

## Guardian gods 53

### Chapter 53 Hunt

In the desolate expanse of the northern continent, where a world of ice and snow reigned supreme, nestled at the base of a towering white mountain, lay a small village. This settlement, home to a population of a hundred or more, boasted a central spectacle—a colossal ice statue impeccably depicting the moon god, Mahu.

More than five years had passed since Maul embarked on his journey to fulfill the destiny bequeathed to him by his mother. The passage of time had etched its marks on Maul's countenance, transforming him into a burly figure with silver-braided hair, a full beard adorning his mouth. Standing at an imposing height of six feet, he stood bare-chested, bearing the visible scars of numerous battles. At his waist, two Viking axes hung, silent witnesses to his prowess.

Alone in his small abode, Maul pondered a safe location for the upcoming hunt for his people. Finding no clear answer, he decided to rely on his usual old method—trusting his keen sense of smell. Rising from his seat, Maul transitioned from his human form to his demigod state—a formidable silver haired werewolf.

Maul had developed a routine of assuming his human guise when in solitude, reserving his demigod form for moments in proximity to his people. This precautionary measure started from a regrettable incident involving humans who share this frigid part of the world with them. Despite swiftly dealing with those responsible, the incident had instilled fear and doubt in his people, even his own children. His human form causes a lot of problems and discussion among his people so to avoid any future trouble, he chooses to keep the human state whenever he is alone.

Opening the door to step outside, Maul was met with the formidable sight of werewolves, each adorned in different-colored fur and armed with various weapons, patiently awaiting their leader's emergence. Unfazed by the biting cold, the werewolves stood bare-chested, donned in minimal clothing to cover their nether regions.

A massive werewolf, his dark hair adorned with streaks of silver, strode forward. Behind him loomed a colossal sword nearly matching his size. Approaching Maul, the werewolf inquired, "Have you decided on the place of the hunt, father?"

As Wulv, his son, conversed aloud, a fleeting shadow of sadness passed through Maul's eyes. Gazing at Wulv, Maul couldn't help but reflect that he was his last surviving offspring. However, a swell of pride accompanied this realization, knowing that Wulv, his son, stood as the mightiest werewolf following in his footsteps.

The werewolves in this icy land matured swiftly, reaching adulthood in just one year, this was a trait they got from their predecessor the wolf. In slightly over five years, their population burgeoned, aided by the blessing bestowed by Maul's mother. Maul, having fathered five children since his journey, saw most of them grow to adulthood only to meet their fate while hunting. The memory of his small and cute daughter being snatched away by a bird haunted him, and the pain resurfaced at the mere thought. Shaking his head to dispel the haunting memories, Maul walked forward, his massive hand finding its place on Wulv's shoulder, squeezing it gently. Pointing at his nose, Maul responded, "No, but I have this."

Addressing the assembly of werewolves, Maul diverted their attention, "Let us offer our prayer to the goddess," before leading them towards the heart of their village.

Their procession toward the central statue drew out female werewolves and children from their homes. They joined the march toward the statue, forming a united front.

As Maul reached the statue, his eyes lifted to his mother's imposing figure, and a quiet thought resonated within him: "I miss her."

Without the need for words, the werewolves commenced their familiar prayer. Maul knelt on one knee, and the others followed suit, their voices echoing in unison, "Blessed lady of the moon, gentle and radiant, in your silver cocoon. As we prepare for this hunt, under your watchful gaze, guide our steps and illuminate our ways." A celestial display ensued, as small lights, reminiscent of stars, emerged around the statue and descended upon each werewolf. The prayer concluded with Maul raising his gaze to the moon, letting out a resonant howl.

The entire tribe, including the children, joined in, signaling to the icy continent that the wolves were about to embark on their hunt.

The chilling howls echoed across the icy expanse, causing many creatures to retreat into hiding or gather with an unmistakable determination. The eyes of various strong beasts gleamed with readiness, acknowledging the imminent hunt.

Maul, having concluded the ritual, rose from his kneeling position, his son Wulv and the other hunters falling into formation behind him. As they reached the village gate, Maul surveyed the frozen landscape, his keen senses alert to the scents that lingered in the frigid air.

A twitch of his nose signaled success, and with a nod to his men, Maul spoke with a low growl, "Get ready." Shifting into a more wolf-like form, he and his hunters followed suit, morphing seamlessly into creatures built for the hunt. Maul dug his claws into the snow, propelling himself forward, disappearing swiftly into the vast whiteness. Wulv and the hunters, mirroring their leader, raced after him.

The journey led them to a small hill of snow, where Maul halted, surveying the icy plain below. His eyes scanned for the elusive prey whose scent had guided them. However, the challenge of hunting in this frozen realm lay in the creatures' adaptations—many sported white fur, camouflaging seamlessly with the snowy surroundings.

Frustration crossed Maul's features, a sentiment shared by the hunters. Hunting those with non-white fur proved easier, but such creatures were often prey, not the formidable quarry they sought. Maul's acute hearing detected approaching footsteps, and as he glanced back, satisfaction filled him at the sight of his assembled team.

Resuming his werewolf form, Maul focused on the icy expanse, gripping two axes tightly. "The prey is out there. Keep your guard up; we're not the only hunters around," he declared, his voice carrying the weight of experience.

Acknowledging their leader's command, the hunters descended from the hill, their steps creating a rhythmic crunch in the snow. Maul led the way, caution etched across his werewolf features, as they ventured forth into the frozen wilderness, getting closer to the elusive creature guided by its scent through the ice-covered terrain.

All of a sudden a snowstorm surrounded them, the sudden change in weather caught Maul and his team off guard, a fierce snowstorm swirling around them, obscuring their vision. Reacting swiftly, Maul's command cut through the howling winds, "Make a circle!"

Wulv, wielding his sword, and the other hunters joined Maul in forming a defensive circle. But one of the hunters, caught in the storm's chaotic grip, was seized by a massive paw with icy claws, disappearing from their midst.

Maul's voice, tense with urgency, rang out, "They are here!" The hunters immediately broke the circle, understanding what their leader meant and the imminent threat. With one member lost, only ten remained. Maul divided the group, leading three, while Wulv took charge of the other half.

Maul planted his axes into the ground, conjuring two ice pillars that lifted both teams above the storm, giving them a better view of their surroundings.