

Guardian gods 46

Chapter 46 Weak?

A cry of pain escaped Ikem's lips as he suddenly found himself suspended in the vast expanse of the sky. The searing pain in his shoulder intensified and as he realized he was ascending, Ikem was gripped by a profound unease. Glancing at the formidable huge claws embedded in his shoulder and the colossal bird carrying him, Ikem knew he needed to act swiftly.

This wasn't his first encounter with bloodshed, so he forced himself to calm down, his mind racing for the next course of action. Drawing upon the mana within him, Ikem focused it into his arm, shaping it into a sword. With determination, he swung the blade at the claws, but the bird exhibited no reaction. The awkward position made it difficult for him to strike with the necessary force, prompting the realization that remaining in this precarious situation would yield no results.

In a daring move, Ikem seized one of the claws as they ascended into the cloud-layered sky. Agony seared through him as he tore the claw out of his shoulder, leaving him hanging from a single point. Rapidly channelling mana into his injured shoulder, Ikem felt the wound miraculously healing as a sword construct materialized in his hand once more. His head darted left and right, evading the bird's attempts to seize him once again.

This time, the sword in Ikem's hand targeted not the claw but the vulnerable space beneath the eagle's wings. Upon impact, a golden light enveloped the eagle, attempting to shield the wounded area. Undeterred, Ikem infused more mana into the sword, increasing its density and sharpening its edge. The blade sliced through, drawing blood.

The consequence of Ikem's daring move was immediate—the eagle relinquished its grip on his other shoulder. As the realization dawned on Ikem, he plummeted through the cloud layer, hurtling toward the ground with alarming speed.

Desperation seized him as he fell. Ikem channelled mana throughout his body, maintaining a pristine and ready state as he healed. The faster he descended, the more panic set in, forcing Ikem to contemplate how to minimize the impending damage from the impending fall.

Wing construct would have been Ikem's immediate solution, but a vivid memory held him back—a conversation with his father that unfolded in the realm of Ikenga.

Flashback:

One day, Ikem, driven by the desire to experience flight, crafted a wing construct adhering to his back, mimicking the flapping wings of the birds he had observed. To his dismay, nothing happened when he attempted to take flight. Undeterred, he found a tree in his father's realm, climbed it, and leaped, hoping the wing construct would lift him into the air.

The attempt ended in failure, resulting in a face-plant on the ground. His father materialized beside him, gazing down at his bruised face. "Creating and handling constructs easily doesn't extend to things like wings. It's something you've never had and experienced before, constructing things require experience, knowledge and imagination. You lack experience and knowledge, merely copying what you see me do."

Flashback ends.

Back in the present, the eagle had its own plans for Ikem. Out of nowhere, a golden light descended from the cloud behind him, reaching him in an instant. Prepared, Ikem surrounded himself with a mana armour. From the golden light enveloping the bird, a wing struck his armour, accelerating his descent.

The golden light continued, flying past Ikem to the ground. Bewildered as to why the bird let him go, Ikem reacted just as the same golden light ascended from the ground, impacting him once again and propelling him back into the sky.

The bird repeated the action with different patterns, leaving streaks of golden light in the sky. After a while, it became apparent to Ikem that the bird possessed a remarkable speed talent. Even now in his demigod form, he found it challenging to react to the bird's unparalleled speed.

Ikem's entire body felt battered, with healing claw marks struggling to keep up as new ones emerged. Suspended in the sky, he wished the bird would release him, even if it meant an uncertain death. Once more, the bird slammed into him, and this time, Ikem didn't bother to track its figure. A massive green net construct manifested from the point of impact, ensnaring the eagle, causing the dispersal of the golden light which revealed the bird's true form.

Holding onto the green net as they descended together, Ikem utilized his free hand to conjure a thin, elongated sword. The blade made its way to pierce through the bird's body, but a barrier of golden light obstructed his progress. Infusing more mana into the sword, he finally pierced through the resistance, prompting a shriek of pain from the eagle. A golden shockwave erupted from its body, throwing Ikem off, and the net construct dispersed.

Looking down, Ikem realized he was dangerously closing in to the ground. Quickly, he curled up, surrounding himself with mana to create an egg-shaped construct. The impact produced a deafening sound, shrouding the area in a cloud of smoke. Nearby animals scattered, disturbed by the unexpected noise.

From the pit formed by the impact, a groaning sound emerged as Ikem clawed his way out of the ground. Coughing and spitting blood as he clawed until he reached the largest tree he could find, extending his hand to make contact. The tree responded with wooden tendrils that wrapped around Ikem, forming an enclosed shell. Once the shell was complete, the wooden tendrils lifted it to the tree branches, concealing Ikem from view. Sensing safety, Ikem succumbed to unconsciousness.

As soon as Ikem fell into unconsciousness, a golden light descended into the massive pit he created. With a graceful wave of its wings, the smoke dissipated. The eagles, unable to spot their prey, screeched to the sky. Transforming into a golden light, the bird shot upward, disappearing into the vastness of the sky.

The entire area fell into a hushed silence for several minutes as a golden light traversed the landscape, appearing and disappearing in a repetitive pattern. The eagle, frustrated and realizing it had lost its prey, hovered over the pit. In a fit of anger, it circled the area at incredible speed, creating a small tornado that tore through the surrounding trees before finally flying off. Somehow the tree shielding Ikem was able to survive the small tornado.

Throughout this spectacle, two treants observed keenly. Witnessing Ikem's fall and hearing the impact, they simultaneously bolted from their positions in swift motion.

A deer grazing nearby twitched its ears at the approaching footsteps, instinctively hopping away. Before it could fully react, it only felt the rush of two passing breezes. Listening intently, the deer detected no further disturbance and resumed its peaceful grazing.

The two treants reappeared at the impact site, scanning the area for any sign of Ikem. His mana signature remained well-hidden until a call from the tree caught their attention. The treants made their way to one of the surviving tall trees, where Ikem was concealed.

Touching the tree, the treants exchanged a complicated glance. The water treant spoke to the stone treant, "Is it luck?"

"Possibly, or perhaps the creator still protects his son even in sleep," replied the stone treant.

The tree where Ikem sought refuge was an elemental tree, a creation similar to that of their lord. The two treants had been with the creator when he succeeded in infusing elemental properties into trees. They overheard his thoughts about the benefits of spreading elemental attributes throughout the trees but deemed it not worth the trouble as it will be too much of a work.

"Could it be that the creator's divinity is now responding to his words after his slumber?" the water treant inquired.

"Without the creator present, we cannot provide a definite answer. However, let us make note of this occurrence so that we remain vigilant for similar signs during our journey," suggested the stone treant. The water treant nodded in agreement as they continued to keep a watchful eye on the tree sheltering Ikem.

Communicating with the elemental tree, the treants requested it to lower the wooden shell enveloping Ikem. Obliging, the tree gently allowed the shell to descend. The stone treant, larger than its usual form, effortlessly carried the sizable wooden construct, cradling it in its sturdy limbs as it made its way back into the heart of the forest.

Still connected with the tree, the water treant uttered, "If you ever undergo transformation, seek me out." As it departed, it left its water mana signature imprinted on the tree, causing a portion of it to take on a subtle blue hue.

The immediate effect manifested as the earth and roots around the tree absorbed the moisture, reflecting the presence of added vitality. The water treant, now detached from the tree, surveyed the devastated forest, a newfound sense of purpose stirring within.

17:00

Driven by instinct, the water treant raised its hand to the sky, coaxing clouds to form above. Sprinkles of water infused with mana fell over the area. Sensing the water treant's actions, the stone treant paused, feeling the subtle changes in the earth.

With its hands engaged, the stone treant utilized its feet as a conduit, sending a wave through the earth. The surrounding soil absorbed the magic-infused water at an accelerated rate. After a while, the two treants ceased their joint effort. The water treant by now had re-joined the stone treant.

"Hopefully, this will aid in restoring the forest to its former state," the water treant expressed.

"Hmm," the stone treant responded, still carrying Ikem through the woods.

Eventually, the two treants reached a clearing. The stone treant gently laid down the wooden shell covering Ikem. "Should we accelerate his healing?" the stone treant inquired.

"No, he is already healing on his own. Besides, no interference unless he faces grave danger," the water treant asserted, turning to retreat into the depths of the forest.

The stone treant, unfazed by the water treant's warning, settled beside Ikem. Placing a hand on the wooden shell and built a connection which it used to assess Ikem's condition. Sensing that most external wounds had healed, the stone treant perceived that the internal injuries, particularly to Ikem's organs,

were still mending, progressing slowly. The treant estimated that healing would likely conclude by nightfall.

As dusk approached, the water treant, dragging a substantial deer corpse, joined the stone treant in the clearing. Explaining its intent, the water treant said, "This is for compensation, as we already lost the one the young master handed to us."

Stunned, the stone treant nodded in acknowledgment. Night descended, accompanied by a coughing sound emanating from the wooden shell enveloping Ikem.

As the shell opened, Ikem emerged—a human with a shrivelled brown complexion, braided hair adorned with a red root, bare chested and wrapped in clothing straight down. The stone treant, attempting levity, remarked, "Looking good, young master."

Ikem, unamused, surveyed his shrivelled state. His nose twitched, detecting the scent of a pre-prepared meal near a bonfire. Eagerly, he sprung up, reaching for the meat and devouring it hungrily. Silence enveloped the camp as Ikem consumed the meal, bones being the only remnants.

Gradually, changes manifested on Ikem's skin as it went from shrivelled to looking full and alive but a few noticeable changes in his skin was seen by everyone available who already knew what he looked like before—claw marks adorned his body. Touching the marks, Ikem muttered to himself, "I thought Father's training was tough with him spitting out blood after each session, but now I understand he was taking it easy on me. He never used sharp weapons; it was always his hands and I always healed fast from that."

"Now, facing a sharp weapon, I realize I can't heal from everything" Ikem said while looking at the marks "I may not be weak against most creatures in this forest, but just an encounter with two unique animals

makes me question if I was ever truly strong, and if the things I considered a challenge before was merely weak in comparison."