

Guardian gods 45

Chapter 45 Horde.

This night seemed endless for Ikem. He had to remain vigilant and alert, his encounter with the panther was still a fresh memory and that made him wary of facing any creature in the wild.

The knowledge that two creatures, each possessing the same amount of mana as the panther, lurked in the forest, waiting for his guard to drop, made it nearly impossible for Ikem to find rest.

Throughout the night, he kept watch, expecting an attack. It did come, but it wasn't from the ones he was expecting instead was from the weak creatures that wanted a go at him as they recklessly threw themselves at him, akin to a moth drawn to a flame.

With the sun beginning to rise, Ikem sensed the two mana signatures moving away. Taking a deep breath, he surveyed his surroundings, finding himself surrounded by the corpses of creatures he had slain in self-defence.

Frustration gnawed at Ikem. He was exhausted from the sleepless night and irked by the unnecessary trouble he faced. The two treants, capable allies, should have offered their assistance in guarding through the night, but instead, they stood by, mere spectators to his struggles.

Silently seething, Ikem said nothing to the treants. Instead, he picked up one of the corpses before resuming his journey to his mother's place.

Observing Ikem's unusual behaviour, the two treants exchanged glances. However, they adhered to the creator's explicit orders: only to intervene when the young master's life was in grave danger.

The joy that usually accompanied the start of a journey had evaporated for Ikem. As he traversed the forest, the sun was already high, bringing forth new dangers for him to contend with.

After walking for a while, thirst crept in. Surveying the forest surrounded by thick woods, he found no nearby water source. Seeking shade under a tree with broad branches, Ikem contemplated his next move.

As Ikem sat down, contemplating how to find a water source, a peculiar sound reached his ears, triggering his heightened senses and one of his innate ability.

"Hurry up, guys, before the whole space is taken up by the others," a distinct voice echoed in Ikem's ear.

"We know, we're already going as fast as we can," another voice responded.

Intrigued, Ikem stood up and scanned the surroundings for the source of the sound. Suddenly, an orange blur darted past him, and with his keen eyes, he discerned it to be a small creature of the same size as the rabbit he had consumed earlier.

Two smaller creatures of similar appearance followed closely behind the orange blur. Watching them rush past, Ikem couldn't help but wonder about the urgency in their movements.

Determined to unravel the mystery, Ikem began running after the creatures, catching up to the orange one, which he identified as a fox if Ikenga were present. The fox, sensing Ikem closing in, abruptly

halted, turned around, and bared its teeth, its skin starting to glow. Ikem, perceiving the fox's defensive stance, immediately stopped in his tracks.

"Hold on, wait," Ikem exclaimed, attempting to convey a non-confrontational demeanor.

"What? How can I understand you?" Hearing the two leg creature speaking and it understanding what was being said caught the lead orange fox off guard.

"Never mind that. I overheard you guys talking about catching up. What is that about?" Ikem inquired, his curiosity overcoming him comprehending the usage of the innate gift he had that would help him a lot on his journey.

The creature relaxed from its defensive stance, gazing at Ikem with a puzzled expression. "There is a water source nearby that most creatures around here use, but it's mostly occupied by the ones that arrive on time," it explained.

After sharing this information, the creature abruptly shifted its focus, shouting at the other two foxes, "Let's go, quick! We are almost close!" It dashed off once more, and Ikem stood stunned, as his need for a water source was easily solved, grateful for the lead, Ikem followed closely, maintaining a good distance from the foxes to avoid appearing threatening.

As they journeyed, Ikem's anticipation grew. The prospect of a nearby water source lifted his spirits, dispelling the fatigue that had weighed him down. Though he didn't impede the fox's progress, Ikem tracked them closely.

After a while, they reached an open space adorned with water. Ikem halted in awe as he beheld the breath-taking sight of diverse animals—predators and non-predators alike—coexisting harmoniously.

The foxes moved past a lion without fear, and Ikem marvelled as they peacefully drank water alongside creatures that, in normal circumstances, would be considered threats. A giant tree, seemingly alive, shifted as a long neck stretched into view, the creature sipping water from the lake. Ikem's mouth fell open as he gazed up at the towering dinosaur-like creature.

His sense of marvel intensified as he felt an innate connection to the enormous brachiosaurus. If Ikenga were present, he would be amazed at how the brachiosaurus changed since his last observation of them.

The enormous dinosaur, resembling a tree, stood motionless as it continued to drink from the lake, blending seamlessly with its surroundings. As Ikem continued to observe, he noticed branches with leaves growing from it, solidifying its tree-like appearance.

Marvelling at the grandeur before him, Ikem finally tore his gaze away and turned toward the lake. With a deep breath, he took a step forward, ready to quench his thirst.

Unbeknownst to Ikem, the two treants silently observed his every move, perfectly camouflaged among the surrounding trees. Even the foxes he had encountered were oblivious to their presence.

As Ikem approached the lake, the atmosphere shifted. The noses of every creature twitched, and a hush fell over the area. Sensing the tension, Ikem paused, his mana stirring within him. He stood still for a moment, waiting to see if anything would unfold. When nothing did, he cautiously continued toward the water.

The closer Ikem got, the higher the tension rose. Yet, surprisingly, no aggression manifested. Ikem moved carefully, ensuring he made no contact with the animals. Upon reaching the water, he gently placed the corpse he had been carrying on the ground. Scooping up lake water, he took a refreshing sip.

Unbeknownst to Ikem, the animals felt a unique attraction to him, stemming from his demigod lineage. The creatures recognized that consuming him would enhance their development and strength. Despite this innate pull, the animals adhered to an unwritten rule around the lake—no attacks were to occur. They stood still, watching the two-legged creature whose mere presence seemed to influence their behaviour and instinct.

Ikem relished the refreshing water, his parched mouth finally finding relief. Submerging his face, he took a substantial gulp, only lifting his head after satisfying his thirst. However, as he emerged, a colossal face filled his view.

The plant-like dinosaur, now closely inspecting Ikem, revealed intricate details upon closer scrutiny. Notably, a bird's nest adorned its head, adding to the creature's mystique. Ikem's admiration deepened, but his surprise intensified as the creature spoke directly into his mind.

"A reckless one you are, huh?" the dinosaur remarked.

"What?" Ikem responded, bewildered.

"Where are your protectors, young one?" the creature inquired.

Silent, Ikem met the dinosaur's gaze, the mana in his body poised for action. Receiving no verbal reply, the creature sighed, retracting its colossal face. Before disappearing, it conveyed, "We are a lot alike, young one, but you are a lot more. You hold an attraction to everything living in this forest, even I myself."

"Look around you. If not for the rule in this lake, all of them would want a bite out of you. I sense your strength, young one, but there are things out there you don't want turning their attention to you. Hope we meet again, child." With those words, the massive creature withdrew its long neck, and the brachiosaurus began to walk away.

Picking up the corpse and casting cautious glances around, Ikem threaded back into the forest through the silent horde of creatures that had been observing him.

As Ikem entered the forest, out of view of the observing animals, exhaustion overcame him, and he leaned against a tree, catching his breath. The two treants, ever watchful, showed no immediate reaction, but the stone treant eventually spoke up.

"Young master, do you plan on coming back here every time you need a drink?"

"Huh? What do you mean?" Ikem questioned, his confusion evident.

"You have a destination to get to. You were lucky enough to find a water source, but the same can't be said for the future. Hope you keep that in mind," the stone treant advised.

It took a moment for Ikem to grasp the message. A cloud of dust soon enveloped the forest, catching the attention of the animals by the lake. After a while of waiting and seeing no threat, they resumed their rest, occasionally sipping from the water.

The two treants observed the fallen tree, a result of Ikem's frustration, understanding the young master's stress. Ikem glared at the broken tree, his clenched fist revealing his frustration. Everything seemed to be going wrong, since he entered this forest his every decision and action has mostly been wrong. Now he has to walk back into the dangerous horde again to do something he should have prepared to do the first time.

Taking a deep breath, he tossed the corpse to the treants, not caring whether they caught it or not. Placing a hand on the broken tree, Ikem infused it with mana. It took a while, but eventually, he felt satisfied with the amount of mana imbued. With focused intent, he molded the mana within the tree, transforming it into a large gourd-like structure capable of holding enough water.

Grabbing the gourd, Ikem returned to the lake to fill it. As soon as Ikem appeared back at the lake the quietness came back, but this time something was different as a boar the size of a tiger with bronze skin walked brazenly towards Ikem as soon as the boar got close to Ikem, the boar emitted a roar quite distinct from what one would expect from such a creature.

Ikem's face contorted with anger as he swiftly shifted into his demigod form, responding with an amplified roar infused with mana. The sound echoed across the lake, creating ripples in the water. The roar ceased, and Ikem, holding the gourd tightly, advanced toward the boar. Frightened, the boar took a step back, and other animals cleared a path for Ikem to reach the water. Calmly, he placed the gourd in the water to fill it, waiting in silence until it was full. Retrieving the gourd, he walked back into the forest.

Returning to the waiting treants with the corpse he had thrown earlier, Ikem noticed the admiration in their eyes and smiled inwardly. He went back to the broken tree, sending mana into it. Soon, a wooden rope formed, which he used to tie the filled gourd securely.

"Let's go," Ikem declared, ready to resume his journey.

The stone treant glanced at the still-held corpse, shook its head with amusement, and caught up with its young master. Unbeknownst to Ikem, the echoes of his roar had attracted the attention of an eagle, perched on the mountain near the lake. The eagle, captivated by the sight of Ikem, marked him as its next meal. In the midst of their journey, Ikem and the treants moved in silence. Abruptly, the two treants exchanged glances, and simultaneously, their mana signatures vanished as they seamlessly merged with the surrounding environment. Ikem, ever vigilant, noticed the sudden disappearance of their mana signatures and turned back, casting a puzzled look at the two treants.

Silence hung in the air as the treants remained wordless, observing Ikem. Suddenly, a flash of golden light enveloped Ikem, and he disappeared from their view. Unfazed, the treants directed their attention to the sky where a pained cry echoed. With their heightened eyesight, they witnessed the talons of an eagle piercing into Ikem's shoulders, hoisting him into the sky before he could comprehend what was happening.