

## Guardian gods 55

### Chapter 55 Scars

His words carried a mix of respect and reverence. Maul's men looked down with sadness, but as he continued, acknowledging the sacrifice, their expressions shifted to one of understanding and respect. Maul's nose twitched as he affirmed, "These two bears weren't the prey that I caught the scent of, but these two will do. Besides, this battle rattled the prey, so its scent is now gone. "Pick up the prey; this was a successful hunt, and we will now head back to the village with pride." Maul said as he howled up to the moon which was always present on this side of the world, his men and son followed right after as they also started howling.

The howl spread through the icy plain as the creatures in it understood a prey must have fallen under the wolves and now the hunt was over.

Maul approached the bear that was struck with his axe, extracting the now bloody axe, snow gathered around wiping the axe clean, Maul proceeded to stomp his leg hard sending mana through the ground. Snow started gathering around the corpses, forming an icy grave for his fallen comrades. The werewolves, admiring and thankful for their leader's action, nodded in unison. With renewed vigor, they began pulling the two bear corpses, returning to the village with a mixture of sorrow for the lost and pride for the successful hunt.

Back in the eastern continent, Ikem continued his journey, nearing the destination marked on his map. Six months had passed since the encounter with the bird, and Ikem had faced numerous challenges, overcoming each one with resilience and determination.

Reflecting on his journey, Ikem traced the burnt scars on his body, a visible reminder of the trials he had endured. His face, fortunately, remained unscarred, but the pain from the fresh wounds lingered. Closing his eyes brought back vivid memories of fire and agony, a haunting nightmare that played every time he tried to rest.

A visible expression of pain crossed Ikem's face, causing concern in the eyes of the two treants accompanying him. The two regretted the incident, realizing the gravity of their mistake. If they had known the outcome, they would have steered their young master away from the perilous route.

The unfortunate event unfolded a week ago when Ikem and the treants encountered a new and awe-inspiring sight—an active volcano. The sight of the flaming mountain, with its molten magma flowing down, fascinated them. Creatures inhabiting this extreme environment added to the spectacle. Caught in the moment, Ikem momentarily forgot the teachings of his father, and the treants, captivated by the view, made no objection when Ikem suggested exploring the fiery mountain.

Several factors contributed to the treants easily agreeing to their young master's request. The forest had become increasingly perilous, with creatures growing more formidable and absurd. The treants, initially enjoying a leisurely journey, found themselves needing to stay vigilant at all times. While they could have concealed their magical energy to mask their presence, doing so would have placed the burden of facing all the danger solely on Ikem. And it was evident that the danger level had surpassed what their young master could handle alone.

The most ridiculous creatures that put a bit of fear into the two treants was a bizarre and perilous encounter with luminescent butterflies, creatures seemingly harmless until they unleashed a threat that sent shivers through the treants. These enormous butterflies dropped small dots of glowing pollen with each flap of their wings. Initially perceived as harmless, the danger became evident when the butterflies approached and perched on the treants, releasing the glowing dots of light.

The seemingly innocuous pollen proved to be insidious, penetrating the treants' bark and started eating them up from the inside. Swiftly realizing the threat, the two treants took decisive action, eliminating the butterflies. Unfortunately, the damage was irreversible, and the treants, now harboring the intruding substance, faced a dire situation.

With no means to counteract the internal damage, the treants made a desperate decision. They removed their own cores, instructing Ikem on what to do with them. The young master, horrified at the turn of events, followed their guidance as the treants emerged anew from the ground where their cores

had been planted, like trees. Yet, this near-death experience became one of the reasons the treants consented to exploring the volcano with Ikem. They didn't mind staying away from the forest a bit.

As they approached the volcano, the landscape transformed, presenting a new and intriguing environment. Ikem thrilled to be away from the dangerous forest, wearing a big smile. However, the closer they came to the volcano, the more oppressive the heat became. The temperature rose dramatically, making the happy tour become nearly unbearable. Ikem felt the discomfort, but it was the two treants, with their wooden physiques, who suffered the most from the intense heat. The excitement of exploring the volcano was cut off by the harsh reality of the scorching environment they were about to enter,

Ikem's elation faded into trepidation as he recalled his father's cautionary words: "I hope, son, you never come across an opponent of your opposing element." When he had asked his father about the element, the response had been "fire"—ironically, the very force he was happily walking into.

The once-happy expression on Ikem's face morphed into concern as he surveyed the volcano, which now in his eyes turned into a dreadful threat. Glancing at the two weakened Treants by his side, Ikem voiced his unease, "This was a bad idea; I think we should leave now."

Seemingly waiting for Ikem to utter those words, the two Treants vigorously nodded in agreement, "Yes, we should leave, maybe another time."

As the trio turned away their back to the volcano and began retreating into the forest, their footsteps abruptly ceased at the thunderous roar emanating from behind them. Turning back with horror-stricken faces, they beheld a colossal lion, with its fiery mane illuminated chasing a huge rat with flames at the end of its tail.

The rat ran past them as they were looking at the lion who now stopped chasing its escaped prey. Instead, it shifted its attention to the trio—two walking trees and a hairless ape—standing before it, an unusual combination in the lion's eyes as it took small steps forward.

As the lion slowly approached, the three took a step back. The water Treant spoke up, "We should make a run for it."

Ikem concurred but added, "I don't think it will just let us do that, besides this type of animal usually has a pack" observing the lion drawing nearer.

As if on cue, two roars came from the surrounding volcano as two Female lioness ran towards the huge lion, upon closer look the lioness were just a tad bit smaller than the lion and at their claws and feet is a small embers of flames wrapped around it.

Bara said nothing, but instead displayed readiness with its waving roots, seemingly poised for action. The lion, perceiving the imminent threat, roared, and the lioness echoed the sentiment. Their slow approach transformed into a sprint.

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The stone Treant proposed, "We should fight back."

"That seems to be the only option," voiced the blood root this time.

Ikem surveyed their surroundings, realizing the disadvantage. "This is bad; it has the home court advantage." Ikem needs a medium for him to manipulate roots as he is not yet capable of making roots appear out of thin air and one thing Ikem has confirmed after looking around was the scorching ground offered none.

"The young master and I are useless in a fight. The only ones capable of significant damage are Brix and Bara," declared the water Treant, using the names assigned by their young master—Brix for the stone Treant, Bara for the blood root, and Aqua for itself.

"Get ready," Ikem commanded, swiftly assuming his demigod form. The mana within him obediently coalesced into a protective armor, and simultaneously, a circular shield materialized in his left hand, while a sword appeared in his right.

Observing their young master preparing for the battle, Brix attempted to follow suit, summoning rocks from the surrounding to form an armor around him. However, he halted, realizing that the rocks carried fire elements—harmful to his Treant form.

Noticing Brix's hesitation, Ikem offered a quick solution, "It doesn't have to adhere to your body; you can let it float around you as a shield."

Accepting Ikem's advice, Brix nodded. The dark flaming stones gathered and merged into a circular shield, mirroring Ikem's. With that complete, Brix used his own mana to shape the earth elements around him into a formidable stone ax, bypassing the problematic fiery rocks.

Aqua, acknowledges that he was the weakest link now, but he still wants to be of help so he decided to emulate something he had seen his creator do. Five massive water drops condensed around him, but the challenging environment caused steams to emanate, demanding more mana to sustain the water drops.

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