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Meanwhile, the cursed Apelings were already in position, moving with practiced silence. Every member of the cursed clan had this formation drilled into them from a young age, a formation that truly showed why they were called the cursed apeling clan.

Garrock held a shield nearly his own size in one hand and a heavy axe in the other, his posture unwavering and focused as he took the lead. Just behind him, Okon held her whip loosely at her side, coiled but poised like a snake ready to strike. Kuro, constantly shifting his weight from side to side, handled his twin daggers with dexterity, each one flashing as he sized up the Apeling students.

As the announcer's voice faded, a tense silence blanketed the arena. Both teams stood ready, like predators eyeing their prey.

Across from them, the Apeling students gathered their energy, forming a united front. Torrent stood in the center, flanked by Ndidi, whose fingers crackled with wind energy, and Aduke, her eyes glowing as nature magic surged through her, roots and vines already coiling around her fingers. Torrent nodded to his teammates, an unspoken agreement passing between them: they would make this fight count. They would not go down easy.

With a yell, Torrent slammed his hands together, sending a wave of water surging toward the cursed Apelings, aiming to break their formation early. The cursed Terra Apeling barely shifted, raising his massive shield in a fluid, almost relaxed motion. The wave split around him, his earthen armor deflecting the impact as if the water was nothing more than a gentle breeze. His steady, piercing gaze met Torrent's, sending a chill down the younger Apeling's spine.

"Kuro, now!" Garrock barked, his voice like thunder.

Kuro moved without hesitation, darting forward with a speed that left barely a blur. He closed the gap between himself and Ndidi in seconds, daggers flashing in a deadly arc. Ndidi twisted to avoid the strikes, but Kuro's movements were erratic and unpredictable, each lunge and feint keeping him on his toes. Ndidi barely had time to block before Kuro's dagger slashed a shallow cut across his arm, blood staining his sleeve.

Torrent's eyes flashed as he saw his teammate struggling. He flicked his fingers, and water rose from the arena floor, spiraling toward Kuro with a snap. Kuro dodged to the side, but Torrent anticipated his movement, redirecting the water in midair and forcing Kuro to leap back. The cursed Apeling let out a low growl, his smile gone as he adjusted, now watching Torrent's every move with a predator's intensity.

Okon's eyes glinted as she watched Aduke's vines fail against Garrock. She seized her opening, her whip snapping forward in a perfect arc to catch Aduke's ankle. She jerked back with practiced ease, sending Aduke crashing to the ground, roots and dirt scattering around her. Before Aduke could react, Okon was on her, her whip's sharp tip slicing through Aduke's thigh, leaving a bloody trail in its wake.

"Aduke!" Torrent shouted, directing a torrent of water toward Okon, but Okon merely stepped back with a cruel smile, letting Garrock's hulking form take the brunt of the attack. The water barely fazed him, glancing off his earthen armor as he advanced on Torrent with grim inevitability.

In response, Aduke gritted her teeth and called up a forest of thorned roots that exploded from the ground beneath Garrock. They wrapped around his ankles, the thorns biting into his skin, drawing fresh blood. Garrock's face twisted in pain, but he twisted his body, using the momentum to snap the roots, ignoring the blood dripping from his legs. He lifted his axe, now with a wild, frenzied look, and swung it toward Aduke in a sweeping arc that nearly took her head off as she ducked just in time.

This drew his attention away from Torrent, who, with a green flash, transformed into a wyvern and swung his tail at Garrock. Garrock tried to merge with the earth, but the tail moved too quickly.

At the last moment, he was saved by Okon, whose whip wrapped around Torrent's tail. Okon dug her feet into the ground as she pulled hard.

Aduke heard Ndidi's voice shouting, "Cover me!" She saw Ndidi being held back by Kuro. Transforming into a flaming lion, Aduke unleashed a breath of fire at Kuro, who swiftly retreated.

Ndidi turned his focus to Okon, who was locked in a struggle of strength with Torrent. He conjured a wind blade spell to throw at Torrent, but the ground beneath him erupted as Garrock, who had merged with the earth, emerged below and launched him into the sky.

The wind blade Ndidi had prepared missed its target as he had no time to aim properly. Now airborne, Ndidi found himself falling, with Garrock waiting below, axe and shield ready.

Midair, Ndidi transformed into a bird, flapping his wings to rise higher, hoping to avoid Garrock's trap. Suddenly, he noticed a wet drop on his feathers.

Looking to see if it was somehow raining, Ndidi realized that Okon, who was supposed to be held by Torrent, was now free—and her target was him.

The whip in Okon's hand shimmered blue as it gathered water elementals around her, which soon turned into a mist. Ndidi's vision clouded, and he narrowly dodged a sudden lash of the whip aimed directly at him.

Aduke had charged at Okon earlier, her paws leaving scorched marks on the ground as she sprinted toward him. Kuro's eyes locked onto her, and for a moment, the world seemed to slow as he assessed her speed. He darted to the side just as Aduke unleashed another fiery breath, the flames licking the air where he had been only moments before. But Kuro's focus remained unbroken as he darted in and out of her reach, his daggers flashing.

The next thing Aduke knew, she was collapsing to the ground, her limbs numb and unresponsive. She couldn't stand—Kuro had severed her hamstring, immobilizing her and leaving her unable to get Torrent off Okon. This gave Okon the opportunity to conjure the mist.

Torrent's wyvern form faltered as he watched Aduke fall, her legs limp from Kuro's swift, ruthless attack. Realization struck him, and a surge of anger flared in his chest. His eyes narrowed, and with a guttural roar, he twisted midair, releasing a powerful, spiraling torrent of water aimed directly at Kuro, who now stood smirking over Aduke's fallen form.

Kuro dodged with a swift roll, but Torrent anticipated the movement, redirecting the water in a serpentine motion. The torrent crashed into Kuro's side, sending him skidding across the arena floor. For a brief moment, Torrent thought he had gained the upper hand. But Okon's mist was thickening, swirling around the battlefield and shrouding the cursed Apelings in an opaque haze that distorted shapes and sounds. The mist grew denser, making it nearly impossible for Torrent to distinguish friend from foe.

High above, Ndidi struggled. In his bird form, he flapped frantically to escape the mist's reach, but the thick fog clung to him, dampening his feathers and weighing him down. The air grew colder, heavier, as Okon manipulated the water element, her eerie silhouette visible through the mist. Ndidi felt a chill as her whip cracked through the fog, narrowly missing him as he twisted and dodged.

"Torrent!" Ndidi called out, desperation in his voice. He couldn't maintain his flight much longer, not with Okon targeting him from below.

But Torrent was already moving, his focus shifting to the source of the mist. He narrowed his gaze, trying to make out Okon's silhouette through the haze. He knew that if he didn't disable her, she would keep them disoriented, picking them off one by one.

Drawing on the increased water element, Torrent gathered a massive spell of hardened water. The spell drained his mana heavily as he dove down, cutting through the mist toward her.

Okon sensed the attack and turned just in time to dodge, but Torrent's spear struck close enough to disrupt her concentration. The mist began to thin as her hold on the water element weakened, and Torrent seized his chance. With a powerful snap of his wings, he dispersed the remaining mist, finally clearing the battlefield.

The arena came back into focus. Garrock, waiting below, saw Torrent's opening and lunged, swinging his massive axe upward to intercept him. Torrent couldn't dodge in time, and one of his wings was severed, sending him spiraling toward the ground.

As he fell, he shifted back into his Apeling form, clutching his shoulder. Horror struck him as he watched Garrock, like a charging bull, positioning his shield to slam into him once he came within range.

Torrent braced himself, closing his eyes in anticipation of the impact as he tumbled toward the ground. But then, looking up, he saw Ndidi swoop down, diving low and fast, his talons glowing with swirling wind energy. With a swift strike, Ndidi slashed at Garrock's face, creating a brief but vital distraction that allowed Torrent to regain his footing. Garrock swung wildly, trying to catch Ndidi, but the bird was too quick, darting in and out with precise strikes.

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Aduke, covered in a green healing glow, was trying to mend her severed hamstring, but the process was slow. Struggling through the pain, she dug her claws into the earth. Drawing upon the last of her strength, she summoned a wave of thorned vines that erupted from the ground, wrapping around Garrock's legs and immobilizing him momentarily. She gritted her teeth as she fought to maintain her focus, her limbs still unresponsive but her will unbroken.

Garrock let out a furious roar as the thorned vines twisted tighter around his legs, drawing fresh blood that ran down his stone-like skin. His body bulged with raw power as he strained against the restraints, and Torrent, struggling to his feet, could see that Garrock was quickly adapting, finding weaknesses in the vines to tear through.

"Not so fast," Aduke murmured through gritted teeth, her voice a mix of exhaustion and defiance. She pushed her energy into the vines, thickening them with layers of thorned roots, trying to keep Garrock immobilized just a little longer. This made her transform back to her ape-like form.

Okon, observing the battlefield with calculating eyes, quickly recognized the students' attempt to buy time. A cold smirk crossed her face as she lifted her whip, water gathering around it, forming sharp, ice-like barbs along its length. She turned her focus to Aduke, seeing her weakened state as an opening. With a flick of her wrist, Okon sent the whip cracking forward, the water-coated weapon snaking toward Aduke's arms.

Aduke, unable to dodge in time, cried out as the whip wrapped around her wrist, slicing into her skin. The pain made her grip on the vines falter, and Garrock seized the chance. With a powerful burst of strength, he tore through the last of the roots, breaking free with a mighty stomp that shook the arena floor.

"Torrent!" Aduke shouted, struggling to pull the whip free. She could see Garrock charging toward Torrent, his axe raised for a devastating swing.

Torrent's eyes flashed with determination, despite his injuries. He lifted his hand, summoning a torrent of water that spiraled up around him like a shield. But Garrock, already anticipating the move, adjusted his footing and swung low, his axe smashing through the watery barrier with brutal force.

Before Torrent could react, Garrock slammed his shield forward, the impact knocking Torrent back into the arena wall. Torrent gasped, struggling to rise as pain radiated through his body.

Meanwhile, Kuro reappeared behind Ndidi, who was still in his bird form, focusing on keeping Garrock at bay. With an eerie silence, Kuro's dagger flashed, aiming for a swift strike to Ndidi's wings. The blade caught Ndidi's side, forcing him to revert to his Apeling form, clutching his injured wing-turned-shoulder as he fell to one knee.

Askue found herself able to move looked over at her teammates. She could feel the weight of defeat creeping in, but a fire sparked in her eyes. She refused to let this be the end. Summoning a last surge of strength, she reached into the earth once more, summoning the last remnants of her magic to create a barrier of thorned roots around herself and her team, buying them precious seconds to regroup.

"T-Torrent...Ndidi..." Aduke's voice wavered, but her resolve was unbreakable. "We're not done yet."

The cursed clan paused, a smug confidence in their stance, but Aduke could see their breathing had grown heavier. They had pushed themselves as well, though they hid it well. A glimmer of hope sparked within her.

"On my mark..." Aduke whispered, locking eyes with her teammates.

As the barrier of thorns began to dissolve, Torrent and Ndidi understood her intent without a word. This could be their final chance. The moment the last vine slipped away, Aduke let out a fierce, defiant roar, launching her remaining vines toward Garrock and Okon in a desperate assault.

In that split second, Torrent summoned a fierce wave, aiming it directly at Kuro, while Ndidi, mustering his last reserves, conjured a whirling cyclone, pushing the cursed clan back. The arena exploded into chaos—a tempest of water, wind, and thorned vines whipped through the air, blinding the cursed Apelings in a frenzy of elemental power.

Torrent's water surged forward in a spiraling vortex, a powerful column designed to snare Kuro, forcing him into a vulnerable position. The torrent moved with a life of its own, twisting and curling, intent on tracking Kuro's every move.

But Kuro, ever the elusive predator, narrowed his eyes, sensing the attack's rhythm. Rather than evade outright, he let the water draw near, gauging its flow. In a single, decisive movement, he drove his daggers into the ground, then pivoted off them, vaulting over the spiraling wave with impossible grace.

Torrent, anticipating Kuro's escape, tried to redirect the water mid-air, but Kuro was faster. He landed lightly atop a stone pillar summoned by Garrock, his dagger slicing downward in a quick, slicing motion. Dust and pebbles cascaded from the pillar, blinding Torrent momentarily. When Torrent cleared his vision, Kuro had vanished, leaving him dazed and vulnerable.

Meanwhile, Ndidi unleashed a fierce cyclone, whipping the sand and grit into a blinding storm that engulfed the arena. The howling winds disoriented the Apelings, giving Torrent and Aduke a chance to reposition. It was both a barrier and an attack, a swirling fortress of wind.

But Garrock met the cyclone head-on. With a roar, he thrust himself upward on a stone pillar, breaking it apart mid-flight as the pieces clung to his frame, enlarging him further. He raised his massive shield and drove it into the ground with a thunderous slam, sending a shockwave through the earth. The cyclone faltered, its winds scattering as the ground trembled. Without hesitation, Garrock charged through the storm's remnants, his massive feet leaving deep prints in the sand as he barreled straight for Ndidi.

Garrock swung his shield ahead of him, deflecting stray gusts with ease. Ndidi, caught off guard by his sheer force, scrambled backward, trying to regain his footing.

Aduke, seeing her allies struggle, knew she had to act quickly. She summoned her deepest reserves, commanding a dense web of thorned vines to surge toward Garrock and Okon, aiming to trap them long enough for her team to regroup. The barbed tendrils raced forward, twisting and branching to box in her opponents with razor-sharp precision.

Okon's eyes gleamed as she understood Aduke's intent. She stepped forward, her whip shimmering with an icy blue energy as she channeled the remnants of Torrent's water attack. With a flick of her wrist, Okon unleashed a blast of freezing mist, coating the vines in a layer of frost. The moisture hardened instantly, freezing Aduke's vines into brittle, fragile strands.

Seeing his chance, Garrock stomped on the frozen vines, shattering them into fragments. He swept his massive axe in a wide arc, obliterating any remaining tendrils and leaving no opening for Aduke's assault.

Aduke, drained from her efforts, felt her strength slipping. Her vision blurred as exhaustion settled in, while Garrock and Okon closed in, their shadows looming over her.

Elsewhere, Torrent barely had time to react as Kuro reappeared, ghost-like, behind him. Torrent only sensed him when it was too late; Kuro's dagger plunged into his shoulder, twisting just enough to paralyze his arm. Torrent cried out, his vision dimming as Kuro struck again, a quick stab to his thigh that forced him to his knees.

Seeing Ndidi rush forward to aid his friend, Okon lashed her whip toward him, jagged ice shards now trailing its length. The whip coiled around Ndidi's legs, biting into his skin with icy claws. Okon pulled sharply, sending Ndidi crashing to the ground, his guard shattered as he fell.

Garrock loomed over Aduke, who was struggling to stay upright, her body still coated in a dim healing glow. With a grim, unrelenting expression, he raised his massive axe and swung down, but Aduke managed to dodge at the last second, rolling to the side. However, this was what Garrock had anticipated—he followed through with a brutal kick, catching Aduke in her side and sending her sprawling across the ground, gasping for breath.

Looking at the apeling students, The announcer appeared in the stage once again as he began counting two "Ten, Nine, Eight, Seven, Six, Five, Four, Three, Two, One, And the apeling students are out" The announcer shouted into the mic as the crowd began shouting.

Okon walked towards the apeling students, the water around her gathering as each student was covered in a ball of water that was slowly soothing them.

Looking at Aduke, she said "We thought Torrent was the heart of your team but you were, too bad you let your guard down around Kuro"

Aduke forced herself to sit up, wincing as the soothing water from Okon's spell eased her bruises and aching muscles. She glanced at Torrent and Ndidi, who were both similarly encased in the restorative spheres, their wounds slowly mending under the gentle influence of Okon's magic. Despite the pain and exhaustion, a faint smile tugged at her lips as she listened to Okon's words

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"Maybe I did let my guard down," Aduke replied, her voice hoarse but steady. "But you and your team are relentless. It's... impressive."

Okon gave her a nod, a glimmer of respect in her eyes. "It's been a while since anyone's made us push ourselves this hard," she admitted.

"But you don't just need strength and tactics; you need to read each other's intentions and fill in the gaps without needing to think about it." Okon said as the apelings students had a lot of call out before they could respond.

Aduke felt a pang of frustration but nodded in acknowledgment. The cursed Apelings had adapted to every tactic they threw at them, reacting faster and staying one step ahead in a way that felt almost instinctive.

Garrock, his expression softer now that the battle was over, joined Okon. He looked at Aduke with a small, rare smile. "You've got grit, kid. But grit alone won't cut it. Learn to look past your opponent's next move. When you can do that, we'll welcome a rematch."

As Aduke listened, Torrent approached, wincing as he held his injured shoulder. "Looks like we've got a lot more training ahead of us," he muttered, managing a rueful grin. "Thought we had 'em there for a second."

Ndidi, still catching his breath, shook his head with a smirk. "Guess we need more than fancy tricks and brute strength to take them down."

The crowd's cheers echoed around them, celebrating the victory of the cursed clan, but Aduke could see in the faces of her teammates the same determination she felt. This wasn't an ending; it was a challenge—a new goal that would push them to grow.

Okon extended a hand to Aduke, helping her to her feet. "When you're ready, come back," she said, her voice softer. "We'll be waiting."

As the students were escorted out of the arena, the adrenaline fading, Aduke glanced back one last time at the cursed Apelings, the image of their unbreakable unity etched in her mind. This defeat was bitter, but it was also a lesson—one she intended to learn well.

Garrock's grin faded as he glanced over the arena, catching sight of the various onlookers. The mermen stood clustered together, their shimmering scales catching the light, while the harpies with their wings tucked in had their sharp eyes scanning every detail. The werewolves, too, watched intently, their expressions unreadable but unmistakably focused. They hadn't missed a single move.

Kuro's gaze darted over the crowd, his voice low as he murmured, "Feels like everyone's trying to dissect us now. They're hoping we'd give away more than we did."

Garrock nodded. "The spell and druid system's integration was working too well for the students," he said thoughtfully. "If Aduke and her team pushed us any longer, and they would've forced us to use movements we can't let slip yet."

Okon sighed, crossing her arms as she gave a subtle, wary glance toward the mermen, who were now muttering among themselves. "They're all studying us, trying to figure out our strategy—hoping we'll let our guard down if we're careless in the next match. But we'll keep things unpredictable," she smirked, her tone confident. "They'll find themselves up against the unknown."

Kuro's lips quirked into a sly grin. "I wouldn't mind throwing them off with a little misdirection. They're expecting brute force or our elements to overpower them, but we could shift things up. Maybe let them think they've figured us out."

The apeling students walked off as the announcer began calling out the next team of competitors "Next we have the Mermen vs the Harpies"

The announcer's voice boomed through the arena, filled with excitement as the crowd's cheers echoed back. "Ladies and gentlemen, brace yourselves! Coming to the stage now, we have the fierce competitors from the depths of the sea and the skies above! In this corner, representing the Mermen, we have the formidable trio: Kaimana the Sharkman, Moanae the Enchanting Mermaid, and Rumblefin the Relentless Murloc!"

The crowd erupted as the three mermen strode forward, their presence unmistakably commanding. Kaimana's powerful, sleek frame and muscular frame got a lot of ladies screaming out loudly drowning out the men's voice, his sharp-toothed grin daring anyone to challenge him. Moanae moved with an ethereal grace, her scaled legs glimpsing lightly from the battle skirt she wore, her eyes calm yet piercing. Rumblefin let out a guttural growl, hopping side to side, his gaze sweeping the harpy team with a gleam of excitement.

The announcer's voice grew louder as he turned to the opposite side of the arena. "And in the opposite corner, soaring high with the winds on their side, we have the graceful but deadly Harpies!"

The three Harpies swooped down, their wings spreading wide as they landed with perfect synchronization. Their leader, Lira, stood at the front with fierce, focused eyes, her talons tapping lightly on the ground. Sylas, the smallest of the trio but the fastest, flared her feathers, eyeing the Mermen with thinly veiled disdain. The final harpy, Icaros, was massive and imposing, his wingspan stretching wider than the others, casting a long shadow over the arena floor.

The announcer gestured toward the two teams as the crowd held its breath. "Let the battle begin!"

Kuro watched from the sidelines, his sly grin returning. "Let's see how the Mermen handle this one. They're going up against speed and aerial precision. Could get interesting."

Kaimana turned to his teammates, keeping his voice low. "Stick close, let them make the first move. They'll expect us to attack aggressively. Let's not give them that."

Rumblefin grunted, his eyes never leaving the Harpies. "Let 'em try. I'll make a snack outta one of 'em if they get close enough."

The Harpies wasted no time. Sylas shot upward with a powerful thrust of her wings, gaining a high vantage point as Lira darted low, fast as lightning, circling to the side. Icaros, with his powerful wings, stayed grounded for a moment, sizing up Kaimana with a challenging glare, then leapt skyward with a screech that echoed across the arena.

The Mermen moved in sync. Moanae conjured a shimmering barrier of water around her teammates, swirling it like a vortex that obscured their forms. "They'll have to come in close to attack now," she murmured, her voice calm. Kaimana and Rumblefin positioned themselves within the vortex, their figures hazy through the water, waiting to strike.

Sylas dived first, wings folding close to her body as she shot down toward the vortex with deadly precision. Just as she broke through the barrier, Kaimana lunged with a swift punch, his fist hardened by a coating of jagged scales. Sylas twisted away at the last second, but not before the shockwave Kaimana from his fist sent a spray of torn feathers to the air.

The explosive sound from Kaimana fist took him by surprise and everyone around by surprise as there was no mana in the punch yet it sounded so heavy meeting the air.

Even Ikem and Urusla were taken back by the show of strength. Icaros who took Kaimana as a challenge now had a different look on his face.

Moanae looked at Kaimana who was staring at his fist in excitement "What was that, she asked?"

Kaimana turned his gleaming teeth at her as he said "I never took notice of it but the surface air feels so light, it might have something to do with that"

Moanae's eyes widened, her voice soft yet filled with curiosity. "The surface air? Are you saying the pressure here is affecting your strength?"

Kaimana clenched his fist again, his grin broadening as he flexed his arm, feeling the raw power coursing through him. "Back in the deep, every move is like a battle against the weight of the ocean. Up here? It's like I'm swinging through water that's barely there." He looked at Moanae, eyes gleaming. "And I plan to use it."

The Harpies, hovering at a wary distance, circled them with newfound caution. Sylas, shaken by her close call, kept her distance, her sharp eyes tracking Kaimana's every move. She called out to her teammates, her voice tense but steady. "Change formation! Keep your distance, and use the air to our advantage. We're not getting close to him again unless we have to!"

Lira and Icaros adjusted immediately, moving in tighter arcs above the Mermen, preparing to dive in coordinated attacks. Icaros's face held a flicker of uncertainty as he glanced at Sylas, then back at Kaimana, clearly shaken by the show of strength.

Moanae gave a slight nod to Kaimana. "If they're staying out of range, we'll have to flush them out."

With that, she raised her arms, and shimmering tendrils of water began to materialize around her, swirling in elegant arcs that formed whips, ready to strike at any Harpy that dared to come close. The

water glinted with a hint of magic, thin yet potent, its weight and speed perfectly tuned to the surface air.

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Rumblefin, ever the opportunist, gave a wide, toothy grin. "I'll take care of the little one," he growled, his eyes locking onto Lira as he prepared to intercept her lightning-fast dives. Around him water can be seen pooling around sinking into the earth making it muddy which he didn't seem to mind as his body was slowly sinking into it.

Sylas, seeing Moanae's water whips lashing out, took a sharp breath, signaling Icaros and Lira to spread out further. "Don't get caught! Hit them from the sides, stay low, and move fast!"

Lira shot in first, dipping low to the ground in an erratic, zig-zag pattern to avoid the water whips, her talons flashing as she aimed for Rumblefin. He anticipated her approach, leaping forward with surprising agility as he extended his claws in a counter strike. Lira pulled up sharply, barely evading his attack, her wings creating a small gust that stirred the dust around them.

Meanwhile, Icaros took advantage of Kaimana's focus on Sylas and swooped low, hoping to strike Kaimana's exposed side. But just as he closed in, Kaimana shifted his weight, swinging his arm in a broad, sweeping arc that sent another shockwave rippling through the air. Icaros felt the blast buffet him backward, and he barely managed to keep himself aloft, eyes wide as he felt the raw force of Kaimana's unrestrained strength.

Kaimana let out a low chuckle, locking eyes with Icaros. "Come on, birdman, I thought you wanted a challenge."

Icaros narrowed his eyes, a new glint of determination overtaking his caution. "You'll regret that, fish."

From above, Sylas seized the moment, diving in with precision as she aimed a series of swift, slicing talon strikes at Kaimana's unprotected back. Moanae, sensing the danger, reacted instantly, sending one of her water whips hurtling upward. It caught Sylas mid-strike, halting her attack as she twisted to free herself.

Sylas pulled back with a frustrated screech, glaring at Moanae as she freed herself from the watery bonds. "You're stronger than I expected," she muttered, her respect tinged with a trace of annoyance.

Moanae gave a soft smile. "The sea breeds strength in its own way."

The crowd's cheers grew louder, sensing the escalating intensity. Kuro watched from the sidelines, a slight smirk on his face. "They're finally putting the Harpies on edge," he murmured to himself.

Sylas rallied her teammates, her voice carrying a hard edge. "Regroup! We'll use the air currents to our advantage. They're strong, but they're bound to the ground. We aren't."

With a fierce flap of her wings, Sylas rose high, Lira and Icaros following suit as they caught the winds, moving in tight formation, high above the arena. They began to circle the Mermen, creating a vortex of air that kicked up dust and debris, blocking the Mermen's vision and forcing them to shield their eyes.

Kaimana squinted up, his grin undeterred. "Hiding up there won't save you. We'll bring you down one way or another."

Moanae nodded, her voice calm but resolute. "Then let's show them the power of the sea—together." She sent a surge of water into the air, forming a dense, swirling mist that expanded outward, combining with the Harpies' dust storm to create a chaotic, shifting battlefield.

As the swirling mist settled over the arena, obscuring the battlefield, the Harpies took full advantage of the elemental chaos. Sylas raised her arms, calling forth her command of wind, creating a powerful updraft that lifted her team higher into the air. Icaros and Lira followed suit, each summoning their own elemental powers to prepare for the next strike. Sparks of lightning crackled around Icaros's talons, and a thin plume of flame flickered from Lira's wingtips.

Kaimana and Moanae, sensing the buildup of elemental forces above, braced themselves as they exchanged a quick glance. "They're pulling out all their tricks," Kaimana grunted, his voice filled with excitement rather than fear. Moanae nodded, her hands moving in fluid gestures that manipulated the water around them, ready to counter the incoming attacks.

Sylas gave a sharp, commanding cry, signaling her team. With a swoop, Icaros dived first, streaking toward Kaimana with talons extended and charged with crackling bolts of lightning. Kaimana stepped back, bringing his fists up defensively, but as Icaros closed in, he unleashed the stored electricity in a wild burst. The searing energy crackled through the air, too fast for Kaimana to dodge completely. He raised an arm to shield himself, but the lightning surged over his skin, leaving trails of charred scales in its wake. Kaimana grunted in pain, his arm trembling from the shock, but he didn't let it hold him back.

With a fierce snarl, he launched a counterattack, swinging a watery construct fist toward Icaros, who narrowly avoided the blow, darting back into the air just in time. Kaimana was about to follow when Lira swooped down from his blindside, a stream of flame erupting from her talons. She aimed directly at Moanae, hoping to break the Mermen's unified defense.

Moanae reacted instantly, raising a wall of water that absorbed most of the flame's intensity, but the impact still sent her stumbling back. The edges of her cloak smoldered, and she winced as the heat seared her skin. She glared at Lira with anger, raising her hand to conjure a torrent of water. With a flick of her wrist, she shot the pressurized stream directly at Lira, who twisted midair to avoid it, her feathers catching stray droplets that sizzled on contact.

But Lira's evasion had left her open. Rumblefin, the Murloc, took the opportunity to strike. His webbed fingers glowed with a dark blue, murky energy as he summoned tendrils of muddy water from the arena's damp ground, forming jagged, spear-like projectiles. With a guttural roar, he hurled them at Lira with deadly force. She managed to dodge most, but one spear caught her wing, ripping through feathers and flesh. Blood sprayed into the air as Lira screeched, her body twisting as she tried to steady herself.

Below, Sylas noticed Lira's injury and grimaced, muttering a spell, a flame lit above her hand as she swept her wings forward, unleashing a powerful gust of wind that carried embers from the fire and crackling sparks from Icaros's who shot out his lightning, creating a storm of fire and lightning that roared toward the Mermen. The combined assault tore across the battlefield, forcing the Mermen to fall back or risk being heavily burnt.

Moanae, however, had other plans. She planted her feet on the swap created by Rumblefin and raised her arms, channeling a dome of water around herself and her teammates to shield them from the deadly onslaught. The flames hissed and sputtered as they clashed with the water, creating dense steam that clouded the arena and obscured the fighters. For a tense moment, the only sounds were the crackling of fire, the hiss of steam, and the steady thrum of energy as both sides gathered their strength.

Out of the haze, Sylas launched herself again, claws extended and surrounded by a razor-sharp aura of wind. She darted in like a predatory hawk, aiming for Kaimana's exposed flank. Kaimana barely had time

to react before her talons slashed across his side, cutting through his scales and drawing blood. He grunted, clutching his wound as he staggered back, his excitement now tinged with the seriousness of the fight.

With a fierce glare, Kaimana gritted his teeth, ignoring the pain, and lunged forward, catching Sylas by surprise as he swung a watery fist encased in a swirling vortex of his own power. His punch landed squarely in Sylas's midsection, sending her flying back with a choked gasp. She hit the ground hard, feathers torn and bloodied, but still managed to push herself back up, defiance burning in her eyes.

"Nice hit, fish," she hissed, wiping blood from her mouth as wind began to gather along her feathers.

Meanwhile, Moanae took advantage of the chaos, manipulating the water around her into a dense, icy spear that she aimed at Icaros, who was attempting another dive toward Kaimana. She flung it with deadly accuracy, and the icy projectile grazed his shoulder, leaving a bloody trail as he twisted away. The impact forced Icaros to retreat, his breaths labored as he struggled to stay airborne.

The Harpies weren't finished yet. Lira, whose wings have healed up, gathered her strength as she took a deep breath, the fire around her intensifying as she dived down at Rumblefin, her talons ablaze. Rumblefin snarled, raising a swirling shield of water, but Lira's fire was fierce, cutting through the shield and searing into Rumblefin's shoulder. He let out a guttural yell as the flames bit into his flesh, the scent of charred scales filling the air. He sank into the swamp he created disappearing from Lira's view

Sylas and Icaros exchanged a quick glance, realizing they were running out of options. Sylas gritted her teeth and tightened her wings, a pulse of energy thrumming through her feathers as wind surged around her. With one swift flap, she generated a slicing gust aimed directly at Kaimana, forcing him to dodge to the side, but Icaros had anticipated this. In a flash of wings, he unleashed a bolt of crackling lightning that arced through the air, striking Kaimana squarely in the shoulder. Kaimana grunted as the shock coursed through him, leaving burn marks on his body and causing his muscles to seize up briefly.

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Seeing her teammate falter, Moanae sprang into action, sweeping her arms forward to draw water up around Kaimana in a cocoon, neutralizing the residual electricity. But the Harpies weren't done. Sylas and Lira dove at Moanae from either side, Sylas cloaked in a blazing aura of wind while Lira's talons glowed red-hot, ignited by her fire magic.

"Not this time!" Rumblefin bellowed as he lunged between them, wielding a thick shield of solid muddy water swirling around his body like armor. He twisted, sending a surge of water crashing into Lira's flames, creating an explosion of steam and embers that obscured the view and bought his teammates a moment to regroup.

From above, Icaros took advantage of the chaos, summoning a thunderous bolt that shot down toward Moanae. She barely managed to dodge, the bolt grazing her shoulder and scorching her skin. She let out a hiss of pain, but quickly countered, spinning around and launching an icy spear at him in retaliation. Icaros weaved midair, but the spear caught his leg, tearing through flesh and feathers. He screeched as he dropped a few feet, struggling to keep himself airborne as blood dripped down his leg.

The Harpies, now emboldened by their success, pressed their advantage. Sylas swooped down again, a deadly wind cyclone gathering around her as she closed in on Kaimana. But instead of dodging, Kaimana snarled and braced himself, encasing his fists in swirling water. Just as Sylas reached him, he thrust his fist forward, colliding with her wind-imbued claws. The impact sent a shockwave through the arena as water and wind burst outward, sending both combatants flying backward.

Rumblefin and Lira clashed next, with Rumblefin rushing forward in a wave of water, while Lira countered with an inferno swirling around her talons. Their attacks collided in a sizzling clash, and Rumblefin's shield began to evaporate under Lira's intense flames. For a moment, Lira broke through, slashing into his side with a fiery claw, leaving a scorched, bleeding wound. But Rumblefin, ignoring the pain, grinned through clenched teeth and brought a water-clad fist down hard on Lira's wing, causing her to scream in pain. An explosion of mana shot out from her which distanced her from Rumblefin.

Kaimana shot a look at Moanae, signaling her to move forward. With a fierce nod, Moanae raised her hands, creating a dozen small orbs of water that hovered around her. She then launched them toward the Harpies in a rapid barrage, each orb freezing mid-air before speeding toward their targets like icy bullets.

Sylas flapped her wings in rapid bursts to evade, and Icaros countered with a surge of wind that deflected some of the ice, but several shards hit their marks. Blood seeped from fresh cuts on Icaros's arm and Sylas's thigh as they narrowly avoided more serious injuries.

"Enough!" Icaros roared, fury blazing in his eyes. Gathering his remaining energy, he raised both wings to summon a massive bolt of lightning, one that split into several smaller arcs, each one targeting the Mermen.

Kaimana managed to shield himself with a thick dome of water, dispersing the lightning, while Rumblefin dove into the swampy ground, avoiding the attack. Moanae, though, wasn't as fortunate. She took a glancing hit to her side, the electricity jolting through her body and leaving her gasping for breath.

But even as the smoke from the lightning began to clear, Rumblefin emerged from below, his eyes blazing with determination. He launched himself at Icaros, water swirling around him in a churning vortex. He rammed into Icaros with a force that sent both of them sprawling across the arena floor.

Realizing their situation was dire, Sylas and Lira regrouped, sharing a look of silent determination. Lira ignited her talons once again, but this time with an intensity she hadn't shown before. Her whole body glowed as flames wrapped around her, and she launched herself at Moanae, intent on taking down at least one of the Mermen. Moanae raised her hands to defend herself, creating a thick wall of water, but Lira crashed through it, slamming into Moanae and clawing deep into her side. Moanae cried out as blood streamed down, struggling to push Lira off.

Kaimana, though battered and bruised, saw the desperate situation and made a decision. Ignoring his injuries, he channeled all his remaining strength into his fist, once again coating it in a powerful vortex of water.

He punched out at Sylas who only had to now to the side to dodge only to find a shadow covering her. The vortex of water she dodged seemed to open a portal as a huge construct shake made of water with its mouth wide open bit towards her exposed back.

The shark mouth didn't close instead it absorbed Sylas into its mouth, Sylas eyes widened in pain as she began suffocating, she tried to disperse the construct from with a huge gust of wind but Moanae who now has a frozen construct of Lira beside her, shot an ice pick at the shark construct freeze it with Sylas inside.

As the medics entered the arena to tend to the fighters, the crowd erupted in applause, cheering for the intense clash they had just witnessed.

It didn't take long for the announcer to reappear and introduce the next matchup: the apelingvs versus the werewolves. Meanwhile, in Ikenga's realm, a new visitor was being welcomed.

Back in Ikenga's ever-growing domain, Osi and Boros stood intertwined, their colossal forms watching the apeling kingdom, where the competition was taking place.

The two pusedo-deities were making a bet on which godling would emerge victorious when, all of a sudden, the atmosphere around them shifted. A portal opened nearby, revealing a familiar yet ethereal realm beyond—a place similar to Ikenga's, but imbued with a more spiritual essence. This was the spirit world.

Through the portal, an ape with keen, intelligent eyes poked its head out, scanning the new surroundings. Unlike an ordinary ape, this one wore garments that set it apart from its kind.

The ape gazed up at the colossal figures of Osi and Boros, barely able to see the top of the towering tree or make out the shape of the massive serpent coiled around it. Though much of this grand scene was beyond his sight, his attention was immediately captured by the tree's fruits, glistening and radiant. His eyes widened, and he began to jump in a circle, visibly disturbed and in disbelief.

"Had he really come upon the sacred tree, a myth among his people?" He knew of a story passed down in his tribe: that the great god Ikenga had promised to reveal an ancient tree of knowledge to any who pursued understanding.

Excitement surged within the ape as he looked down at the garments he wore—the first of their kind among his people created by him. Was he blessed with this opportunity because of them?

After composing himself, the ape stepped through the portal, landing fully in Ikenga's realm. His body shuddered as he felt the pure energy in the air, washing over him like a wave.

Entranced, he didn't notice when something resembling a door appeared in the great tree. From this door emerged "The All-Knowing Oracle," a cursed being.

The Oracle strode toward the ape, casting a large shadow over him. Startled, the ape cried out and leaped back.

The Oracle made a sound similar to that of an ape, calming the newcomer and allowing him to communicate with the giant before him.

Making another sound in the ape's language, the Oracle pointed toward the tree and its fruits. "You came here for the fruits, didn't you?"

The ape nodded, and the Oracle continued, gesturing to himself. "I am the guardian appointed by the great god Ikenga to protect the fruits and the knowledge they hold."

Upon hearing this, the ape bowed, then asked, "What must I do, great guardian?"

The Oracle turned and began walking. "We will journey through the tree and its branches until we reach the fruit that calls to you."

The ape looked up at the immense tree. Even craning his neck as high as possible, he still couldn't see the top. Hesitating for a moment, he followed the Oracle, who was already moving toward the tree. The closer they drew, the less the tree resembled a mere tree; it seemed more like a mountain, with winding paths reaching into the sky.

As the ape cautiously followed the Oracle, the aura of the colossal tree intensified. The bark shimmered with veins of iridescent energy, pulsing like the rhythm of a heartbeat. The closer they got, the more the ape's senses blurred and twisted, as if his very thoughts were being reshaped by the tree's influence.

As they ascended, the Oracle glanced back, noticing the ape's eyes beginning to glaze over. A bemused grin tugged at the Oracle's lips. He knew that any mortal in the presence of this tree would be affected by its knowledge-laden aura—a test, of sorts, for those who sought wisdom.

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The ape's vision began to swim with vivid, kaleidoscopic colors that danced across his mind. He blinked and saw faces from his tribe—some familiar, others who were long gone—hovering around him, their voices whispering, echoing. He swayed, staring as the faces merged and separated like clouds.

He stumbled, his gaze unfocused. "What... what's happening to me?"

The Oracle chuckled softly, his voice echoing like a deep rumble through the ape's altered perception. "You are tasting the spirit of the tree. Knowledge and memory are one and the same here. Only by letting go of your fear will you find clarity."

The ape, though disoriented, felt a strange reassurance in the Oracle's words and continued forward, his steps uncertain but determined. Colors bled into his surroundings, and he saw moments from his life playing out in fragments. The struggle for food, the thrill of discovering fire, the joy of a newborn in his tribe. He reached out, fingers trembling, as if he could touch these memories. But each time, they slipped through his fingers like mist.

The Oracle's voice cut through his visions. "Focus on the fruit, little one. It calls to you, doesn't it?"

The ape nodded, his eyes glazing over as he looked up. Even through the haze of his altered senses, he could feel an undeniable pull. Somewhere up there, among the branches, something was waiting for him. The Oracle continued to lead, always a few steps ahead, never looking back for long.

As the ape followed the Oracle further along the immense branches of the tree, the strange, shimmering atmosphere around him began to intensify. The light grew hazy, and colors seemed to bend and shift, melting into each other like a mirage. The ape's steps slowed as he found himself once again mesmerized, caught in a strange trance.

The Oracle, sensing this shift, paused and turned back to observe the ape. "Feeling a bit... disoriented, are you?"

The ape shook his head as if trying to clear a fog. "Everything... it looks different. Strange. Like... like I'm seeing things that aren't there."

The Oracle chuckled softly, his deep voice vibrating in the thick air. "This is what happens when mortal senses meet divine knowledge, little one. This tree holds truths too vast for a simple mind. If you wish to continue, you must let go of what you know and let the tree guide you."

The ape blinked as his surroundings blurred. Suddenly, visions flooded his mind, as if he were reliving lifetimes in an instant. He saw memories that weren't his own—ancient apes, gazing up at a sky lit with unfamiliar stars, mysterious figures reaching towards a distant light. He stumbled back, his head spinning.

"What... what is this? Am I dreaming?" His voice trembled, and he clutched at the bark, feeling its rough texture ground him. "These are not my memories."

The Oracle's voice was calm and almost soothing. "This tree has borne witness to knowledge, from the dawn of your kind and to mysteries yet to uncover. These visions are fragments of what it holds, gifts and curses woven together."

The ape's breathing steadied as he focused on the Oracle's voice, but the strange visions continued to swirl around him. He saw himself standing tall, wearing a crown woven from branches, his people gazing at him in awe. Then, in another flickering moment, he was a stranger, lost in a storm of stars, clutching something—a fruit?—close to his chest as if it were his only salvation.

"Why does it show me this?" the ape whispered, almost to himself.

"Because knowledge comes at a price," the Oracle replied, watching the ape carefully. "It tests your resolve, your willingness to confront your fears, your limitations. To touch this knowledge is to touch the unknown—and the unknown can reshape you."

The ape closed his eyes, steeling himself as the visions continued. It felt as though he were plunging into a vast ocean, yet with each passing moment, he felt something strange—a growing understanding, an awareness he hadn't known before. The swirling, chaotic images began to settle, revealing glimpses of clarity within the chaos.

He looked up at the Oracle, his eyes wide, filled with wonder but also trepidation. "I feel... I feel like I'm seeing parts of myself I never knew existed. It's terrifying."

The Oracle nodded, his eyes glinting with a mix of approval and amusement. "That is the first step, little one. To understand the fruit you seek, you must first understand yourself. Now, let us continue—the path only grows stranger from here."

The ape took a deep, steadying breath, glancing once more at the enormous tree that now seemed even more like a living, breathing entity. With newfound resolve, he nodded and fell in step behind the Oracle, ready to face whatever lay ahead.

The Oracle led the ape through the dense, twisting branches, up toward a glimmering point deep within the tree's canopy. As they drew closer, the air grew thick with a charged stillness, and the ape's senses heightened. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, they reached a small clearing where a single, radiant fruit hung from a low branch, glowing softly in the dim light.

The ape's heart pounded as he gazed at the fruit. It was unlike anything he'd ever seen—a sphere of swirling colors, as if it held galaxies within. It beckoned to him, filling his mind with promises of knowledge, power, and a deeper understanding of the world.

The Oracle gestured toward it. "This is the fruit you seek. But know this: once you taste it, there is no return to the life you knew before."

The ape hesitated, swallowing hard. Despite his fear, the lure of the fruit's wisdom was irresistible. With trembling hands, he reached out and plucked it from the branch. The moment his fingers touched the fruit, a surge of energy coursed through his body, setting his skin aflame with a strange, tingling sensation. He took a bite, the taste sweet and bitter all at once, filling his senses with an overwhelming flood of images and ideas.

As he chewed, the world around him seemed to spin, and he dropped to his knees, feeling his body shift and pulse with each beat of his heart. His limbs lengthened and reformed, his spine straightening. His shoulders broadened, and he felt the weight of his body redistribute as he slowly rose to stand upright.

Panting, the ape gazed down at himself in shock. He was standing, his posture no longer hunched. His arms were different—more balanced with his body—and his hands felt more precise, his fingers nimbler, as though designed for tasks he had never imagined before.

But as he adjusted to this strange new form, he felt something else—an unsettling hollowness. The strength that once surged through his muscles had ebbed, replaced by a quieter, subtler force. He reached for the familiar, comforting well of mana within himself, only to find it elusive, as if it had slipped from his grasp.

Confused, he looked at the Oracle. "What... what has happened to me? I feel weaker. My power... it feels gone."

The Oracle regarded him with a calm, knowing expression. "You have sacrificed your primal strength and your connection to mana, the life force that sustains the wilds. This fruit grants knowledge and reason, but it distances you from the pure, instinctive power you once knew."

The ape, now aware of his sharpened thoughts, his enhanced perception, and the clarity that filled his mind, felt a pang of loss. Yet, something else stirred within him—a strange confidence, a newfound understanding that his mind could achieve what his muscles no longer could.

"You may find that your former strength pales in comparison to what your mind can now achieve," the Oracle continued, his gaze steady. "This is the blessing—and the curse—of knowledge. It elevates, but it also separates."

The ape took a deep breath, looking down at his transformed hands. He felt fragile, but his mind raced with ideas, questions, and possibilities. He could see himself no longer merely surviving, but creating, building, and transforming the world around him. He was no longer bound by the limitations of instinct; he had become something else entirely.

"And now," the Oracle said, his voice softer, almost reverent, "you are no longer just an ape. You are something beyond—a being with the potential for creation and change."

A strange silence settled over the tree as the ape absorbed these words. He felt the weight of his new reality, a sense of loss mingling with a thrill of possibility. He stood upright, gazing up through the branches, his eyes filled with a new fire.

"Thank you," he whispered, barely knowing to whom the gratitude was owed—to the Oracle, to the tree, or to the mysterious forces that had brought him here.

The Oracle gave him a nod, a glimmer of satisfaction in his ancient eyes. "Go forth, and may you honor the gift and the sacrifice you have made." And with that, the Oracle turned, walking into the door that opened up on the tree.

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The ape began retracing his steps along the path he had come from, noticing how it had changed. This time, no images were forced into his mind, allowing him to appreciate the view from the tree fully.

From his high vantage point, he looked out over the realm, taking in the enchanting scene: magical creatures prancing about and a flower-like sun hanging in the sky.

He sat down, appreciating the sight before him, then shook his head and stood up. He needed to return to the spirit realm and share this discovery with his people.

They had once abandoned the pursuit of knowledge, but what he had experienced today would rekindle that flame. Taking one last look at the realm, he stepped through the portal, which closed quietly behind him.

The ape emerged from the portal, the ethereal glow fading as he returned to the spirit realm. He felt the weight of his transformation settle over him, a tangible reminder of the change he had undergone. This knowledge, this new awareness—he could already sense how it would reshape his people's lives, opening doors they hadn't even imagined.

He took a few steps away from the portal and cast one last glance at the place he had left, the majestic tree towering in the distance, its branches disappearing into the boundless sky. A pang of loss struck him, but he knew his path now lay elsewhere, with his people. He would teach them, share the story of the sacred tree, the Oracle, and the mystical journey that had changed him forever.

Meanwhile, high above in Ikenga's ever-expanding realm, the colossal forms of Osi and Boros observed with curiosity and uncertainty. Osi's thick branches rustled thoughtfully as he looked down at the ape's shrinking figure, then shifted his gaze to Boros.

"What does our lord have in plan for these creatures?" Osi asked, a hint of fascination in his voice.

Boros curled slightly around Osi, her serpentine form shimmering in the ethereal light. Her eyes held a glimmer of puzzlement, matching his question with a faint smile. "I have no idea. But knowing Ikenga, it will be full of surprises... likely for us as much as for them."

Osi hummed thoughtfully, watching as the ape walked back into the heart of his kingdom, head held high, bearing the weight of knowledge with an air of newfound determination.

"Perhaps that is the way of creation," he murmured. "What Ikenga has done here may one day bloom into something even we cannot predict."

Boros nodded, her coils tightening as she, too, turned her gaze back to the ape and his path. "Then let us watch, Osi. For whatever lies in their future, they will have to carve it with the strength of their will and the spark of knowledge."

In the capital city of Björn's kingdom on the Northern continent, Yuki was meeting with Olaf, while Finn was notably absent.

This had become a recurring scene, a result of ongoing disagreements about the changes happening among the people of Björn. Initially, Finn had supported these changes, believing they would bring greatness to his god, Björn.

But as the transformation continued, Finn began to realize how far it deviated from the path Björn had once set for them. In Finn's view, his people were meant to be simple, and he saw no need for them to overuse their intelligence. He believed that only certain individuals—those like him and Olaf, the chosen leaders—were called upon to use their intellect. Tragically, many of their greatest generals had fallen in the war, leaving a gap that had once been filled by seasoned warriors.

Yet, with the changes Yuki was introducing, everyone now seemed eager to display their intelligence, complicating the once simple way of life. While this shift might have been celebrated by others, Finn felt it wasn't meant for his people. They were warriors, meant to revel in bloodshed, to procreate, and to embrace chaos.

Since that night they bathed in the pit of blood, they had transcended their human nature, so why should they now strive to become more human? Seeing the changes in his people, Finn chose to distance himself.

As a result, the capital had become divided into two factions. Many of Björn's people, unhappy with the shift, were relieved to see a higher-up like Finn aligning with their views, and so they rallied under his banner.

This rift in the capital between Yuki's faction and Finn's faction highlights a deepening ideological divide. Yuki, with her vision of evolution and refinement, represents a new era of progress, encouraging the

people of Björn to engage their intelligence, pursue peace, and build a society that aspires to be more than the primal warriors they once were. In contrast, Finn embodies the old ways, seeing Björn's people as simple and bloodthirsty, their true essence lying in chaos, combat, and carnal pleasures. Finn believes that trying to change their core nature will only lead to unrest.

In the room, Olaf sits across from Yuki with a determined look, his loyalty to Björn's original order unshaken, yet his ambition keeps him allied with Yuki. However, deep down, Olaf doesn't realize the extent of Yuki's influence and control. The more Yuki shapes the minds of the people on his side of the city, the more Olaf's grip on power slips, as his followers' loyalty shifts subtly to Yuki.

The division in the city grows increasingly stark. On Yuki's side, the people adopt a structured, disciplined lifestyle that shuns weaponry and embraces intellect and collaboration. They've adopted new customs, studying, refining their skills, and abandoning the chaotic rituals that were once integral to their identity. Cleanliness, order, and intellectual pursuits become symbols of the new life Yuki envisions for Björn's people—a life that some embrace, seeing it as a form of liberation from the violence and bloodshed that once defined them.

Meanwhile, Finn's territory remains raw and untamed. His followers relish their freedom to express themselves in ways that are violent, intense, and chaotic. Blood stains the streets, and raw passions spill over into open displays of strength and dominance. Conflict, Finn argues, is their true nature, and anything else would mean rejecting who they are.

With his clarity restored by the renewed faith of his followers, Björn turned his attention back to his kingdom. He recognized that he should have better prepared his people for his ascension; had he done so, it might not have been so easy for Murmur's daughter to infiltrate and attempt to sway them.

Thankfully, he still had loyal followers who remained true to his path. Björn shared Finn's beliefs and vision—not only because he was the creator of this way of life but also because it aligned with his divinity.

Though his domains of warfare and insanity were a double-edged sword, Björn believed he had taken enough precautions to control them. The gauntlet he had claimed from the woman, though it bit steadily into his hand, helped him maintain his sanity.

The unstable factor, however, was the raw faith energy he now possessed. He was keenly aware of the limitations faced by ascended gods, in contrast to those who were born divine.

Björn's current predicament was a delicate and dangerous one. The unrefined faith energy flowing into him was like a chaotic torrent, each fragment tainted with conflicting mortal desires, fears, and misconceptions. Without a proper filter, it was destabilizing, threatening to erode his clarity and amplify the instability already tied to his domains of warfare and insanity.

As a former demon, Björn's memories of ascended gods were clear warnings. Newly ascended deities often fell into the trap of greed, believing every scrap of faith energy would make them stronger. Inevitably, they learned how wrong they were when their personalities began to fragment, their minds consumed by the very power they craved.

The older ascended gods, however, had learned the value of restraint. They carefully cultivated their followers, allowing faith energy to flow naturally as a byproduct of mortals living in alignment with their divine principles. This refined energy, shaped by devotion to their true essence, was far more stable and sustaining than the chaotic flood of blind prayers.

Björn knew this was the path he should take. Despite never establishing a formal religion or church during his time in the mortal world, his leadership had already defined a way of life for his people. They followed the ideals he embodied—strength in battle, unbridled passion, and chaotic revelry. This alignment with his essence had set him on his divine path.

But Murmur had upended everything. By sending his daughter Yuki, Murmur had introduced new ideals, redefining Björn's religion into something alien. Yuki's influence had made his people question their way of life, leading them to embrace concepts of intelligence, structure, and progress—values that clashed with Björn's essence. Worse, the faith energy generated from this new belief system was being forced onto him, raw and incompatible with his divinity.

Björn couldn't simply reject the faith energy—it was a natural consequence of his ascension. Yet the more he absorbed, the more he felt its effects: an encroaching sense of disharmony and disconnection from his original purpose. The gauntlet on his hand, though it anchored his sanity for now, was not a permanent solution. If he didn't find a way to filter or redirect this energy, the risk of losing himself to the madness of unrefined power would only grow.

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Björn's grip tightened around the gauntlet as he wrestled with his thoughts. The clarity granted by the pure faith energy from the priest's fulfillment in battle had been a reprieve—a temporary balm against the corrosive chaos threatening his mind. But he knew better than to rely on fleeting moments of

stability. The gauntlet biting into his flesh was a constant reminder that his sanity hung by a thread, and he could not afford complacency.

The temptation to seize an Origin God's altar had been a fleeting but potent idea. Such a relic could serve as a filter, refining the faith energy pouring into him and anchoring his divinity. Yet the memory of Mahu, the Origin Goddess of the Moon and Motherhood, squashed that notion as quickly as it arose.

Mahu had not been a goddess of war, yet she had subdued him effortlessly, reducing him to a state of submission so profound it still sent shivers down his spine. He remembered the overwhelming pressure of her presence, her divinity wrapping around him like an iron shroud disguised in velvet. It had been less of a battle and more of a reckoning—a stark reminder of the chasm between him and the ancient gods.

Björn shuddered at the memory. What would she have done if she hadn't needed him back then? The thought of remaining in that childlike state of pleading for her grace was enough to crush any notion of challenging the Origin Gods. Their power was not something he could yet face, even with his growing divinity.

He tapped the skull throne he sat on, the red hue of blood in his realm churning. His mind churned for solutions. He couldn't keep relying on temporary fixes, and he couldn't afford to confront Murmur head-on just yet. What he needed was a way to stabilize himself—an anchor to his original essence.

The answer lay in the priest's actions. Pure faith energy had come not from blind worship but from alignment with his divinity: warfare and insanity. The priest's fulfillment in battle had created something untainted, directly tied to the essence of Björn's being. This was the kind of faith energy he needed—a natural byproduct of his people living true to his path.

But how could he reclaim that path when Yuki's influence was pulling them in a different direction? The capital was divided, his people's belief splintered between Finn's loyalty to the old ways and Olaf's embrace of Yuki's vision. The division was both a curse and an opportunity.

If he could reignite the flame of his original path among his people, it would stabilize his divinity and give him the power to resist Murmur's machinations. He needed to act decisively, rallying those who remained loyal while also subtly undermining Yuki's influence. The gauntlet's pain spiked as he clenched his fist, a sharp reminder that time was not on his side.

Björn's plan began to form. He would seek out those who embodied his essence—not just Finn but others who thrived in chaos and battle. He would create opportunities for them to display their strength, to rekindle the primal pride of his people. And he would watch the faith energy carefully, ensuring it aligned with his divinity.

Even with this in mind, Björn knew he had to be subtle else Yuki and Murmur will catch on what he plans on doing. Finn was a great person to start with but Björn knew that once he contacts Finn on his plan.

It will be exposed not because of disloyalty but quite the opposite, Finn's glee for his lord speaking to him will expose Björn's hands. Björn instead set his eyes on the right hand man of Finn, who was quite the unique individual. Björn was about to make a move yet introduced to this world yet, it has been partially done but not in the right way.

The idea of selecting a true priest, a champion to act as his voice and presence in the mortal world, had been brewing for some time. His religion had grown rapidly, but it was hollow—a structure without a soul. The priests currently leading it were disconnected from him, their prayers merely echoes of ritual rather than genuine connection. They needed to feel the true embrace of their god.

Björn's mind lingered on Finn's right-hand man—the werelion who had caught his attention during the battle at the seaport. This individual was more than a warrior; he was a beacon of faith, his prayers resonating with Björn's divinity in a way that few others had managed. That resonance had been powerful enough to send a ripple of pure faith energy through Björn, even amidst the chaos of an unfinished battle. If there was anyone who could embody Björn's path, it was him.

The werelion's constant state of pride in his form spoke volumes. He was unapologetically himself, a creature of chaos and strength who embraced his nature fully. This was the kind of example Björn wanted his people to follow—not the diluted teachings Yuki was spreading but the raw, primal essence of his path. Björn had no doubts about the werelion's loyalty or capability. The question was how to approach him without tipping his hand too soon.

Björn leaned forward, resting his chin on his hand as he remembered the moments when demons of higher rank had "embraced" their followers. He understood the intoxicating power of that embrace—an overwhelming connection that filled the soul with both power and dependency. As a demon, he had seen its effects firsthand, and while he had never performed such an act as a god, he felt confident it would be similar.

The werelion would not only become his champion but also serve as a living example of this embrace. Björn would pour his divine essence into the man, granting him power and purpose beyond anything his people had ever seen. They would witness what it truly meant to be touched by their god. It would create a ripple effect, reigniting the faith of those who had started to stray and silencing the whispers of doubt that Yuki and Murmur had planted.

Through the priest, Björn will make sure his people get a taste of this embrace so that they would seek it, only not to find it but instead watch those who fall under the true teaching enjoy this grace, that maybe be the fire they need to be lit under them.

But at the same time, Björn wasn't satisfied. He knew he was once part of Murmur consciousness but now he was a god something Murmur couldn't achieve, yet here he was being toyed by Murmur and used as a pawn.

Björn wants to pay him back, he wants to let him know he no longer was just a small consciousness. He is a god sitting in a skull throne side by side with origin gods.

Björn looked down on the mortal world where he set his eyes on Yuki, the woman was great and Björn would have tolerated and appreciated what she was doing if not for Murmur in the background.

Even with Björn's plan, he knew how bad it will divide his kingdom if it succeeds as the woman control half of his people army. The silver kingdom will never let go of an opportunity like this if they notice infighting among his people so Björn has to come with a way to get Yuki on his side and at the same time make Murmur pay.

Björn leaned back on his skull throne, the weight of his dual desires—restoring his kingdom and exacting vengeance—pressing heavily on his mind. The path forward was treacherous, littered with potential missteps. Yuki's influence over his army was undeniable, a testament to her charisma and cunning. But she was not irredeemable. Björn could sense that her loyalty to Murmur was not absolute. Yuki also sought to carve her own path, separate from being merely a tool of her father.

To draw Yuki away from Murmur's grasp and into his fold, Björn knew he would need to appeal to her ambitions. He couldn't approach her as a rival or an adversary; that would only deepen the divide. Instead, he would offer her something Murmur never could: freedom from manipulation and a place of prominence in his divine order. He would give her a reason to see him not as a foe but as a force she could align with, one that would value her strength and vision.

Björn turned his attention back to the werelion, It seems this new champion will play a heavy roll in getting Yuki to his side. Now all that is left is the perfect opportunity to hand the position over to the werelion.

Björn needed to test the werelion's resolve. A direct approach might draw unwanted attention, so he would orchestrate a challenge—a battle that would push the werelion to his limits and draw out his full potential. Only then would Björn reveal himself and offer his embrace.

Björn suddenly took a sniff at the air in his realm, he felt the calling of an upcoming war from one of his worshipers. This person was not a devout worshiper but they still pray to him.

Chapter 359:

Turning his attention to the eastern continent, Björn locked in on his target "King Nwadiebube" Björn wanted to take a closer look but he was in an unfamiliar territory as this continent was claimed by Ikenga, he is not around but that doesn't mean he won't return.

Björn closed his eyes as he leaned in on his throne, the war will come and he will be called upon, by then he could watch as much as he wants to.

At the eastern continent, Ezinne has already prepared herself for her advancement, with the help of the branch. Ezinne can be seen dressed in white kneeling before the statue of Keles, around her was a drawn magic circle with other shamans gathered around.

They all began walking in a circle around her while at the same time murmuring a spell, Ezinne was also murmuring with them soon Ezinne body dropped yet no one stepped forward to help.

The shamans had a glow in their eyes as they looked at Ezinne, unsurprised as her soul left from her body, the branch she was holding casting a natural green energy around her.

"Mounts of the inbetween, i need help" Ezinne soul called out, she waited a while as the space in front of her shook as a huge deer walked out of it.

The deer looked at her and the green glow she had on her, Ezinne stood wide eyed as the deer came closer to her and touched its snout on her. Ezinne wasn't the only one surprised as this was the first time since these spirit deers ever bothered to get closer to them.

The deer bent its body allowing for Ezinne to climb on to it, with that the deer stood up and began walking away. The deer slowly turned from walking into strutting soon it became a full blown run.

Ezinne held on tight as the deer all of a sudden dived into the earth with her. The scenery was passing by fast, when Ezinne got to her senses, they were now in front of a huge gate.

Ezinne recognized the gate, Ezinne found herself entranced with the gate as her body began to slightly float away from the deer's back. Only for the deer to shake its body getting Ezinne back to focus.

Ezinne heard the spirit speak to her "The green on you is good for you but also hold a lot of attraction to the underworld, keep your curiosity to yourself if you ever plan on getting back"

The deer Ignored Ezinne as it spoke out "Father open the door" Down in the southern continent, Wardenwild who is keeping guard on Murmur heard the request. He looked down to see the human woman and one of his children.

Curious Wardenwild nodded as the gate to the underworld opened up for Ezinne and the deer to walk through.

The gates groaned open, their heavy iron creaking with an eerie melody as Wardenwild granted passage. Beyond the threshold, a sprawling expanse of the underworld stretched out, a realm both desolate and brimming with an unsettling vitality. Shadows flickered as if alive, and the air was heavy, thick with the weight of countless souls.

The deer stepped gracefully forward, its hooves making no sound against the ground. Ezinne clung tightly to its back, her eyes darting around the alien landscape. Whispers brushed against her ears, faint voices murmuring secrets and sorrows. She could feel the oppressive pull of the green glow encasing her, drawing attention from unseen entities lurking just beyond her sight.

The deer spoke again, its voice reverberating like a deep bell. "This is your path, shaman. Do not stray. The underworld watches those who do not belong."

Ezinne nodded silently, her determination unwavering despite the growing tension in the air. The glow around her pulsed faintly, and as they moved further, she noticed shapes beginning to emerge in the distance. Souls, wandering aimlessly, their faces etched with despair and longing, turned their hollow gazes toward her. Some recoiled from the green light, while others reached out as if seeking solace.

"Why do they fear this light?" Ezinne asked softly.

The deer replied without turning. "It is life. To some, it is a beacon of hope. To others, a reminder of what they've lost. Pay them no mind. We have a destination."

They journeyed deeper until the landscape began to shift. The ground beneath them turned from barren rock to soft, shifting soil, and the air grew colder. Ahead, a lone figure stood, its form flickering like a candle caught in a breeze. It was an ancestral soul, its presence unmistakable, radiating a mix of strength and sorrow.

The deer stopped a short distance from the figure, lowering itself to allow Ezinne to dismount. "Go," it said. "Your task begins here. Remember the words I spoke—curiosity can be your undoing."

Ezinne approached cautiously, the green glow around her casting long shadows. The soul turned to face her, and she gasped. It was a woman, her features eerily similar to Ezinne's own, as though the spirit were a reflection from another life.

As Ezinne approached the ancestral soul, recognition flooded her senses. It was her great-grandmother, Ngozi, a woman whose tales of wisdom and resilience had shaped much of her family's identity. Ngozi's spectral form glowed faintly, her features clear and familiar despite the ethereal nature of her presence.

"You've come far, child," Ngozi said, her voice warm yet laced with caution. "But this is only the beginning. The underworld does not yield its treasures without struggle."

Ezinne bowed her head respectfully, clutching the branch tightly. "Great-grandmother, I succeeded in finding a way to claim a domain, as a resident of this realm. Guide me."

Ngozi nodded approvingly, then gestured for Ezinne to follow. The deer that had carried her thus far stood silently, its glowing gaze fixed on her as she stepped forward. With each step, the terrain shifted subtly. Shadows flickered and danced, forming hazy outlines of structures long forgotten by the living. The air was thick, carrying whispers that seemed to seep into Ezinne's thoughts.

They walked until they reached a hollow, where a cluster of souls had gathered. These were ancestral spirits, some faint and drifting, others vibrant and alert. Ezinne's green glow caught their attention, and murmurs rippled through the group.

"This is where I reside," Ngozi said, gesturing toward a small grove that shimmered faintly with her essence. "It is a safe haven, but only for those who have claimed their place. Now, child, it is time to choose your land."

Ezinne's eyes scanned the expanse. The underworld was vast, its geography as mutable as its occupants. Nearby, she saw a stretch of barren plains tinged with faint green hues, calling to her as if it resonated with the energy of the branch she carried. But scattered across the expanse were other souls, some aimless and weak, others alert and wary. She realized that claiming a domain would not be simple—it would mean displacing others.

"This land is free to claim," Ngozi continued, "but it is not unoccupied. The moment you step forward, the spirits will understand your intent. They will not surrender easily. Some will flee, but others will fight for what they see as theirs. You must be ready."

Ezinne inhaled deeply, steadying herself. "And if they fight?"

"Then you must prove that you are stronger, more determined. The underworld respects power and resolve. But beware—the strongest spirits, those who still retain fragments of their sanity, will see your claim as a challenge. They may come for you."

As Ezinne stepped onto the barren plains, the ancestral glow around her intensified, drawing the attention of every spirit nearby. Some retreated, sensing the strength of the ancestral bond emanating from her. Others, more territorial or desperate, edged closer, their forms solidifying, ready to defend what they believed was theirs.

Ngozi stepped forward, her spectral presence growing more tangible as she turned to address the other ancestral souls gathered. "This is not just her battle; it is ours. If she succeeds, this land becomes a sanctuary for our bloodline—a place where we may gather, where our family's spirits can rest and thrive for generations to come."

The gathered ancestors nodded, their faint forms beginning to glow with resolve. One by one, they aligned behind Ezinne, forming a spectral retinue of her lineage. Their combined presence radiated a powerful aura, the kind that only a united ancestral line could produce.

Ezinne glanced back at them, her heart swelling with a mix of pride and gratitude. "Thank you," she murmured. "I won't let us fail."

As the spirits of the plains advanced, a low hum of energy rippled through the ground. The ancestral souls stepped forward, their forms growing more defined. Ngozi raised her hand, and a shimmering barrier of light spread outward, pushing back the weaker spirits.

"This is our claim," Ngozi declared, her voice resonating like a tolling bell. "Leave, or face the might of a united family."

Chapter 360:

Some souls hesitated, sensing the strength of the ancestral bond. A few fell back seeing how united they were, unwilling to challenge such power. But others surged forward, their desperation and defiance giving them form and ferocity. These were the ones who would not yield without a fight as they knew the benefit if they won.

A phantom of the branch appeared above Ezinne's head, from the branch extended grew lights like roots that connected each ancestral soul around, covering them in the same green glow as Ezinne.

The ancestral souls each taking up a position to shield and support her. In their hands grew out a green weapon, which they used to fend off the attacking souls.

A soul with a heavy light of intelligence in its eyes used the opportunity to grab hold of weaker and retreating souls as it grew in size soon large and menacing spirit lunged toward Ezinne, its form flickering with unstable soul energy. Ngozi moved swiftly, raising her hands to summon spectral vines that lashed out, binding the spirit in place. "Now, child!" she shouted

Ezinne thrust the branch which appeared on her hand forward, and its green light exploded outward, dispersing the huge bound spirit into harmless wisps of energy that gathered into complete souls, those that were swallowed up. Around her, other ancestral souls were working in unison, their combined efforts driving back the opposition.

As the battle raged, stronger spirits from the outskirts began to approach. One, soul figure it's figure more compact, paused to assess the scene. Its deep voice rumbled through the air. "A family seeking to carve a place for themselves. Rare... but dangerous."

Ngozi turned toward the figure, her eyes narrowing. "This land is claimed by us. Stand aside, or be driven out."

The figure hesitated, then gave a low, rumbling laugh. "Very well. I will not interfere... this time. But know this—staking a claim in the underworld draws attention. Be prepared to defend it."

With that, the figure turned around, following behind him were other stronger soul staring at the land Ezinne was claiming with greed.

The plains began to quiet as the last of the resisting spirits were driven away. The green light surrounding Ezinne flared once more, and the ground beneath her shifted. Where once it was barren, the land began to bloom faintly, patches of soft grass and spectral flowers emerging, infused with the energy of her claim.

Ngozi stepped forward, placing a hand on Ezinne's shoulder. "It is done. This place is now ours. Your journey has brought honor to our line."

The other ancestral souls gathered closer, their forms glowing with satisfaction. They spoke in unison, their voices resonating like a chorus. "May this land remain a sanctuary for all who carry our blood."

Ezinne, exhausted but triumphant, knelt on the soft ground, letting the glow of her ancestors envelop her. She had done it—carved out a domain in the underworld, not just for herself but for her entire lineage.

As the light of the reclaimed land bathed her, Ezinne felt a warmth she hadn't expected in the underworld. The spectral glow of her ancestors dimmed, their voices softening into whispers as they withdrew to their new sanctuary. Ngozi lingered, her presence still strong as she placed a hand on Ezinne's shoulder.

"You have done well, child," she said, her voice filled with pride. "This place is now bound to our lineage. But your journey is far from over. Return to the living world and carry our legacy forward."

Ezinne nodded, gratitude shining in her eyes. "Thank you, Great-grandmother. I will honor this gift."

Ngozi gave a faint smile and turned to bow to the empty air. The spectral deer reappeared, its glowing form shimmering with the energy of their reclaimed domain. It knelt beside Ezinne, urging her to mount once more.

As Ezinne climbed onto its back, she glanced around one last time at the land she had claimed. The faint greenery and spectral blooms pulsed with life, a stark contrast to the desolation that had greeted her earlier. With a final look at Ngozi, she nodded her farewell.

The deer began its ascent, leaping upward as the world around them blurred. The underworld's oppressive darkness gave way to streaks of light and warmth as the deer carried her back to the surface. Ezinne felt her spirit tethered, the pull of her body growing stronger with each passing moment.

Finally, the deer slowed, and with a gentle nudge of its head, it lowered Ezinne to the threshold of her physical form. "Go, shaman," it said, its deep voice resonating in her mind. "The green glow will guide you always. Do not squander it."

Ezinne bowed her head in gratitude, touching the deer's snout briefly before stepping forward.

The magic circle surrounding Ezinne's body pulsed faintly as her soul re-entered. The shamans circling her paused, their murmurs growing softer as they sensed the completion of her journey. The green glow from the branch faded, absorbed into her body, leaving only a faint shimmer in her hair and skin.

Ezinne's chest rose sharply as she took in a deep breath, her eyes fluttering open. Her gaze was distant for a moment before clarity returned. The room was silent, the gathered shamans watching her with a mixture of awe and reverence.

"She's returned," one murmured.

As Ezinne stood up, her former old and shrunken form shifted as she grew younger. Her back straightened, her grey hair still partially grew but some part are streamlined with dark green colour.

Nwadiebube and his sister was close by with the princess having a bright smile on her face seeing Ezinne change, meanwhile Nwadiebube only clenched his fist with a thinking look on his face.

The princess ran to the circle holding Ezinne's hand and excitedly asking her how it was. Ezinne took time to calm the princess before looking at Nwadiebube and seeing the serious look on his face.

Raising the branch on her hand, she said "It still can support one more death shaman advancement" Nwadiebube nodded as he gestured for Ezinne to follow him to a more bigger space.

Nwadiebube turned to Ezinne, his gaze sharp and focused. "Call it forth," he said, his voice carrying both command and anticipation.

Ezinne inhaled deeply, feeling the connection to her domain stir within her. She raised the branch, its green hue intensifying as it resonated with her energy. Closing her eyes, she focused on the memory of the underworld—the reclaimed land, the spectral blooms, and the presence of her ancestors.

The air around her began to shimmer, and a faint green mist spread across the courtyard. From the mist emerged ghostly forms: her ancestral spirits, their figures translucent yet vivid. The reclaimed domain took shape, with patches of spectral grass and flowers appearing underfoot, accompanied by the faint sound of wind that seemed to echo from the underworld itself.

Nwadiebube gave a slight bow to the ancestral soul before he turned to Ezinne "You know this isn't what I was looking for, show me it's capabilities"

Ezinne nodded as she stomped the ground, creating a crack in it where dead bodies began to climb out of, among these dead bodies can bodies of people of Björn be seen.

This was the bodies traded from the merchant of death, after the dead bodies all climbed up, numbering in hundreds, Ezinne nodded to the ancestral souls as they all turned into a dot of light each getting into a body the fell is perfect for them.

As the ancestral spirits merged with the bodies, an eerie transformation unfolded. The previously lifeless corpses stiffened, their hollow eyes flickering to life with an otherworldly glow. Each body seemed to adjust to its spirit host—wounds knitting together, missing limbs reforming with spectral energy, and once-ragged clothing mending into an ethereal semblance of their past forms.

Ezinne took a step back, A staff appeared in her hand pulsating like a heartbeat, synchronizing with the newly reanimated warriors. A ripple of energy surged through the group as they collectively stood taller, their presence commanding. Each spirit now seemed perfectly aligned with its vessel, creating an army of the undead infused with ancestral power.

Nwadiabube's eyes narrowed, studying the display before him. He strode forward, "React to this," he said sharply, slamming his foot into the ground and sending a pulse of kinetic energy through the courtyard. The wave collided with the spectral warriors, but rather than scatter, it passed through them like they weren't there with the force and remained steadfast.

Nwadiabube his voice low but firm. "And their connection to you? Can you serve them at will? Reclaim their energy if necessary?"

Ezinne's expression hardened. She raised the staff again, and sickly green glow intensified. One by one, the warriors began to dissolve into motes of light, the spirits returning to their saanctuary. Within moments, the courtyard was still again, save for the faint shimmer of spectral flowers marking where the army had stood.

Nwadiabube nodded as he ordered "Prepare for the next advancement, also contact with the merchant of death and see if you can get your hands on stronger dead bodies"