Lord was taking the lion way too lightly!

CRRRRRRR!

Suddenly, the legs of the lion changed shape, surprising Gravis. He hadn't seen a beast change their body like this yet. He wondered what was up with that.

The lion's legs became many times bigger while its torso shrunk a little. Now, Gravis realized what the lion was doing. 'Incredible,' he thought as he scratched his chin with a claw, 'the lion can increase the power of his legs by moving muscle mass from his torso to his legs. Is that a Law?'

It was a Law.

Nearly everything had a Law associated with it, and legs also had several Laws associated with them. By understanding such a Law, the lion was able to increase the power of his legs many times, which would increase his speed by a lot.

BANG!

A loud bang thundered throughout the surroundings as the lion shot forward with all its speed. It was even faster than an average level five Lord, which was incredible. Gravis could only push his speed to be over a level faster than him during his Lightning Transformation.

SHING!

Suddenly, the front-right claws of the lion grew to several times their size. On top of that, they became way harder and sharper.

These seven level four Lords were the strongest in their level. Every single one of them had comprehended two Laws. Even though the Golden Dragon had been at the same level as this lion, it wouldn't have had any chance to win.

The second Law that the lion had comprehended had something to do with its claws. It was able to increase their power and reach with this Law.

One Law increased its speed, while the other Law increased its power. This was an incredibly effective combination. No wonder the lion could fight two levels above itself.

Gravis had appeared relaxed the whole time, but he had never dropped his guard. He knew that these Lords were outstanding. Yet, even with this terrifying combination of Laws, the lion didn't even pose a small danger to Gravis.

Why was that?

The lion's speed was faster than Gravis.

The lion's attacking power would even be able to destroy Gravis' armor.

Yet, Gravis had an unfair advantage over beasts with higher Battle-Strength but a lower Realm. If there were a Realm like a Half-Step King, Gravis would find it much, much more difficult to fight an average beast in that level than this lion, who had the same power in theory.

The beasts looked with bated breath at the charging lion. Surely enough, the contestants were incredibly powerful. They believed fully that this lion was one of the most powerful level four Lords in existence.

They saw the lion swipe at Gravis, but suddenly, the lion became many times slower. Its speed had dropped by nearly 90%! Was the lion taking Gravis lightly? Why was it becoming slower?

Of course, this was Gravis' Will-Aura. Since he concentrated his Will-Aura onto the lion, the other beasts weren't able to feel it.

This was Gravis' unfair advantage.

When it came to beasts, only a level advantage would weaken the effect of his Will-Aura. The lion could have comprehended five additional Laws, and it wouldn't have made a difference to Gravis. In regards to beasts, Gravis' Will-Aura was the ultimate counter to Battle-Strength.

With humans, it would be different. After all, humans with incredible Battle-Strength also had incredibly powerful Will-Auras, which would be able to suppress Gravis' Will-Aura. Sadly, beasts didn't have this weapon.

The lion had no idea what was happening. It just felt some kind of incredible pressure pressing into its body, making it nearly impossible to move. Why was it suddenly this slow!?

The other beasts watched as Gravis easily jumped over the claw-swipe. Then, the sharp stick reappeared inside Gravis' hands. After that, Gravis simply swiped at the head of the lion.

BOOOOOOOOOOM!

A many-kilometers-wide explosion appeared, which completely consumed the lion's head. Additionally, some Kings hadn't been ready to protect their candidates, which resulted in some level three Lords dying to the explosion. Luckily, most of the Kings had been prepared to block the attack for their participants. Only nine level three Lords died to the Lightning Crescent.

The explosion vanished just as quickly as it appeared. The mountain was still fine since it was far beyond Gravis' ability to damage it, but the lion and the dead level three Lords had vanished. As soon as the lightning killed them, it consumed their corpses.

One of the shocked Kings saw a flying lightning bolt at the place where his candidate had been previously. He grew angry and swiped a claw at the lightning to destroy it.

Whooop!

Yet, contrary to expectation, the lightning bolt jumped upward, evading the claw. The King hadn't taken the lightning bolt seriously and had only casually swiped.

BZZZZ!

Then, all the lightning bolts flew into the middle of the arena and entered Gravis' body. Gravis hadn't expected that some bystanders would die because of his attack, but he didn't really mind. In Gravis' mind, since he didn't want to kill them, he simply shrugged it off as an accident. Beasts die. Shit happens.

By absorbing nine level three Lord Divine Beasts and absorbing one level four Lord Divine Beast, Gravis' lightning became much more powerful. Right now, his lightning was a little over three times as powerful as when he had just reached the Middle Unity Realm. One more level five King should be enough to reach the Late Unity Realm.

"He has killed my contestant!" one King shouted in rage, while others quickly followed up with more outrage.

Killing a contestant without the Empress' consent was a great disrespect to her!

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Chapter 455: Hawk

One King stepped forward into the arena, while five others followed him. All of these Kings had their candidates killed and wouldn't receive their rewards because of that. This made them incredibly angry since the reward was the only reason they were here to begin with.

The King who brought the best candidate received an incredible reward, while others still received a participation award. After all, they had brought powerful beasts to the Empire.

After the breeder had been chosen, all other candidates would join the Empire. None of the candidates were weak, and they were all valuable beasts. Because of that, all other Kings would still get something. Yet, if their candidate died, all of this wouldn't matter.

The remaining three Kings, who had their candidates killed, remained stationary and didn't say anything, as they simply watched.

"This beast has killed several candidates without your explicit consent, and therefore, has disre-"

"You dropped something," the Empress interrupted.

The King felt taken aback when the Empress interrupted him. He immediately took back his anger. "Yes, my Empress?" he asked deferentially.

SHING! BANG!

All six Kings exploded as ice spears penetrated their bodies. Only some icy dust remained of them.

"Your common sense," the Empress finished.

"Pfft."

Most of the Kings had expected that something like this would happen, but they were genuinely shocked when they heard the sound of suppressed laughter coming from Gravis. They all looked at him in shock since they couldn't believe what Gravis had just done.

The Empress had killed several Kings to show her power. She did this to intimidate every other King that harbored malice. What was so funny about that!? Did this beast's guts have no end? Was he not satisfied until the Empress killed him!?

The Empress looked with surprise at Gravis, while the white ape only smiled bitterly. He knew that the Empress wanted to make a joke, but he just didn't find it funny when some beasts were killed in the process. These had been valuable Kings.

The Empress smiled a bit, surprising every beast present. Had the Empress just smiled? They had never seen her smile before!

"Gravis," the Empress said, a different kind of pride radiating off of her. The other beasts couldn't evaluate this feeling of pride, but the white ape knew it. The Empress was proud of her own joke. The white ape wasn't a fan of that since he always tried to improve the Empress's image. After all, she needed to appear regal and unapproachable to everyone.

Gravis turned to the Empress. "Yes?" he asked evenly.

The beasts were surprised again by his even and casual reply. Meanwhile, the Red King only rolled his eyes in exasperation. This tone reminded him of all the times Gravis infuriated him.

The white ape and the Empress noticed the Red King's reaction and drew some conclusions from that. Judging by the Red King's reaction, the white ape knew that this was Gravis' normal conduct. He wasn't just putting on a show.

The white ape had thought that Gravis tried to appear intimidating and daring in front of the others, but the Red King's reaction showed him that this was just normal to him. After all, the Red King didn't seem surprised at all.

The Empress also realized this and started liking Gravis more. Contrary to expectation, she actually hated it when everyone was acting this subservient to her. Yet, there was nothing she could do against that. After all, by understanding the Law of Pride, she radiated pride all around her, which suppressed weaker beasts.

Gravis was a pleasant surprise to her.

"You're already more than qualified to become my mate. Do you still intend to fight one of the present level five Lords?" she asked.

"I'm not doing this to impress you," Gravis said, making the present beasts stop breathing. "I simply want to temper myself."

The Empress looked at Gravis with furrowed brows. "You know that you are not on the cusp of understanding a new Law?" she asked.

Gravis nodded. "I do," he said.

"Yet, you still want to put your life on the line?" she asked.

Gravis nodded again. "In my current situation, tempering seems like it's not worth the risk to you, but there is something valuable that I gain out of this," Gravis answered.

The Empress looked some more at Gravis and then gazed at the level five Lords standing to the side.

"Alright," she said. "If anyone of you level five Lords manages to kill him, I will continue the search for a mate, and I will choose one among you."

Immediately, all the level five Lords gazed with battle-intent at Gravis. If one of them managed to kill Gravis, they would all have a chance to become a breeder of the Empress. This was the dream of every beast present.

The gathered level five Lords released their innate superiority, and it hit Gravis. Gravis' mind went wild when he felt that. One singular level five Lord wasn't able to influence him in such a way, but when so many level five Lords released their superiority simultaneously, it was wholly different.

This feeling of suppression washed over Gravis, and he felt his mind go wild. Yet, among the chaos, his mind became more focused. In no time at all, Gravis felt an incredible feeling of battle-intent. By resisting this pressure, his battle-intent increased.

When the Empress saw Gravis' eyes, she smirked. This had been another test. When confronted with such a feeling of suppression, would Gravis take a step back or resist even harder? Apparently, the second scenario had happened.

"Choose your opponent, Gravis," the Empress said.

Without waiting a second, Gravis pointed at a red hawk, about 500-meters-tall. "You," he said.

The red hawk was surprised that it was chosen, but it quickly grew excited about the incoming fight. It was sure that Gravis had noticed its outstanding power!

Yet, the red hawk was surprised when it noticed that Gravis was no longer looking at it. Instead, Gravis had turned his head and looked at the Red King with disdain.

The Red King only groaned in annoyance. He knew that Gravis wanted to make an example out of this red hawk since it looked similar to him and also had a fire affinity.

The white ape and the Empress weren't surprised. They had already concluded that Gravis was not a fan of the Red King at all. The Red King had shown his annoyance towards Gravis multiple times, while Gravis had basically ignored him the whole time. This was not how a contestant normally acted towards their referrer.

Based on Gravis' casual, even, and disrespectful nature, they had already concluded that Gravis wasn't the biggest fan of the Red King. He was probably pretty angry at the Red King.

The red hawk noticed this and also realized what was going on. 'So, you chose me only because I look similar to the Red King!?' it thought in anger, its feathers standing up.

The Empress laughed a bit at this display, but she kept it hidden from everyone. Yet, the white ape noticed it anyway, which made him sigh. He already saw it coming.

Trying to manage Gravis in the future would be a massive pain in his ass.

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Chapter 456: Armor

The red hawk looked at Gravis with hatred and flew to the middle of the arena.

BANG!

It landed in the middle of the arena, its weight creating the sound of a loud explosion.

"Stop," the Empress said, making the red hawk's feathers stand up due to fear. Had it done something wrong? Was it about to die?

Gravis looked at the Empress with his standard, even look.

"The mountain is too small for your fight," the Empress said. "Use the arena beside the mountain to fight. The Lords can go to the edge of the mountain and watch. The Kings can watch from where they currently stand."

Whooooom!

The clouds beside the Mountain of Pride parted and revealed a seemingly shining crater. Gravis flew over and looked at the crater with surprise. This was the arena?

It was a round crater, which had a diameter of around 50 kilometers. It was absolutely gigantic. Gravis had never seen such a huge arena before. Additionally, Gravis noticed that the arena was made out of ore at the beginning Ranks of Law Comprehension. Even level five Kings wouldn't be able to damage it.

'That's truly an expensive arena,' Gravis thought with surprise. 'Creating such a huge arena out of Law Comprehension materials is something that probably only a natural world could produce. No human would waste so many powerful pieces of ore to build a mere arena.'

Beasts had nearly no use for ore, which was why they could build such wasteful buildings.

Whoom!

The red hawk flew towards the arena without waiting for another second, while Gravis looked at the ore with a complex expression.

The Empress and the white ape noticed Gravis' peculiar gaze. Only beasts with a metal affinity looked at the arena like this. Yet, Gravis had clearly shown that he had a lightning affinity. So, why did he look at the arena like that?

After some seconds, Gravis shook his head and sighed. Then, he also flew towards the arena. After Gravis left the mountain, the other Lords walked over to the edge of the mountain. Their senses weren't developed enough to see everything in detail. That's why they still needed to watch with their eyes if they wanted to keep track of the fight.

Meanwhile, the Kings simply remained at their positions. The fluctuations coming from the fight would be enough for them to know exactly what was going on. They didn't need to watch with their eyes.

Luckily, the Lords all had different sizes and didn't need to form a single line. The bigger Lords simply looked over the heads of the smaller ones.

Gravis landed in the middle of the arena, directly in front of the red hawk. They looked into each other's eyes with battle-intent.

"Hey," Gravis said, "wanna see a trick?" he asked.

The eyes of the red hawk narrowed. "Is it the same trick as before?" he asked.

"No, it's a different one," Gravis answered.

"Then go ahead," the red hawk said.

Then, Gravis pointed grandly to the sky. "Suit up!" he shouted.

Whooom!

Suddenly, Gravis' body was completely hidden behind an earthen-yellow suit of armor. Only his eyes could be seen behind the layer of yellow.

The red hawk blinked a couple of times out of surprise. How and why has his opponent changed color? Beasts could change their color when evolving, but the hawk hadn't seen someone change their color just like that.

Only after a couple of seconds did the red hawk notice that Gravis' shape had also changed. There were new spikes growing out of his tail, and his body showed a kind of metallic gloss. Then, the red hawk finally noticed that some kind of ore enveloped Gravis.

The other beasts nearly felt their eyes fall out of their head. Multiple things shocked them. First of all, the manipulation of ore and metal was only possible if a beast had a metal affinity. Additionally, they needed to understand a Law in regards to metal to do something like that.

On top of that, the ore-layer had appeared instantly. Where had it come from? None of the beasts knew how this was possible, including the white ape and the Empress. Something like this just didn't seem possible.

Lastly, the color of a beast represented their affinity. Right now, Gravis looked like a beast with an earth or metal affinity. Had he changed his affinity somehow?

One couldn't fault the beasts for misunderstanding something so obvious. The concept of armor didn't exist inside a natural world, which made every beast associate the color of other beasts with the elements. The fact that Gravis had a layer of yellow ore around him confused them to no end.

"Has he comprehended a Law regarding metal?" the Empress asked the white ape out of confusion.

The white ape remained silent for a bit. "Honestly, I don't know. Beasts rarely comprehend an Elemental Law different from their affinity. On top of that, he is only a Lord. Additionally, he shouldn't be able to

control ore like this, even if he comprehended a Law regarding metal. He lacks the metal affinity, which makes the manipulation of metal impossible," the white ape guessed.

"Yet," the Empress transmitted to the white ape, "he has achieved just that. How else would he have been able to fit the ore so perfectly around his body? This would be impossible without an affinity for metal."

The eyes of the white ape narrowed as he watched Gravis more closely. "Is he one of the legendary beasts with two elemental affinities?" he transmitted to the Empress.

The Empress took a deep breath. "I don't know, but he gives me one surprise after the other. It might actually be possible if it's him," she transmitted back.

"I think we should wait until the fight's over before we jump to conclusions," the white ape transmitted back.

The Empress nodded inconspicuously to the white ape.

Meanwhile, in the arena, the red hawk started taking Gravis very seriously. Gravis had just unveiled another one of his powers. Apparently, this meant that he didn't even need to use his full power to kill the lion. Gravis might actually have a chance to win this fight.

Yet, Gravis had said that this was tempering. This meant that he believed that his victory wasn't assured. Otherwise, this couldn't be considered tempering at all.

"Impressed?" Gravis asked, his helmet opening together with his mouth.

"How are you able to manipulate ore?" the red hawk asked with narrowed eyes.

"I'm not telling," Gravis answered with a grin.

"Do you also have a metal affinity on top of your lightning affinity?" the red hawk asked.

"Are you stupid?" Gravis asked back. "I just said that I'm not telling."

These words ruffled the red hawk's feathers as its anger rose. It had tried to gauge the truth of Gravis' powers by looking at his reaction, but he had shot back with a provocation.

BANG!

The red hawk took to the sky and started circling the arena. Gravis remained standing inside the arena as he waited for the red hawk to attack. The circling continued for a couple of seconds until the Empress finally signaled the start of the fight.

"Start," she transmitted to all beasts simultaneously.

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Chapter 457: Horrible Mistake

BRRRRRRR!

Five enormous balls of fire came out of the red hawk's mouth, the fire crackling loudly in the sky. Yet, instead of shooting directly at Gravis, the balls remained in the sky and only circled the red hawk's body. The five balls of fire followed the red hawk's movement perfectly and never hit it.

Gravis tried to scratch his chin but only felt metal. Unperturbed, he decided to just scratch the metal. 'This is definitely not normal,' Gravis thought. 'This is probably one of the Laws that the bird has understood.'

'The bird can keep creating fireballs and ready them. After a while, he can use them all freely, which allows him to create a wider spread or make a more powerful attack. On top of that, my armor is weak to fire.'

Fire was a huge counter against any kind of metal or ore. Breaking the ore or destroying it was harder than liquifying it. A level five Lord won't be able to break this armor normally, no matter what they did, except when they used fire.

One had to remember that Gravis used the heat generated from his lightning to forge the armor. This meant that his lightning generated enough heat to melt the ore. So, obviously, the fire of a level five Lord would also have enough heat to melt the ore.

On paper, the red hawk was one of the two worst opponents Gravis could have chosen. Another bad choice would have been a beast with an earth affinity. After all, it would be difficult for Gravis to break through their defense.

Yet, advantages came with disadvantages and vice versa. Looking at the situation from the outside, one would think that Gravis was at a huge disadvantage. Yet, that was only because they didn't know that he was a human.

Why did such attacks never appear when humans fought? They always shot their elements directly at the opponent without gathering them like this, nearly stupidly so. One would think that there was so much more potential to be found by fighting differently. Yet, that simply was not true.

Whoooooom! BANG! BANG!

Gravis activated his Will-Aura and deleted the will from the fireballs, which made them stop moving. Yet, the red hawk still continued flying, which made it fly right into two fireballs. Of course, the fireballs exploded right onto the red hawk's body.

"Hahahahahaha!" Gravis laughed loudly. One of the fireballs had hit the red hawk's face, creating quite the funny scene.

This was why it was impossible for humans to fight like this. As soon as they summoned their element, the will on it would simply get wiped out by the opponent's Will-Aura. When humans fought, they could only shoot their element forward at the opponent.

Meanwhile, the watching beasts felt like their eyes were falling out of their heads. What happened? How did the red hawk suddenly get hit by his own fireballs? Gravis didn't even move!

The Red King was also a bit surprised. He remembered that Gravis had managed to make the Golden Dragon's spears uncontrollable, but he hadn't thought that this ability could also be used like that. The

Red King realized that the ability to cancel the opponent's control of the elements was more dangerous than he had initially believed.

The Empress and the white ape were also taken aback. "Did he just cancel the control of his opponent's Law?" the Empress asked the white ape.

The white ape narrowed his eyes. "I think so, but that's only possible if he has comprehended the same Law."

The Empress furrowed her brows in an unsure expression. "Does that mean that he knows three Laws from three different elements? This doesn't seem possible, at least not on his current level," she transmitted back.

The white ape combed his beard with his right hand as he fell into thought. Two seconds later, the white ape stopped combing his beard as he found an answer. "I'm going to ask the Red King," he said to the Empress.

The eyes of the Empress also widened in realization. Right! Why hadn't they thought about that before?

"Can you please explain Gravis' powers?" the white ape transmitted to the Red King.

First, the Red King was a bit taken aback by the white ape suddenly contacting him like that, but then he sighed in annoyance. "I don't know much more than you," he confessed.

The eyes of the white ape furrowed. "How is that possible? Isn't he your candidate?" the white ape asked with annoyance.

The Red King sighed again. "Yes, but I wasn't able to learn much about why he has these weird powers. I only know what powers he has, but not why he has them or how they work."

The white ape still wasn't convinced. "You're stronger than him. Why didn't you just order him to tell you?" he asked.

The Red King sighed again, something he had been doing quite a lot. He felt like he was being humiliated right now. "I tried. I really, really tried. Yet, the little shit knows that I wouldn't kill him for that. Pain and injury also don't affect him at all. I threatened him so many times with his life, but he always called my bluff."

"It feels like it wasn't me forcing him to do stuff, but him doing whatever the fuck he wants and forcing me to adapt. That's why I don't know much about the workings of his powers. I only know what powers he has, and what Laws he has comprehended," the Red King finished ranting.

The white ape thought about this scenario for a bit and realized that what the Red King had said was most likely true. "What are the Laws he knows?" he asked.

"Gravis knows two Laws," the Red King transmitted, surprising the white ape. Only two? "One of them is his lightning while the other one seems to have something to do with metal."

"Do you know how he can manipulate the ore like this?" the white ape asked.

"He isn't manipulating the ore at all," the Red King answered, eliciting a skeptical look from the white ape. "He has some kind of space where he can store stuff. He used his lightning to form the ore into this shape and then summoned it around his body. I think he calls it armor."

This whole conversation had only taken around five seconds since voice transmissions were nearly instantaneous. The white ape still had more questions, but those had to wait since the red hawk had recovered. The fight was about to continue.

"RAAAAAA!" the red hawk shouted in rage and pain. The fireball that had hit its chest had incinerated all the feathers and created quite a big hole. The fireball that had hit his face had destroyed his beak, his feathers, and nearly all the skin and flesh on his head. His head looked like a bloody skull now.

A mortal beast would have died to these injuries, but Lords could withstand such an attack. Yet, these were still heavy injuries for a Lord. On top of that, the red hawk had completely lost his eyes. This was an important weapon for them since eyesight was still very relevant to Lords.

Yet, instead of being happy, Gravis looked annoyed. 'It's no danger in this state. It can feel my body's movement with its senses, but only as long as I stay in my physical form. As soon as I transform into lightning, it won't be able to feel me. Then, I can just close in and kill it directly.'

Gravis frowned. 'This isn't tempering.'

Sometimes, horrible mistakes happen. Usually, such a beast would have offered excellent tempering to Gravis. Yet, it had committed a mistake that would make it nearly helpless in front of Gravis.

Gravis really wasn't happy about this development. Yes, it had been quite funny to look at, but it had ruined his entire tempering experience.

"Hey," Gravis shouted at the mountain, "I want a different opponent. Mine's broken and is no longer a challenge."

All the beasts were shocked. The fight still wasn't over, and the red hawk should have more weapons at its disposal. How could he already say that the fight is over?

The Red King sighed again. "He's right," the Red King transmitted to the white ape. "Gravis has a weapon that makes him invisible to a beast's sense, except when they know what they're dealing with. And, right now, the hawk has no idea what's waiting for it. Gravis will go in without being noticed and kill it with one easy strike."

"The fight really is over," the Red King transmitted to the white ape.

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Chapter 458: Forgetfulness

"I don't agree to this!" the red hawk shouted with rage. "I can still fight, and an ability like this only works once against me!"

The white ape transmitted what the Red King had said to the Empress. She would need to be the one to make the decision in this matter.

The Empress remained silent for a bit as she went over all the things that the white ape had told her. The information came from the Red King, and it should be pretty reliable. Yet, should she really ask for a new opponent for him? In actuality, she just wanted to get this whole matter over and done with. Gravis had already proven himself more than worthy of being her mate.

After some seconds, the Empress sighed inconspicuously. A sigh was a show of emotion and frustration and shouldn't be seen by her subjects.

"Any beast ready to fight him, step forward," she announced, shocking the gathered beasts. The Empress had agreed? But the fight wasn't over!

"Empress," a King said as he stepped forward. "I honestly don't mean any disrespect, but the fight isn't over yet. Maybe the red hawk can still win."

This was the referrer of the red hawk. Some beasts became nervous when that King stepped forward, but, surprisingly, the Empress didn't kill him.

"This isn't some kind of trick from him to save his life," the Empress said. "If it were some sort of trick, he wouldn't ask for a different opponent. Even if it's hard to believe, he genuinely has already won."

The King that had stepped forward was a bit unwilling, but he stepped back and no longer said anything. His polite and deferential attitude had saved his life.

"I don't agree to this!" the red hawk shouted again. "I can still wi-"

SHING! BANG!

And the red hawk was no more. The Empress had overlooked the first time when the red hawk had objected. Yet, after seeing its King stepping forward and also being unsuccessful, it had dared to object again. A powerful beast needed to remain calm and had to have the ability to judge its current circumstances accurately. The red hawk, obviously, didn't have this quality.

"Any beast ready to fight him, step forward," the Empress announced again, glossing over the fact that she had just killed someone.

Meanwhile, the King of the red hawk grew incredibly frustrated. He wasn't frustrated because of himself or the Empress, but because of the red hawk. Its stupid hot-headedness had cost him his reward!

Surprisingly, not many level five Lords stepped forward. Gravis' display had intimidated a lot of them. He had shown one weird power after the other, and they were sure that he had more things and abilities stashed away. It was simply too risky to fight him.

Yet, some still stepped forward. They were confident in their abilities and knew that this weapon wouldn't work against them. Those beasts were beasts with no elemental affinity, earth affinity, metal affinity, and one with lightning affinity. They didn't rely on ranged attacks and could attack him without any issue.

The Empress nodded. "This time, I will choose an opponent," she said.

Gravis shrugged, his shoulders creating a metallic sound. "Sure," he commented.

There was still a little bit of surprise that the beasts felt due to Gravis' casual manner, but they had mostly gotten used to it by now.

"You," the Empress said as she pointed at a brown mammoth. This beast obviously had the earth affinity. On top of that, it was gigantic, with a body nearly five kilometers long.

The mammoth grew excited when it had been chosen. Then, it took flight and flew over to the arena.

BANG!

A mighty explosion could be heard as it landed on the ground. It looked at Gravis with bloodlust and battle-intent.

Gravis looked back with the same battle-intent. This fight would be way better and more challenging than the previous one. Finally, he could get some real tempering!

"Your weird ability won't work on me," the mammoth proclaimed with a booming voice.

Gravis smirked. "You're right, and that's good. I don't want to win. I want tempering!" he said.

The mammoth also smirked. "Good, because I will give you more tempering than you've expected. In fact, I'm going to temper you into a footprint of mine."

"That's the best you can come up with?" Gravis asked after some seconds.

The mammoth grew a bit angry when it heard Gravis' answer. "Listen here, you little-"

"Can we start now?" Gravis asked as he looked to the Mountain of Pride.

The mammoth grew angrier, but the Empress found Gravis quite entertaining. Usually, such powerful and talented beasts had quite a strong ego, which often resulted in a lot of posturing before a fight. Yet, Gravis didn't seem to be interested.

"Start!" the Empress transmitted to everyone.

Gravis flew backward for a bit and landed around ten kilometers away from the mammoth. The mammoth didn't care and simply stayed there. "Might as well. I need some space anyway to reach my full speed," it said.

"Oi, less talking, more fighting," Gravis shouted from a distance. Then, he clapped into his hands a couple of times, creating a metallic sound. "I've been waiting for this all day! So, hurry up!" he shouted.

The mammoth gritted its teeth and sneered. "Oh, I will enjoy squashing-"

"I just said less talking! Are you stupid!?" Gravis shouted from a distance.

Now, the mammoth was genuinely enraged. Its eyes became yellow as it gathered all its earth power. Then...

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

The mammoth started accelerating quickly, its footsteps thundering into the horizon. Its body's weight became heavier and heavier, and its hardness also increased manifold. Yet, its speed was still incredible. In fact, it seemed to be even faster than an average level five Lord.

Gravis realized that this was probably a Law related to speed. Otherwise, there would have been no way for a beast with the earth element to be that fast. Together with its affinity, this was a terrifying combination. It completely solved the weakness that the earth affinity had.

As Gravis watched the mammoth charging at him, he felt his blood boil. 'Finally! This is a proper fight!' he thought.

Gravis watched the mammoth coming closer, and he felt his mind going into overdrive to save his life from this charge. The mammoth's charge was too fast, and evading it wasn't an option. He, somehow, had to find a way to block it. Yet, even if he used his shield, the mammoth's incredible power would injure him severely.

This feeling of having one's life hanging by a thread was exciting to Gravis. He loved it when he didn't know how to survive but then managed to find a solution to his predicament, and the same thing happened this time too. Gravis found a solution to the mammoth's charge.

Yet, when he realized this solution, he felt his heart ache. 'Why?' he lamented.

Yes, he had a solution, but he didn't like that solution at all. In fact, he hated the solution.

The mammoth saw Gravis' expression and felt disdain towards him. Gravis had obviously realized that he couldn't withstand the mammoth's charge. The mammoth closed in quickly and was ready to attack Gravis.

BOOOOOOOOOOOM!

An incredibly loud, explosive noise resounded throughout the surroundings. It was absolutely deafening.

Gravis still stood in his earlier place, grieving over his lost tempering opportunity. The charge of the mammoth had also stopped. Yet, that stop hadn't been voluntary.

BOOOOM!

The mammoth collapsed as it lost consciousness while Gravis sighed.

What happened?

That was easy to explain. Right now, the mammoth and Gravis couldn't see each other. That was because something was in the way.

Between them was a massive chunk of ore inside the Nascent Nourishing Ranks. Gravis had a lot of powerful ore inside his Spirit Space, and he only needed to summon a random one of those in front of him to stop the mammoth's charge.

This powerful ore was impossibly heavy and hard. No Lord was even able to scratch it. So, when the mammoth charged into it, its tusks, skull, trunk, and neck broke. Luckily, it was still alive but barely.

The eyes of all the watching beasts opened widely. Where did that massive chunk of ore come from!? Also, was the fight already over?

"Hey, ehm," Gravis said with some embarrassment, "Can I have another opponent?" he asked quietly. "I will also put my ore away. I kind of... forgot about it. Is it okay if I just put it to the side?"

Gravis didn't sound confident at all. To the beasts, it seemed like his whole demeanor had changed. Wouldn't a beast that had managed to win against two such powerful opponents in succession brag about its power and shout in confidence? Why did Gravis look and sound like he had done something wrong?

"Oh yeah, right," the Red King transmitted to the white ape. "I forgot that he had a lot of powerful ore in his separate space. Yeah, if you want the fights to be somewhat fair, you should allow him to empty his separate space. Otherwise, none of these fights will be a challenge to him."

The white ape didn't answer the Red King as he was too busy coming to terms with the current situation. Had a level three Lord, who was not a Divine Beast, just won against two really outstanding level five Lord Divine Beasts?

"Pfft."

The sound of suppressed laughter could be heard coming from the Empress' direction, but she had isolated the sound as soon as she realized what had happened. So, only the white ape was able to hear her. After he heard that sound, he could only sigh.

Then, the white ape looked at the sky.

"What is even going on anymore?" he asked himself.

"This is not how this day was supposed to go."

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Chapter 459: Complex Threat

The beasts still weren't able to come to terms with the current situation. A normal level three Lord had easily won against two of the most outstanding level five Lords in existence. Those were beasts that could fight two levels above themselves!

"Move your ore away from the arena," the Empress commanded.

Gravis sighed in relief when he heard that. He was afraid that he wouldn't get another opponent after this last fight. In truth, Gravis even felt a bit guilty. He asked for two opponents, got two, and then messed up the fights. It was like he was a kid that had gotten two toys and quickly broke both of them.

Actually, he even felt a bit embarrassed by asking for a third one. He wasn't even sure if he had the shamelessness to ask for a fourth one if he broke this one too.

Only an insane person like Gravis could look at life and death battles like they were toys. Even the craziest beast would act superior and arrogant after finishing these two fights like this. Then, the beast would shout arrogantly into the surroundings and challenge every other beast for a fight. That's how the opponents were normally chosen.

Yet, Gravis looked at this whole thing differently. An enemy wasn't really an enemy to him. It was more like a beast that offered up their life to help him increase his power. That's why he felt bad about "wasting" two such opponents.

Gravis quickly flew out of the arena and summoned all his ore around 100 kilometers away from the arena. He needed the ore to be outside his Spirit Sense so that he wouldn't be able to get it while fighting.

BANG! BANG! BANG!

One huge chunk of ore after the other fell to the ground until there was a pile nearly 20-kilometers-tall. The sheer amount of ore stunned every beast present. How did he have so much ore!? Where did he even keep such a large amount?

Many of the beasts had already realized that Gravis could store stuff in some kind of separate space, but this was just way more than they had ever thought. How big does a separate space have to be to store that much stuff? Also, wasn't all this ore incredibly heavy?

Even the Red King was a bit surprised. He knew that Gravis had taken a lot of ore from his Kingdom, but he hadn't expected it to be that much. This was way more than he had anticipated.

He hadn't been there when Cynthia had followed Gravis to get his ore. After all, this so-called ore was only some kind of hard stone. For all he cared, Gravis could take as much as he wanted.

Gravis had so much ore due to the eventuality that his body could become way bigger in the future. He had no idea how much his body would grow while he went through the Nascent Nourishing Realm. So, to be on the safe side, Gravis had taken a lot of ore. After all, maybe he would become several-kilometers-tall in the future.

After seeing the mountain of ore and how Gravis had used some ore in his last fight, the beasts quickly realized something terrifying. Gravis might even be able to kill Kings with the help of so much powerful ore! He could simply drop these huge chunks onto their bodies. What could they even do against that?

'This is unfair,' many of the beasts thought in frustration. They could accept Gravis' weird abilities, but to use some kind of storage space like this just seemed to make any fights meaningless.

A situation like this never happened, no matter in which world one was. Natural worlds didn't have humans, which made the appearance of such a situation impossible since beasts didn't have a Spirit Space.

Worlds with humans in them also wouldn't have such a situation appear. That was because ore was a precious commodity, and without enough power, one wouldn't even be able to get their hands on such powerful ore, and if they somehow did, it wouldn't be that much.

Gravis had gotten his hand on ore that was way beyond his current level, and a huge amount at that, which broke the whole concept of balance in fights. One could debate if something like this could be considered as Gravis' personal power or external power.

On the one hand, he was only using his abilities to the maximum effect, which could be considered as his personal power. Yet, on the other hand, such a situation could only happen in these circumstances.

In the future, the circumstances would change, and Gravis would no longer have access to such powerful ore. After all, the next world wouldn't be another natural world. This meant that, in the next world, Gravis would lose this advantage.

If Gravis relied on that power right now, he would waste a ton of genuine tempering. Also, at some point, there simply wouldn't be any way to gather enough ore to kill his opponents. Could he kill the highest Heaven by dropping ore on it? That was very doubtful.

This meant that this whole ore-thing was a short-term, overpowered ability. One could also call it a cheat. By relying on it, Gravis could quickly reach higher Realms in no time at all, but he wouldn't have gotten the understanding and tempering during that time. So, relying on the ore was more damaging than helpful to Gravis, in his case.

Due to all these reasons, Gravis decided to keep his ore away from him while fighting.

"Grand Elder," Gravis transmitted as he looked at the Mountain of Pride.

The white ape was a bit surprised that Gravis talked to him. "Yes?" he asked.

"I would like to request something from you. It might seem senseless in the beginning, but it's very important to me," Gravis transmitted slowly and politely.

The white ape raised an eyebrow. "Go ahead," he answered.

"I would like you to promise me that if I take any of these ore-chunks in a fight, you will send an incredibly powerful beast to kill me directly," Gravis transmitted. Others shouldn't hear something like this.

The white ape was quite surprised about this request. This request raised multiple questions in the white ape's head. "Why would I need to send another beast?" he asked.

Gravis sighed when he heard that. This was the question that he dreaded. Obviously, the reason for that was that Gravis could kill the white ape with merely a thought. Yet, if Gravis exposed this power, the white ape might lose his rationality in fear and might kill him directly with a slap. After all, if the white ape took the initiative to attack, Gravis would die before he could even formulate a thought.

The reason why Gravis had asked the white ape and not the Empress was because of the white ape's lightning element. He had no idea if the Empress would go through with killing him if she made such a promise, but he could trust the white ape due to the lightning element.

Yet, the problem was the white ape's complex threat. It was like both of them had a bomb in their heads that could go off instantly if the other so chose to trigger it. Both of them could kill the other one before they could react. Whoever pulled the trigger first would kill the other person without them having a chance to react.

Gravis could kill the white ape with a thought, but the white ape could kill Gravis without him even being able to react due to the speed difference. So, Gravis was not entirely safe from the white ape, even if he had the ability to kill him in less than a second.

And what if Gravis killed the white ape? Then, the Empress would probably kill him. After all, this white ape was the Grand Elder and probably also had quite a good relationship with the Empress. If those two

had a fair fight, she probably wouldn't mind, but a Lord killing an Emperor like this couldn't be considered fair.

This whole thing was way too complicated for Gravis' liking. The end goal was to make it impossible for him to access the ore, even if he desperately wanted to.

Gravis thought for a bit, and the white ape got confused due to Gravis' sudden silence. His question seemed to have thrown Gravis into some distress. Yet, why would such a question throw Gravis into distress? It was his request, after all.

Gravis was unsure how to accomplish his goal right now.

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Chapter 460: Third Opponent

Gravis thought about this whole thing for a couple more seconds but couldn't find a long-term solution. Yet, he found a short-term solution.

"Sorry for disturbing you," Gravis transmitted to the white ape. "Forget what I said. I found a different solution. Thanks, anyway."

The white ape became more confused when he heard Gravis' answer. On top of that, it also felt a little weird to have a Lord speak to him this casually. Every Lord and King always talked to him in a very subservient manner. The white ape didn't know if he preferred this method of talking or the other.

"Okay," the white ape answered. "We can talk more later," he said.

"Sure," Gravis answered.

Then, Gravis simply flew back to the arena without talking to anyone else. His short-term solution was to ask the referrer of his future opponent to keep watch over the ore. They would surely accept when Gravis gave them the possibility to kill him and protect their candidate if he came close to the ore. After all, it was in their interest.

"I'm ready," Gravis shouted.

Most beasts still looked at the mountain of ore in surprise and shock. They had just never seen anything even remotely like this.

The Empress nodded and turned to the level five Lords. "Anyone willing to fight him, step forward," she said.

Silence.

No level five Lord was willing to take a step forward. Gravis' first display had already somewhat intimidated them, and the second one was obviously even worse. Right now, none of the candidates were ready to fight Gravis. There were simply just too many variables.

The Empress was quite happy when she saw that. She wanted this whole thing to be over as quickly as possible. There was no longer any reason to test Gravis, and if there were an even more outstanding beast, they would have already stepped forward and proven themselves.

Step!

One beast stepped forward, irritating the Empress. She had just thought that this whole thing was finally over, but a beast decided to show its guts now. Obviously, she was annoyed, but that didn't mean that she would suppress this whole event. It was just a bit more time that needed to be wasted.

A silver wolf stepped forward. He was "only" 500-meters-long, but his fur stood up like it had been electrified. Judging by his color, he was a beast with a lightning affinity.

The Empress released a hidden sigh. Hopefully, this time, nothing went wrong. She didn't know if she could allow Gravis to ask for a fourth opponent. At some point, this whole thing would just become ridiculous.

"I can't fight that one," Gravis suddenly shouted from the arena.

Now, the annoyance of the Empress reached new heights. Why could nothing go smoothly on this day!? As soon as Gravis got involved, this whole thing devolved into some weird one-beast-show starring Gravis. Could this still be considered a contest?

"What?" the Empress asked with obvious annoyance in her voice. She even sounded a bit threatening.

Gravis scratched his metallic cheek in embarrassment. "Well, how do I put this?" Gravis said with embarrassment. "Beasts with a lightning affinity aren't my opponents," he said.

The beasts were surprised again when they heard that. How could Gravis know that this beast wasn't even his opponent if he hadn't even seen anything of the beast's power?

"How can you know that?" the Empress asked with more annoyance. Watching Gravis enrage others was fun, but it stopped being fun as soon as it involved her.

Gravis still had an embarrassed smile on his face. "I kind of... don't want to explain why," Gravis said, surprising the beasts even more. Being casual was one thing, but refusing to answer the Empress' question was a whole different level.

The Empress was a little taken aback when she heard that.

"How about I show you?" Gravis said suddenly before the Empress could react. Then, he pointed at the wolf while still staying in the arena.

The beasts had no idea what Gravis was doing. Why was he pointing at his opponent from that far away?

"Stop! Stop! I won't fight you anymore!" the wolf suddenly shouted in genuine panic and terror. Then, he quickly stepped back and even buried himself in the sea of other level five Lords behind him. It was like he was trying to get as far away from Gravis as possible.

That the beasts were shocked didn't need to be described or explained. It happened so often on this day that it already became boring.

The white ape and the Empress were also surprised. They had seen the genuine battle-intent inside the wolf's eyes. He, obviously, had been ready to put his life on the line. Yet, as soon as Gravis pointed at him, his battle-intent immediately transformed into genuine terror.

A level five Lord was too weak to fake something like this in front of two Emperors. Emperors had far superior senses and could see the tells and symptoms of a lie easily. One first needed to become as powerful as them to lie to them successfully.

Because of that, they realized that the wolf felt genuine terror as soon as Gravis pointed at him. What could have made him so afraid so suddenly?

Of course, Gravis simply made the lightning inside the wolf go berserk. He moved it around a bit inside his body and burned some unimportant things, which could be easily regenerated. The feeling of losing control of one's power was terrifying to everyone. Such a feeling was something that only appeared in nightmares.

After some seconds, the Empress turned to Gravis again. "What did you do?" she asked. Her annoyance had disappeared and was replaced with curiosity.

Gravis scratched his cheek again. "I made his lightning go out of control," he said. Gravis had to tell them something. After all, they could just force the wolf to answer, who obviously knew what had happened. As long as Gravis didn't tell them that it also worked on Emperors, everything should be fine.

The Empress and the white ape were surprised when they heard that. Was something like that even possible? How would that even work? The lightning didn't even leave the wolf's body! One had to realize that not even the white ape was able to feel the lightning inside the wolf's body. It was completely hidden inside of him.

So, how was it possible that Gravis felt the lightning? Even more, how was it possible to control it like that!?

The Empress looked at the wolf, who froze immediately as he saw the Empress looking at him. "Is that true?" she asked.

The wolf quickly nodded his head. "Yes," he whimpered. He had seen how the Empress killed even Kings, and he knew that if he did anything wrong, she would also kill him.

The Empress was a bit taken aback when the wolf confirmed it. Something like this just didn't seem possible. Why were all of Gravis' powers so weird!?

"It's the truth," the Red King suddenly said. "Gravis can control the lightning of every beast and make it explode. As long as a beast has the lightning affinity, he can kill them with only a thought."

Then, the Red King looked at the white ape.

'No, he wouldn't!' Gravis thought in terror.

"No matter how powerful the beast is," the Red King finished.

The white ape's eyes widened in realization.