

## Guardian gods 44

### Chapter 44 Invisible or Teleportation ?

The blood-sucking root wasn't idle as Ikem prepared his meal. It voraciously absorbed every drop of blood from the prey. With the meat finally ready to cook, Ikem secured it on a branch over the fire, the savory aroma quickly filling the forest air.

Observing that their aid wasn't required, the two treants transformed into flowers, their roots delving into the earth. As the meat finished cooking, Ikem, ravenous, dove into the meal. The hunger was unlike anything he'd experienced before. In his father's company, he'd never faced such extreme deprivation. With a wild hunger in his eyes, he devoured the meat until he was satiated and full.

A peculiar expression soon crossed Ikem's face as he eyed the remaining meat. When he caught the prey and saw its size, he was expecting for it to be not enough to fill him but only curb the hunger, but no he was already full and there was still some meat left. He could have eaten more, but it lacked the flavor of his father's prepared meals, missing the seasoning his father magically conjured—salt.

Puzzled about what to do with the leftovers and unable to fathom eating more, Ikem left the remaining meat beside the dying fire, preparing for rest. Yet as he laid down, sleep eluded him. The discomfort of the hard ground combined with the cacophony of the forest's night sounds made rest impossible. He also was lacking something comfortable to rest his head upon.

Glancing at the treants, now in their floral form, Ikem wished to seek their aid but remembered their warning. Frustrated, all he could do was sigh, resigned to reclining on the unforgiving ground.

As Ikem lay beneath the star-studded sky, he marveled at the beauty above. Contemplating the toll his journey was taking on him, he realized its taxing nature despite being merely at its beginning. Lost in these thoughts, he eventually succumbed to a deep slumber.

Near Ikem's campsite, hidden within the forest's cover, a black, four-legged beast blended seamlessly with its surroundings. Observing the extinguished camp light in the vicinity, the creature remained still, scenting the air.

It was familiar with hunting prey that emitted such similar light in their surroundings, it was familiar with and anticipated the prey's behavior after the light's disappearance. The beast's ears perked up, and an odd expression filled its yellow eyes as it rose from its hiding spot, taking a cautious step backward.

Sensing the prey's unusual wakefulness this long after the light disappeared, the creature's keen hearing detected the restlessness of the target. Puzzled by this deviation from the usual behavior, the beast hesitated, attentive to the sound. It awaited and soon it came, a signal of vulnerability, the creature recognized the familiar cue.

The prey's behavior struck the beast as unusual, not just in action but also in the inexplicable attraction it seemed to hold toward the predator. Its instinct tells it that there will be a reward from hunting this prey, the creature lingered before advancing toward the camp, vanishing from its spot as if it had never been there at all.

Ikem while in a deep sleep was not having so good sleep, He was haunted by not being able to fulfill his father's expectation for him, he was full of worry if he would last long in his journey. The tension in Ikem's troubled sleep soon escalated as his instincts jolted him awake. This time, the blood root, responsive to his distress, swelled in size, hurling him away from his resting spot. Instinctively, Ikem's mana surged, encasing him in a protective green armor, just in time to witness a dark paw, adorned with ominous purple claws, slice through the ground where he had lain moments ago.

Regaining his stance, the blood root retreated to its place in his hair, reducing in size. Ikem's expression turned grave as a creature materialized, shrouded in darkness. Standing face to face, he struggled to discern the form of the creature, which, if not for its immediate presence, might have remained an enigma. If Ikenga were present, he'd have recognized the creature as an oversized Black Panther.

Ikem's heart raced with a fear of the impending danger he was just in. The blood root had shielded him, saving him from a grievous injury. Taking a deep breath, he expelled green mana from his hand, forming a long spear.

Both Ikem and the enigmatic creature assessed each other, tension thick in the air. Abruptly, Ikem ducked as three energy claws surged over his head, tearing through the forest. From his crouched position, he lunged towards the panther, thrusting the spear as he closed in.

The panther, clearly taken aback by Ikem's agility, let out a resounding roar as the spear grazed its chin. In an instant, it vanished, leaving Ikem bewildered. Regaining composure from the slight of display, he looked around the forest floor to see if the creature would expose its steps but nothing was found, so he focused on sensing the creature's mana, but his attempts also proved futile.

Out of nowhere, a huge paw appeared in front of his eyes. He could clearly see the hairs on the dark paw as it closed in on his head. Knowing he couldn't defend with his hands, a green construct formed in his head, taking the shape of a helm, the only protection his mind could conjure at that moment.

The huge paw made immediate contact with his head after the construct was formed, sending him flying into the dark woods. At the same time, he swung at the space where the claw came from, but he felt nothing.

As he felt the last tree cushion his flying form, Ikem stood up, looking around, and thinking to himself, 'So its power is not simple invisibility.' If it were just invisible, he should have hit the panther when it sent him flying.

Just as he contemplated, he moved to the side as another claw appeared from thin air, cutting through the air. Not intending to attack again, Ikem stepped back, occasionally dodging the claw strike that emerged from thin air, moving closer to a tree. He soon stopped as the creature emerged out of thin air again, this time running toward him.

Ikem braced himself, the spear in his hands turning into a green shield. Ikem rejoiced for his choice of construct as the panther's running form grew a dark horn on its head. The horn impaled into the shield, the force pushing Ikem back as he dug his feet into the ground, infusing mana into the shield to fortify it.

It took a while before the momentum wore off. Ikem immediately sent mana through the ground, causing roots to spring out, holding the creature in place. Ikem then jumped up as the shield construct changed into an ax, aiming to cleave the creature's head in two."

As the ax got closer to the panther, it immediately changed into an arm, grabbing its hair. At the same time, the creature disappeared from its spot, and this time, Ikem vanished with the panther.

Cutting off the construct, Ikem landed on the creature's head, immediately panicking as he thought something must have gone wrong with his eyes. He was thrown off as the panther rolled on the ground, now also looking at him with a stupefied face.

"Where is this?" Ikem asked himself as he looked at the black and grey world around him. He realized he was in the same position as in the forest, but it was as if he had entered another layer of the forest after the panther disappeared with him.

Simultaneously observing his surroundings, a strange howl echoed in the black and gray world. For some reason, upon hearing the sound, Ikem immediately rushed toward the panther while shifting into his demigod form.

The panther, still trying to comprehend how its prey had entered the same world it usually inhabited when ambushing prey, quickly felt the shock fade as it saw Ikem running toward it. The panther couldn't react as Ikem swiftly got underneath it, delivering a punch that sent the panther flying. Without giving the panther a chance, Ikem rushed toward it again.

Two green constructs formed under Ikem's armpits, raining blow after blow on the panther. The panther attempted to attack back, but Ikem easily dodged and continued pummeling the creature. Briefly halting his assault, Ikem glanced into the distance of the black and gray world before returning to continue beating the panther, this time adding more strength to each blow.

The panther sensed that if this continued, it would perish, resorting to its typical defense mechanism when in danger. It teleported back to the forest. Reacting swiftly, Ikem grabbed the panther before it could teleport, taking them both back.

As soon as Ikem saw he was back in the forest and there was no black and gray color around him, a sigh of relief left his mouth. He immediately rushed toward the now escaping panther. As he got close to its retreating form, a green axe construct formed in Ikem's hand as he jumped, cutting the panther into two, blood staining everywhere.

The green construct disappeared as Ikem shifted back to his human form. He slumped to the ground, breathing heavily. He wasn't tired, but the feeling of coming close to death two times in one night was too much for him.

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Ikem sat in silence as he heard two footsteps. Looking back, he saw the two treants walking toward him, the water treant raising its hand as water appeared in thin air, falling on him, washing away the blood spilled from the dead panther.

The stone treant went to the panther to take a look at the beast and then asked, "Where did you disappear to with the beast?"

Hearing the question, Ikem perked up. "You also noticed me disappearing?"

"Yes, we did, and that got us worried because we couldn't sense you anywhere," the water treant answered while drying off the water that fell on Ikem.

"I noticed the same thing too when the monster disappeared the first time. I couldn't sense it anywhere, like it was no longer in this world. The only time my senses picked it up was when it attacked," Ikem said, rubbing his chin.

"I decided on grabbing the monster in hope to interrupt its disappearance, since it always escapes when I am so close to killing it. The monster then teleported us both to a weird place, not really a place. I was still at the same place of the disappearance, but it was like another layer on top of the real world."

"Hmm, that's interesting. I believe the creator would be greatly interested in that since this hasn't happened before," the stone treant answered.

"How did you get back then?" the water treant asked him.

Hearing the question, Ikem shivered but soon took a deep breath. "The moment the beast teleported me to that weird place, my whole instinct went off that the longer I stayed there, the more likely I was to die or something bad happening. So, I did the only thing I thought was best to survive: force the beast to use its ability again to teleport me away from that place."

All three were silent after hearing that. "Young master, I would advise you to run whenever you meet any creature whose ability you don't understand. You were lucky this time," the stone treant advised.

"I already thought of that. As soon as I killed the creature, it was foolish of me to jump in without having enough information," Ikem said with a sigh as he stood up.

He was about to walk back to the camp when he halted, picking up on multiple life forces and mana signatures in the dark forest around them. Two life forces were equal to the panther he just killed.

A frustrated but suppressed sound came from Ikem's mouth, sitting back down near the panther corpse, Ikem looked at the two treants. "It seems there will be no sleep for me tonight."