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Chapter 57 Drink

The sun hung high in the sky when Ikem reached the entrance of the ape's domain. Taking a deep breath to calm his excitement, he stepped forward, only to swiftly retreat as a wooden spear flew out, landing precisely where he had just stood.

A bow construct materialized in Ikem's hand, and he looked up to find an ape perched in the tree, armed with a spear. Ikem and the ape locked eyes until Aqua's voice came from behind, "Your appearance, young master." Realizing the issue, Ikem dispersed the bow, revealing his demigod form.

Confusion crossed the ape's face, and though it seemed like it wanted to move, it remained in place, abandoning its aggressive stance. The silence lingered until Ikem questioned, "Are you with the apes residing in this forest?"

No clear indication showed that the ape understood, but Ikem caught a flicker of surprise in its expression. Without offering a response, silence settled over the area. After a while, Ikem's demeanor shifted as armor constructs enveloped him, and he wielded a sword and shield in each hand. The treants also readied themselves as they too sensed multiple mana signatures approaching them at a decent speed.

Observing Ikem's actions, the ape resumed its attack stance, readying its spear to throw it. The forest held its breath, tension escalating as the impending confrontation loomed.

The silence lingered as the multiple mana signatures reached them. The spear-wielding ape jumped down as if on cue, and at the same time primates of various sizes and colors emerged, each perched on a tree.

Silent gazes from the apes were fixed on the trio until faint footsteps echoed from the forest. All eyes turned to see an old gorilla, using a stick for support, approaching Ikem with measured steps. The spear-wielding ape walked toward the elderly gorilla, whispering some words. The elder nodded and said nothing before scrutinizing Ikem, circling him.

Having seen enough, the gorilla spoke, "Who are you, boy?"

Ikem was taken aback by the gorilla's ability to initiate clear conversation on its own but quickly composed himself. He was about to proudly proclaim his lineage as the son of the Lord of Nature, Ikenga, but he remembered his father's journal and decided to chose a different path.

"I am the first son of Panacea," Ikem proclaimed with confidence, locking eyes with the elderly gorilla. Surprise flickered across the gorilla's face, and Ikem's words had a ripple effect on the surrounding primates. The once-quiet area buzzed with the chatter of primates talking and pointing at Ikem.

"Silence," the elderly gorilla commanded, striking his stick on the ground. A small wave spread out from the impact, surprising Brix, who felt the earth elements surrounding the gorilla.

Approaching Ikem, the gorilla sniffed him before questioning, "You claim to be related to that being, child."

Ikem understood the reference and nodded firmly. The elder uttered one word, "Proof," catching Ikem off guard. He pondered what he could show to prove his claim.

"I only have this," Ikem said, pulling out the book his father had given him. The elder gorilla examined the book before reaching into its fur, retrieving a glowing green leaf.

As the glowing leaf appeared, Ikem felt the book in his hand tremble, same goes for the elder as the leaf also had a reaction. The book and leaf detached from their owners and floated towards each other, merging seamlessly. The once plain book now bore a glowing green leaf imprint on its cover.

The book returned to Ikem's hand, and the elder, along with all the primates present, immediately knelt and bowed. "Your Majesty," they proclaimed collectively, surprising Ikem with their enthusiasm. Stepping forward, Ikem lifted the elder gorilla and addressed them, "Stand up, everyone. There's no need for this."

The elder complied, placing a hand on Ikem's shoulder. "I am happy to finally meet you, child. I thought I would be long gone by the time you would appear before us. I am truly happy that I held on all this while," the elder expressed, his tone tired yet content.

Ikem wanted to respond, but the elder gestured for him to follow. "This is no place to talk. Come, take a look at your new home and territory. Your companions are invited, of course." A gorilla with red skin and a flaming presence came forward and carried the elder, at the same time casting a curious look at Ikem before leaping onto a tree and swinging further into the forest.

Ikem, puzzled by the look, signaled to the treants, saying, "We are here; let's go." With that, he leaped onto a tree and swung after the primates.

Brix and Aqua exchanged glances before shrugging, their arms stretching to grab onto a tree as they followed Ikem.

As they swung through the forest, a fruity aroma gradually enveloped Ikem the further they headed into the forest. Initially attributing it to the abundance of fruit trees, he soon realized the scent grew stronger even after they were past the fruit trees. Eventually, they reached an opening.

The opening revealed a breathtaking sight—a large pond connected to a waterfall, beside the walls of the waterfall are holes made in the mountain where each primate made their homes. Hanging from various trees in the open spaces were rattan beds, intriguing Ikem with the question of how they learned to craft such things.

However, what truly captivated Ikem was a massive cave where the presence of his father seemed palpable. The fruity scent was also most potent there. The elder observed Ikem heading towards the cave and silently followed. Brix and Bara, curious about the familiar presence of their creator, trailed behind.

Approaching the cave, Ikem discovered a towering tree at its center. As he drew near, a branch extended toward him, revealing the tree's sentience.

The elder, surprised, exclaimed, "It's alive, how?" Ikem turned to him, curiously asking, "What do you know about this tree?"

The elder quickly regained composure, clearing his throat before gazing up at the tall tree. "This tree stands as a sign of your father's reign over primates and his claim over this territory. I remember how the tree sprang from the ground with your father and mother standing on top of it, proclaiming his rule over us after defeating me in a battle," the elder reminisced.

"It has been something of a symbol for us. We recently gained a certain level of mindfulness and understood a bit of the being your father was, the tree became a focal point for worship and a resting

place for our departed, in hopes of getting closer to your father and mother, Panacea," the elder explained.

Chuckling, he added, "Hahaha, it's still something of a surprise to me that this tree is alive. I thought I understood your father, but it seems I'm still lacking," conveying a tone of self-mockery.

Ikem couldn't quite articulate the whirlwind of emotions surging through him. Although he had read about his father's conquest of the primates, the details had remained elusive. Now, hearing the elder's words filled him with excitement. However, his focus remained on the peculiarly sentient tree and its familiar energy, reminiscent of the tattoos and markings on his father's body.

"I don't think father knows about this tree; otherwise, he should have mentioned it in the book. I should keep an eye on this tree," Ikem pondered silently. He attempted to communicate with the tree, but it remained unresponsive, confirming that it had recently gained consciousness.

Shifting his attention back to the elder, Ikem inquired, "What is this fruity smell that I have been perceiving all this time?"

"Hahaha, follow me," the elder chuckled as he led Ikem further into the cave. Soon, they arrived at a small area covered with large plantain-like leaves. Pulling aside the leaves, Ikem was met with the sight of purple, fruity-smelling liquid. Eager for an explanation, Ikem asked, but the elder remained silent, summoning a small stone bowl.

Reaching out to scoop a bit of the purple liquid, the elder took a hearty sip before scooping once more and offering the bowl to Ikem. Hesitating briefly, Ikem closed his eyes and took a small sip, only to open his eyes wide and proceed to take big gulps.

"Wow!" Ikem exclaimed, pointing at the liquid. "What an amazing drink this is!" The elder chuckled again, pleased with Ikem's reaction. "That, my young friend, is the nectar from the various fruits you saw on the way here. Some of the fruits are magical and unique that only grow deep within our territory. The fragrance you noticed earlier is the natural aroma of these fruits after they have been preserved for a long time. The liquid is not only delicious but also known for its rejuvenating properties."

Ikem, still savoring the taste, couldn't help but express his gratitude. "Thank you for sharing this incredible discovery with me. I've never tasted anything like it."

Ikem looked over to Brix and Aqua while offering them the bowl. "You guys have to try this!" The two treants, already curious, went ahead and grabbed themselves a drink to which they gulped down while nodding at the after taste.