

Plot

Berries are the most important asset of the Kingdom of Vilda and simultaneously the most maddening existence. Approximately a century ago—no one knows exactly when it started—beasts with extraordinary intelligence began to appear across the continent. Centered around the southern Origin Forest (now the Royal Forest), they began to spread outward. Contrary to their animal instincts and habits, they started establishing villages, trading goods, and gradually built a system of governance and commerce, living abruptly yet peacefully.

Within ten years, the beasts that had spread beyond the forest discovered remnants of an ancient civilization scattered across the continent. In the ruins of abandoned cities, they uncovered traces of human survival and finally unraveled the mystery of civilization's extinction. Documents found in humanity's last stronghold revealed that people could not escape the consequences of their greed and stubbornness, leading to their ultimate demise.

In the era before the kingdom was established, the beasts, through their explorations, gradually discovered an astonishing truth. The very thing that granted them wisdom and abilities—the catalyst of their evolution—was the golden berries growing in the Origin Forest. These berries emitted a golden glow even at night, with the seeds resembling eyes that watched over all creation. The beasts began harvesting these berries, aiming to "humanize" their animal kin who had not yet evolved by consuming the berries, in order to claim resources and expand their dominance.

The fastest to evolve were the Chicken Clan, whose rapid humanization allowed them to occupy the entire southern continent. Although other clans attempted to overturn the situation, they were outnumbered and defeated. In the north, various beast clans were scattered and disorganized due to their lack of access to the golden berries, making it difficult for them to achieve anything significant.

Just as the situation seemed settled, the entire continent was suddenly overrun with purple berries overnight. Similar to the golden berries, these emitted an eerie purple glow that struck fear into the hearts of all. It was as if the heavens, concerned about the imbalance, had provided an opportunity for a new wave of change. The beasts discovered that the purple berries bestowed different attributes on animals, including the ability to use magic. They viewed these berries as both a weapon and a chance to change the course of history.

Various clans, whether forming alliances or acting alone, launched attacks on the Chicken Clan. Although the Chicken Clan was indeed overwhelmed by the simultaneous assaults, this only plunged the continent into a twenty-year-long war. Original alliances broke

apart, reformed in chaos, and collapsed again during negotiations. This cycle of conflict left the weaker beasts suffering and the stronger ones weary.

A glimmer of hope for ending the prolonged war emerged in the hands of the Bear Clan. Forming an alliance with three northern clans, the Bear Clan, driven by the ideal of unifying the land, launched a rebellion. They reclaimed territories and garnered the support of civilians across various factions. Amidst the cheering, the Bear Clan finally negotiated a truce with the last resisting Chicken Clan fifty years ago, thus establishing the Kingdom of Vilda, leading the continent towards a peaceful future. The Bear Clan ascended the throne amidst widespread acclaim, becoming the beloved rulers of the land, ending the so-called "Berry War".

Under the leadership of the royal family, the citizens began exploring the remnants of human civilization. They drew knowledge from the materials and texts left behind by humans, leading to a significant technological leap. The Royal Research Institute established a new national system based on this knowledge, repairing the ruins of human cities and restoring them to habitable and developable conditions.

However, just as reconstruction and technological development were in full swing, the king abruptly announced a halt to the kingdom's pursuit of further technological advancements. The Kingdom of Vilda decreed that human fate should serve as the ultimate warning to avoid repeating past mistakes.

They maintained the level of civilization that existed before humanity's disappearance and ceased further development and resource exploitation. The highest directive was to live in harmony with the land, protecting it above all else. To balance urban pollution and damage, the vast southern lands centered around the Origin Forest were designated as royal territories, becoming an untouched nature reserve.

In the city of Yueben, where the Bear Clan's uprising began, the beasts, under the royal family's guidance, initiated a war festival centered around the purple berries. This festival not only showcased the power of the berries but also served as a grim reminder of the horrors of war, preventing the citizens from falling into endless conflict. The purple berries granted the participating beasts temporary and varied magical abilities. The festival, held annually at unpredictable times, became a pilgrimage for the entire kingdom, drawing millions of visitors to Yueben each year.

Through the kingdom's research, the beasts also glimpsed the past of human civilization. White, who called himself the base commander, was recognized as the last human and became a symbol of reflection and propaganda for the Kingdom of Vilda. His statue stands in the capital's center, reminding the citizens never to follow in humanity's footsteps. Three years ago, the Royal Research Institute discovered startling information, causing a stir throughout the kingdom. The chief publicly stated, "I believe our research on

the berries is accurate. The origin of the golden berries remains unclear, but it is certain that the purple berries grew from human bones scattered across the continent. Based on this fact, we must be even more vigilant to avoid humanity's fate!"

This statement continues to spark debate in the academic world, with some conspiracy theorists claiming it is a royal ploy to promote environmental conservation. Nevertheless, the citizens remain living peacefully in the lifestyle inherited from humans, and this year's war festival will proceed as usual, with everything as it always has been.

Guilds

The unique aspect of the war festival is that, besides individual combat, participants also have the right to join guilds for team battles. These guilds are legal organizations under the jurisdiction of the War Festival Committee, with all guilds registered and operating under its supervision. Guilds are the best places for people to hone their skills, and they sometimes form alliances on the battlefield, working together towards victory.

Character Story: Bart (Cat)

As an ancient creature, the cat has finally found its place after being domesticated by humans for nearly ten thousand years. Bart is a member of this noble race. However, unlike his kin, he has no world-renowned achievements nor has he been granted any official position under his ancestors' glory. He is the most low-key member of this generation of cats and the only one who left the capital.

Years ago, Bart gave up an opportunity to work at the Royal Research Institute. With just a backpack, he began heading east. He had no specific direction, simply wandering like an adventurer, and eventually, he found himself in Yueben City, the birthplace of the heroic uprising. The royal family's influence enveloped the city, with decorations reminiscent of the capital, and the citizens were well-versed in royal deeds. However, compared to the conservative capital, Yueben City had the vigor and courage befitting its status as the starting point of change. This was evident in daily life and even more so in the war festival.

It seemed that a fascination with combat was etched into his blood, just like the ancient deities, and Bart harbored an ancient desire to dominate the battlefield. In several war festivals, he could feel this urge boiling within his veins. But the training he received since childhood prevented him from immediately joining the fray. He quelled his restless thoughts and spent three years observing the war festival from the sidelines, familiarizing himself with the rules of battle and avoiding the mistakes of those who came before him.

This year, Bart finally decided to participate in the war festival. However, he was neither a local resident nor a renowned warrior, so he received little attention, let alone any discussion. But this was also why Bart liked the city; the people were courageous yet not blindly obedient. They praised the royal family without appearing sycophantic. Perhaps this was the true manifestation of the kingdom's ethos, fully displayed in this city and, by extension, the war festival.

Character Story: Miguel (Chicken)

The Chicken Clan has always been unpopular, a fact known to everyone. Miguel is a member of the Chicken Clan living in Yueben City. It was unusual for them to leave their northern homeland, and Miguel being born in Yueben City was an accident from the start. His father, Arthur, joined a traveling education team and brought his two older sisters and his heavily pregnant mother to support a remote southern village. However, they encountered a traditional village that held a deep-seated prejudice against the Chicken Clan due to past oppression. The locals even believed the Chicken Clan were demonic incarnations, resulting in extreme hostility towards Arthur's family.

Unable to stay, Arthur planned to return home after a short two-week stint. However, while stopping to rest in Yueben City, Miguel's mother experienced severe labor pains and gave birth to him there. To allow his wife to care for baby Miguel and avoid further travel-related complications, Arthur decided to stay in Yueben City and requested a permanent transfer from his unit.

Fortunately, Yueben City, despite being the origin of the Bear Clan uprising, did not succumb to old hatreds. While they weren't overly welcoming, they did not discriminate against Arthur's family. Growing up in Yueben City, Miguel developed a keen interest in the Berry Wars, even feeling a stronger affinity for the allied forces outside of the Chicken Clan. Arthur, who worked as a teacher at Yueben Elementary School, was well-liked by his students, and the family lived comfortably.

Earlier this year, Miguel's request to participate in the war festival nearly caused a family upheaval. Arthur, who had always been charitable and opposed violence, could not comprehend the appeal of a festival centered around combat and mutual harm. Having never attended the festival during their years in Yueben City, Arthur had no understanding of it. However, Miguel patiently explained his perspective, framing his participation as an anti-war statement, and finally convinced his father.

This year will be Miguel's first time participating in the war festival. More importantly, it will be the first time a member of the Chicken Clan competes, adding a new dimension to the festival's mission and highlighting its principles more effectively.

Character Story: Sloan (Elephant)

The Elephant Clan, known for their immense size and strength, are renowned for their contributions to rebuilding human cities. Their natural strength and ability to handle construction tasks quickly made them invaluable in construction sites and material transportation. Sloan, the most famous worker in Yueben City, exemplifies this. His construction sites are always bustling with energy, and his trunk can lift up to 300 kilograms of steel, making him a favorite among foramen.

Despite his large size, Sloan has a gentle temperament. He always maintains a friendly demeanor, fearing that his imposing figure might scare passing children. His participation in the war festival happened by accident. While helping to set up the festival's framework, he was unexpectedly selected by a visiting committee member, unintentionally becoming a participant in this year's festival.

Although it was an accident, Sloan took his preparation seriously. He even visited the Human History Museum to explore his origins. He discovered that humans had a history of training war elephants long before elephants gained human-like intelligence. Realizing that his greatest assets were his massive size and tusks, Sloan decided to focus on these strengths for his festival training.

In addition to personal training, Sloan joined the "Guild of Tusked Animals" to spar with other contestants and gain new experiences and advice. He gave his all, hoping to leverage his clan's strengths to secure a place in the festival. This is Sloan the elephant, embodying both strength and perseverance, exemplifying the war festival's spirit.

Character Story: Lab (Monkey)

The Monkey Clan is the most unique among the beastmen. As the animal most similar to humans before transformation, they are believed to communicate with untransformed monkeys, though the Monkey Clan denies this. In fact, most monkey beastmen never see monkeys in their lifetime, but this is not the case for the people of Yueben City. The Monkey Clan forms a significant part of the city's population, making them more distinctive in this mountainous city. Public schools regularly organize forest visits for the Monkey Clan, ensuring that all students see untransformed monkeys to deepen their understanding of their species.

Lab is one of these many monkey students. He wasn't sure how to react upon seeing his untransformed kin. However, in his reflection, Lab wrote, "The difference between us and monkeys is that we do not incite conflict arbitrarily." This left a strong impression on his mentor. Unlike his classmates who discussed berries and human history, Lab preferred focusing on fundamental issues.

Because of this, Lab showed an early interest in the war festival. During middle school, he even criticized the festival for deviating from its principles. However, as he grew older, his perspective on the festival evolved, understanding the irreplaceable symbolic significance of reminding people of history. To promote anti-war ideals, he volunteered at the festival for several years, contributing to its smooth operation.

On his twentieth birthday, Lab excitedly registered for the war festival, and years have passed since, yet he remains a consistent participant. The Monkey Clan, known for their strong unity, always supports their contestants wholeheartedly. Lab, a standout with numerous achievements, is undoubtedly a star player. This year, as always, the Monkey Clan will fully support Lab in the war festival, fighting for passion and ideals.

Character Story: Amos (Water Buffalo)

The Water Buffalo Clan is undoubtedly the royal family's warriors. They have been awarded royal medals multiple times and consistently make up the highest proportion of the royal guards. Their imposing presence can deter even the fiercest of animals. The lineup of Water Buffalo guards is the pride of the Vida Kingdom and the king's most reliable shield.

Amos once participated in the royal guard selection due to familial expectations and pressure, but due to the rule that only one member per family can be selected, he lost to his brother, Raymond. This did not deter his spirit; in fact, it somewhat fulfilled his own wishes. Unlike Raymond, who aspired to join the royal guards, Amos found the idea of standing motionless under the scorching sun too arduous, so he was relieved by the outcome.

In Amos's view, the pursuit of the essence and spirit of war was far more fascinating than the monotonous duty of guarding royal majesty. He aspired to be a traveler, roaming the continent to collect artifacts and information related to the Berry Wars to fulfill his dream of researching that historical period. At eighteen, he bid farewell to his parents and embarked on his long-awaited journey. He passed through the Origin Forest, where the berries were first discovered (now a restricted area controlled by the royal family), towns occupied by the Chicken Clan, and finally arrived in Yueben City as planned.

Before his journey, Amos had studied the war festival and was drawn to its spirit of peace. Despite knowing the grandeur and excitement of the festival, he was unfamiliar with Yueben City. After eagerly registering for the festival, he wandered the city, determined to understand it fully before the competition began. Thus, Amos decided to stay in Yueben City, exploring it thoroughly before the war drums started to beat.

Character Story: Walker (Rhino)

Walker is recognized as the most enthusiastic public servant in Yueben City. He volunteers for more organizations than anyone else in the city, dedicating almost all his time outside of school to various volunteer activities, including government services, hospital assistance, and of course, the war festival. He always helps those he encounters with a cheerful smile, leaving a great impression on the citizens.

However, the history of the Rhino Clan is not as pleasant. From human records, they learned that even before humanity's extinction, rhinos had become rare due to poaching. The number of rhinos capable of anthropomorphizing was already small, and their plight worsened. Despite their generally gentle nature and solitary habits, their strong physique and formidable horns made them prime candidates for military drafts by various leaders, including the bear army, where they became indispensable. Consequently, their numbers dwindled drastically, and now only a few remain.

Walker is one of these rare individuals. His grandparents perished during the war, and he has only a few relatives left. This scarcity drives Walker to seek connections with strangers, partly to fill the void left by his lack of a close-knit community. This year, encouraged by friends, Walker reluctantly signed up for the war festival. They were curious to see how effective the rhino's horn would be in combat.

It was through these conversations that Walker realized he lacked a deep understanding of his nearly extinct clan. He knew little about how his ancestors contributed to the Berry Wars and became a formidable force. Driven by a desire to learn more about his heritage, Walker decided to participate in the festival this year, hoping to find answers that would help him connect with his lineage.

Character Story: Chichi (Chick)

The chicken clan possesses a unique trait that scholars have yet to fully explain—the anthropomorphization of chicks. In other species, if a youngling is anthropomorphized, they typically resemble human children. However, chickens are different. A newly hatched chick, still in its downy feathers, when anthropomorphized, transforms into a new species. They grow old but never become chickens again. Most scholars consider chicks a subspecies of the chicken clan, making them a hot topic in recent discussions on berry anthropomorphization.

Chichi is a famous elderly chick in Yueben City. Despite his advanced age, he maintains the appearance of a young yellow chick. His physical aging hasn't kept pace with his mental faculties, creating a paradoxical existence—diminished cognition but robust physical health. Chichi has three sons, all approaching middle age, who eagerly participate in

the war festival activities, displaying a childlike curiosity and enthusiasm ingrained in their bones.

Interestingly, chicks seem to possess a natural aversion to aging, with many older participants in their clan continuing to engage actively. Chichi, in recent years due to declining mental acuity, hadn't signed up for the war festival until mid-year. However, a sudden change occurred. Against his sons' objections, Chichi, despite his cognitive decline, managed to bring home a war festival flyer, expressing his desire to participate. Despite their efforts to dissuade him, his sons eventually relented, reluctantly agreeing to Chichi's wish to join the festival.

They speculate that the pivotal reason behind Chichi's sudden decision lies in his past experiences. As a chick, Chichi was often underestimated—considered unintelligent or simply as muscular children. To challenge this perception, he participated in the war festival when he was younger and achieved remarkable success. The triumphs from those years remained unforgettable for him, likely fueling his sudden desire to participate once more. With this understanding, his sons are determined to fulfill Chichi's dream of participating in the festival, ensuring that he becomes a respected veteran in this year's event, fighting for his memories and dreams.

Character Story: Nova (Frog)

The frog clan, as one of the few amphibious species to be anthropomorphized, unexpectedly possesses significant combat prowess. Tree frogs form the majority of the frog clan in Yueben City, spread across the entire continent, including the densely populated city itself. When discussing the frog clan in Yueben City, one cannot omit the Bai family. They are a deeply rooted tree frog family in Yueben City, with dozens of members engaged in various professions. Among them, Nova stands out as the most famous.

Nova serves as the Director of Tourism for Yueben City, annually responsible for promoting the war festival, making her intimately familiar with the city's advantages. The city's image and development owe much to her efforts. Despite her prominent role in tourism, Nova never adopts bureaucratic airs and actively participates in the war festival every year, a tradition she has upheld for over a decade.

Beyond her role as a government official, Nova is universally acknowledged not only for her administrative prowess but also for genuinely enjoying every moment of the war festival. Her unique skill lies in the mucus she retained from her anthropomorphization, a source of pride for the tree frog clan.

Despite being a government official, Nova blends seamlessly with the common folk during the war festival, lacking any resource advantage or airs of superiority. She embodies

the true spirit of the festival. In addition to her duties promoting Yueben City, Nova herself is a stellar public figure, consistently ranked among the most popular public personalities in the kingdom. Her naturally gentle and amiable personality as a frog clan member is evident, yet her steadfast dedication to matters concerning Yueben City showcases her capability to lead the city towards a brighter future. Under her guidance, Yueben City's reputation continues to flourish, promising even greater accomplishments in the future.

Character Story: Bondi (Rabbit)

The rabbit clan boasts a vast population within the Vida Kingdom, second only to the chicken clan, thanks to their ancestors' exceptional reproductive abilities. However, managing such a large population poses challenges, leading the rabbit clan to discourage excessive anthropomorphization and high birth rates. They firmly believe that their current numbers strike a delicate balance, sufficient to sustain the clan without jeopardizing its survival. The Rabbit Clan Association advocates for a maximum of three children per family annually, making them the only clan in the kingdom to recommend birth control measures.

Despite this, Bondi finds herself among twelve siblings, a fact she can only laughingly acknowledge. For the Bondi family, participating in the war festival is a cherished tradition. Every adult member under twenty-five participates in the festival as a bonding activity. The Bondi household is renowned for its harmonious and close-knit atmosphere, where participation in the war festival is approached with enthusiasm rather than solemnity. However, this does not diminish their competitive spirit. Several of Bondi's brothers have even achieved victory medals in past festivals.

This year marks Bondi's third participation in the war festival, and her excitement is palpable. She has a personal incentive: if she manages to win any medal, even the participation award given to the most participants, her parents have promised her a car. This prospect of finally commuting to school by car after years of exhausting travel is a dream come true for Bondi. She confidently boasts to her siblings that nothing will stand in her way of victory.

The Bondi family remains a prominent presence in the war festival, akin to the white clouds of summer or the drifting snow of winter, exuding a youthful and vibrant energy essential to the festival's atmosphere. They fight not only for their own interests but also for the spirit of family unity and tradition.

Character Story: Mostr (Bear)

The Bear clan is renowned in the Vida Kingdom for its nobility and prowess. Fierce yet wise, massive yet agile, they command respect both before and after anthropomorphization. In the bustling city of Moonben, there exists one such individual

carrying this rare bloodline: Mostr. He is a descendant of a secondary branch of the Bear clan's royal family, endowed with power and wealth, living a life of luxury without any concerns about sustenance. Despite being such an enviable figure within the Bear clan, Mostr has willingly immersed himself in Moonben's war festival.

The roots of Mostr's involvement can be traced back to his childhood. Living in the capital, he resided in the palace with his mother, not far from the king and queen. Growing up amidst military discussions and hunting expeditions, where he witnessed the king's majestic demeanor during these activities, Mostr developed a childhood dream—to become a leader like the king, commanding respect yet approachable.

As Mostr matured, he realized the impracticality of this dream. Achieving the stature of the king was not only improbable but also irrelevant in an era of peace where military prowess was less valued. Mostr, lacking exceptional political acumen or military prowess, decided after graduating from university to redirect his ambitions towards Moonben, a city historically tied to royal uprisings, to get closer to the glorious past of the Bear clan's martial exploits.

Today, Mostr has become a renowned participant in Moonben's war festival. Endowed with the Bear clan's combat abilities, he defeats opponents effortlessly, often seen as a consistent victor in the festival. However, as the number of festival participants rises annually, Mostr's victories are no longer as assured. Nonetheless, he maintains an optimistic outlook, believing that the festival's growth benefits both Moonben and the royal clans. Thus, this year, he eagerly prepares to once again join the festival, fighting for the glory that resides within his heart.