

Lightning Is the Only Way

Chapter 9: This Feeling Again...

Gravis' next opponent was a dark humanoid shadow with a short sword. It was slower and weaker than him. Yet, it was challenging for Gravis to defeat it since it was incredibly cunning and kept on surprising him. This was the first fight where Gravis could not sit back and plan out his strategy. Every time he thought he saw an opening, the shadow countered immediately as if it had planned everything.

Gravis received multiple cuts across his body. If he hadn't had tempered organs and blood, he would have already bled out. Luckily, tempered organs and blood substantially increase the body's recovery, especially when nothing else was tempered. A stronger body needs more energy and nutrients to heal. In this case, his lower cultivation level was an advantage. Though, if he had tempered skin, the shadow wouldn't even be able to scratch him.

After a while, Gravis finally realized that planning and strategizing would only make him lose. In the end, Gravis decided to grip the shadow's sword with his hand and slashed him with his saber. The shadow's sword cut Gravis' hand to the bone. Luckily, the plan worked, and the shadow died. This was another essential skill for survival: Trading injuries to kill your opponent.

Gravis' hand would need at least a day to become usable again. So, he went into the next fights with just one hand.

The next opponent was a cheetah. Its speed surpassed Gravis, but everything else was weaker. With the experience of killing the mountain lion, the cheetah was quickly defeated. That he could only use a single hand didn't change the outcome.

The next opponent proved problematic. It was a rhinoceros. It had heavy armor, and in a straight line, it outsped Gravis. Luckily, with the experience of fighting the tortoise, he quickly noticed that the rhinoceros also had issues with turning. The fight took a long time, as Gravis could only use a single hand to swing his saber, and the rhinoceros's armor was thick. After some hours, Gravis got the idea to stick his saber up the rhinoceros's bum. It felt weird, but this was definitely the best way since the rhinoceros slowed considerably and bled profusely. After some time, it finally died.

There was nothing that stood out with the next two enemies, and Gravis quickly overpowered them. After those, he received his food and water again. This time, the food was a living fawn. Gravis finished the deed as humanely as possible and ate some rhinoceros meat.

Gravis noticed a pattern with the enemies. All enemies only had one or two strong points that outclassed him, but at least one major weak point to exploit. This practical test was probably there for getting the research assistants used to fighting different kinds of opponents, and to quickly spot weaknesses.

Like this, a couple more cycles of fighting and resting passed. Gravis got the hang of things, and with his added experience and healed hand, he overpowered everything. He did not know how much time had passed, but it had to have been at least a couple of weeks. With every passing cycle, two additional fights were added before the next rest period.

Gravis slashed his saber and cleanly cleaved the giant toad in two. He picked it up and threw it onto his corpse mountain, which had grown to an impressive size. "Toad tastes like shit," he nonchalantly commented. He had become used to killing by now, as Gravis accepted his situation. Only more strength could help him. He calmly waited for his next opponent.

The purple light appeared again, but this time, it flowed over the cave, like a wave. Gravis narrowed his eyes. 'This is probably another environmental challenge,' he thought. True to his word, the air began to whirl and quickly took up speed. After some time, Gravis had problems keeping his eyes open. The wind soon grew into a storm, and finally into a tornado. If he didn't do something, things would get ugly, so he stabbed his saber into the ground.

CLANK!

The saber bounced off without even leaving a scratch, and Gravis frowned. "Shit!"

The tornado grew more powerful, and Gravis could not hold himself on the ground anymore. He began to whirl through the air furiously. He could still breathe, but it was growing more difficult.

THOMP!

Pain shot through his whole body, as the storm smashed him into a wall. Fortunately, he only broke his shoulder. Unfortunately, the storm hadn't ended yet. As he continued flying through the air, he tried to keep watch on any walls coming his way.

THOMP!

While he looked at the closest walls and ceiling, he neglected to look at his surroundings. One of the corpses of his corpse mountain slammed into him. Luckily, this

time, nothing broke, and he only received a couple of bruises. With all the pain and the stress, he forgot about the corpses. He looked around and noticed all the bodies whirling through the air. This made things even harder, and it surely didn't help that he was quickly approaching another wall.

He relaxed his body and tried to minimize the impact by rolling. The roll was awkward and still injured him, but it was only a minor injury. As he neared another wall, Gravis raised his arms and 'parried' a flying corpse, using its momentum to his advantage. This time, the impact on the wall was even easier to handle.

Gravis continued to parry the corpses, and also managed to get better at mitigating wall-hits. After some minutes, he calmed down as he finally got the hang of it. He also didn't receive any more injuries. Additionally, he also started predicting when corpses or walls hit him. It seemed like he could feel the rhythm of the storm. In his eyes, the storm grew increasingly more predictable.

Soon, he didn't even need to look at the corpses to know when they were coming. He just felt it. It was like the storm was telling him. Gravis furrowed his brows. This felt very similar to the time when he was underwater.

Just like last time, he slowly lost the sensation of the wind surrounding him. He was still flying through the air, but it didn't pose any danger to him anymore. Gravis felt more and more as if he were standing still, and everything else simply circled around him. Corpses stopped hitting him, and he didn't smash into any more walls from then on. His body also stopped spinning, and he had no more problems staying upright inside the storm.

He began to slow down, and at some point, he managed to stand stationary in the air, the storm and the corpses furiously whirling around him. "It's this strange feeling again. It's like I am part of the storm." Gravis looked around and watched the chaos unfold around him. Inside, he was calm and started to move around the air like he was flying.

After some minutes of flying around, Gravis noticed that there was no eye in the storm. The tornado whirled even in its middle, probably so that no one could bypass this challenge. Gravis slowly descended, and his feet hit the ground. He looked up and saw that most of the corpses were already torn into multiple pieces by now. A mist of blood filled the cave, whirling around and scraping the walls. This was probably the reason why the stones in the cave were red.

Gravis plucked some pieces of fur from the storm like they were apples, and wiped down all the blood on his body. According to the pattern of the cycles, there would be one last fight after the storm. Additionally, he also had a broken shoulder, though he wasn't really worried about that. Every enemy seemed to be on the same level in this

cave, just with different strengths and weaknesses. Gravis had no problems with defeating them anymore.

After about an hour, the storm calmed down. Blood and pieces of corpses rained onto the cave and Gravis. The biggest piece was only 10 centimeters long.

THUNK!

Well, except that one. Gravis looked at the bloody tortoiseshell. This thing was still in one piece, surprisingly. It seemed to be even harder than he initially thought.

When all the 'rain' settled, the purple light appeared again. When Gravis saw what appeared this time, he narrowed his eyes. 'This might be a problem.'

Gravis was looking at a man in his thirties. The man held a longsword in his hands as he scanned the cave. When he spotted Gravis, the man also narrowed his eyes.

This fight should've been easy for the man. He would only need to kill a newbie without tempered skin, bones, or muscles. Before he came here, he wasn't worried. But when he looked around the blood-drenched cave and noticed all the corpse pieces, that thought quickly changed. What happened here?

When he spotted Gravis, all the hair on his neck stood up. He saw a youngster, thoroughly drenched in blood. His long hair stuck to his face, and through it, the man could see two intense eyes staring into his own. Right now, the man was sure that this fight would not be as easy as he thought. Was this kid a monster?

Gravis waited for the man to do something, but nothing happened after five seconds, so Gravis took a step towards the man.

"As per the rules of the contract, enforced by this array formation, I am required to inform you of some things," the man loudly shouted. He sounded imposing, but that was only a front. When Gravis took that step, the man panicked and tried to win some time to regain his bearings. Seeing that Gravis had stopped, the man released a hidden sigh of relief and continued, "I am your last challenge!"

Gravis narrowed his eyes further, but inside, he grew excited. Finally, this hell would end!

