

Guardian gods 41

Chapter 41 Slumber

Feeling the tiger's skin sufficiently cooked, Ikenga gently floated the tiger out of the bonfire. Its stomach began to split open as if an invisible blade were at work, and soon, the innards spilled out onto the ground near the bonfire. The ground sealed itself after the innards fell, and wooden stands emerged, connecting to the tiger's mouth and butt, making it look like a spit. Small pieces of wood materialized out of thin air, fueling the fire and gradually cooking the tiger.

Ikem couldn't have chosen a more perfect time to wake up, as Ikenga added a pinch of salt to the tiger meat. Feeling his son stirring behind him, Ikenga spoke, "You know the rule?"

Without bothering to respond to his stern father, Ikem stood and walked up to the meat, easily tearing a handful off the bone. They ate in silence, with Ikem consuming the most, as he needed the energy.

While they were eating Ikenga felt a shift in the wind and, with his heightened vision, saw Tweet, whose body had grown larger, fly towards them. Behind Tweet followed a variety of exotic fruits encased in a whirlwind.

Smiling, Ikenga said nothing and returned to his meal. He watched as Ikem finished the last piece of meat, discarding the bone and massaging his satisfied stomach. He was about to say something when both of their expressions changed at the same time as they sensed a change in the mana around them.

Ikem immediately took a comfortable position, closed his eyes, and entered a state of deep meditation. Ikenga watched with keen interest, recognizing that his son was advancing to the next stage of his power.

Mana began to surge rapidly toward Ikem. Tweet, who had initially flown in and appeared eager to say something, changed his mind as he noticed Ikenga's stern look directed at him. Tweet slowly landed and arranged the fruit that came with him on a large leaf that had grown from the ground.

Ikenga nodded in acknowledgment of Tweet's actions before turning his attention back to his son. He was curious about the changes taking place but didn't want to interfere. His eyes turned golden, granting him the ability to see through Ikem's body, providing insight into the process of advancement.

In Ikenga's view, mana with a wooden attribute rapidly gathered toward his son. He watched as the mana concentrated at Ikem's heart, transforming the blood-red heart into a vibrant green. Within his son's heart, an ethereal space began to form. Once the space was complete, the heart returned to its natural color, and the mana gathered in the ethereal space, coalescing into a small core.

As soon as the core was formed, the turbulence of mana around Ikem's body gradually subsided, returning to a state of normalcy. He continued to watch as the second transformation began. With each beat of his son's heart, a change unfolded within his body. His expression shifted from curiosity to concern as he pondered whether mana possessed sentience.

To ordinary eyes, nothing would seem out of the ordinary with his son. However, with his divine sight, Ikenga began to doubt if his son remained a mere flesh-and-blood creature. While Ikem had previously undergone the stages of mana adaptation and mana inhibition without alarm, the core stage raised questions.

It appeared that his son's mana attribute was determined to change his son's physique to align with the element. With each heartbeat, Ikenga observed how Ikem's red-golden blood transformed into a green-golden hue. It was as if the elements couldn't alter his divine blood, so they changed his mortal blood instead.

Ikem's blood was not the only thing undergoing a gradual shift; his skin, muscles, eyes, everything was in a state of transformation. If Ikenga were to draw a comparison, his son was evolving from a flesh-and-blood being into a wooden life form with flesh and blood.

Having seen enough, Ikenga's eyes returned to their normal brown color. While he lacked sufficient knowledge about mana and the peculiarities of this world, he understood that, for now, his son was not in immediate danger, and there was nothing more he could do.

If his siblings weren't currently asleep, he would have sought their insights on the matter and whether their children were experiencing similar transformations. Lost in his thoughts, Ikenga was unaware that Ikem had already awakened from his transformation.

"Tweet!!!" Ikenga was jolted from his thoughts as he heard the exclamation. He watched as his son accelerated, colliding with Tweet and easily bringing the larger bird to the ground. Tweet struggled to break free from Ikem's grasp, but the younger one was relentless, rubbing his face against the bird's feathers.

Ikenga wasn't surprised by his son's behavior. Tweet had been absent for quite some time, choosing to explore beyond Ikenga's realm. Both Ikem and the bird had missed each other dearly, as Tweet had been his son's sole companion since birth.

While Boros remained in his realm, he didn't seem to share the same fondness for Ikem, perhaps because the snake had an exceptionally strong attachment to Ikenga, leaving Ikem without much company.

Seemingly having had enough of Ikem ruffling his feathers, Tweet unleashed a powerful gust of wind, sending Ikem tumbling away from him. Then, Tweet spread his wings and took to the sky, hovering there.

"Damn it, Ikem. Do you know how much time and effort it takes to keep my feathers looking this good?" Tweet's voice carried down from the sky, now audible to Ikem and Ikenga.

Surprised by Tweet's newfound ability to communicate, Ikem landed and exclaimed, "You can talk now, Tweet?"

Even Ikenga was taken aback at the bird's newfound skill. They had previously been able to communicate with Tweets through their innate ability to understand animal language, but now the bird was clearly speaking, using the wind to carry its voice.

Tweet got even more angry at Ikem ignoring the matter of his feathers but Ikem responded with curiosity, "Why do you worry so much about your feathers, Tweet?"

Tweet appeared to be pleased with his son's inquiry as he floated back down to the ground, gloating.

"Unlike someone I know, there are tons of bird ladies who admire these majestic feathers of mine," Tweet proudly boasted.

"Bird ladies? Wait, you've been to the Father's brother's side?" Ikem asked, his tone laced with jealousy.

"Of course. Now you understand with your maidenless self," Tweet retorted, amused by the reaction.

Ikenga noticed a vein throbbing on his son's forehead and swiftly intervened, not wanting to witness an argument. "Okay, boys, calm down now."

"But Father, this—" Ikem began, but Tweet cut him off.

"This what?"

Putting an end to the exchange, Ikenga spoke once more, his voice tinged with fatigue. "Enough, Ikem, I need to talk to you, and time is running short."

Ikem's expression turned serious as he observed the weary look on his father's face. "Okay."

They sat in silence by the crackling bonfire. "This will be our last day together, son," Ikenga finally said.

Ikem shifted uncomfortably upon hearing this. "It feels a bit early, doesn't it, Father?"

"I believe you're ready, and your recent advancement in power confirms that. You are more than prepared," Ikenga replied.

Silence hung between them for a moment before Ikem spoke, tears streaming down his cheeks. "I will miss you, Dad."

Ikenga reached out, gently ruffling his son's hair. "Time will pass quickly, my son. You'll hardly notice my absence. A whole new adventure awaits you. I can't predict the specifics, but I sense that great changes will come after I enter my slumber."

Ikem said nothing but he absentmindedly nodded in understanding. "I want you to be ready for whatever changes may come. Take this." Out of thin air, a large wooden book materialized, which Ikenga handed to his son.

"This book contains everything you need to establish a great kingdom, as well as a map that will guide you to your mother's birthplace and other areas where I have significant gifts prepared for you and your new kingdom," Ikenga explained.

Continuing, Ikenga said, "Your mother's birthplace is a good starting point for your journey. I'll leave the two treants to guard you for a while, but I have other plans for them, so they'll depart once they're certain you're safe. If Red wakes up, remember not to inquire about any changes he may have undergone."

Curious, Ikem asked, "I noticed he wasn't here. Did something happen to him?"

Ikenga responded, "No, nothing bad has happened, but he may look quite different the next time you see him. Do not let your curiosity lead you to inquire about his transformation. You're not yet prepared for the being and power level behind it."

"Oh, and before I forget, the blood-sucking root will also accompany you. I've done it a disservice by keeping it with me, as there's rarely any prey for it to feed on. It will be your closest companion in the times to come."

As Ikenga spoke, the roots unfurled from his hair, scattering it. He handed the roots to his son, who observed them with curiosity. He soon cried out as the roots pierced his finger, drawing blood.

Ikenga remained impassive, watching the roots exhibit new behavior. They absorbed the blood, glowing green for a moment before returning to their usual appearance. They then wrapped themselves around his son's hair, braiding it and forming a bundle to hold it together.

"Be sure to document every change in your power and advancement from this point on," Ikenga advised after witnessing the interaction. He inwardly thought that the root's behavior most likely linked to the changes in his son's physique following his advancement.

Ikem nodded in response, and silence once again enveloped them. Tweet seemed uncomfortable with the quietude. Ikenga then thought of Boros and decided that it might be beneficial for the snake to live outside the realm, with that he established a connection with his realm and expelled Boros from it.

The always slumbering snake materialized in front of them, initially entering an attack posture and launching into the sky before realizing who it was. Boros has also grown significantly, its body now larger and more massive than Earth's anaconda, with two wings enabling flight.

Boros, recognizing where it was and who summoned her, immediately returned to her smaller form, wrapping around Ikenga's arm. Its tongue occasionally darted out to give Ikenga's face a few licks. It paid no attention to Ikem and Tweet, his childhood friend who had returned.

"Great to see you too, Boros," Tweet sarcastically remarked.

"I didn't say anything, you stupid bird," Boros retorted with an irritated female voice.

"Still as grumpy as ever, you green shit," Tweet, ever adept at provoking others, fired back.

Boros separated from Ikenga's arm and reverted to its normal form, hissing at Tweet. "Say that again."

Tweet, not one to back down, challenged, "Wanna fight?"

Ikem, lost in his thoughts about his father's imminent departure, remained unresponsive. Observing his family gathered around, Ikenga couldn't help but laugh, drawing everyone's attention.

With all eyes on him, Ikenga smiled and suggested, "Since everyone is here, why don't we all go to sleep? It's already deep into the night."

Ikem looked deeply at his father before letting out a sigh. Boros, familiar with the routine, served as a headrest for both father and son, with Tweet snuggled in between, providing warmth with his shrunken, fluffy body. At a snap of his fingers, Ikenga extinguished the bonfire.

Finally, Ikem found his voice and uttered, "I love you, Dad," just before drifting off to sleep.

"I love you too, son," Ikenga responded, gently caressing his son's head. It remained this way for a while until Ikenga sensed that everyone was fast asleep. Slowly standing up and slipping away, he took one last look at his family before entering the portal leading to his realm. There, he succumbed to a deep slumber.