

The Oracle Paths

Volume 4: The Purgatory

Chapter 497 – Jake vs Nylreg (part 3)

This should have made him despair, but his hunger for victory and his dedication to the fight had at long last reached a satisfactory level. He was now in the zone sometimes referred to by top athletes.

Now that he was in this condition, searching for speed was no longer relevant and he began to carefully control his Aether to shield the remaining parts. The 27 tons of liquid alloy in his possession became a heavy metal sphere wrapped around him and he proceeded to use it as a kind of quicksand to engulf Nylreg's arms or legs at the slightest opportunity.

Each time, the Digestor's punches, kicks and claws would slow down, but never enough to be stopped completely. Neither his telekinesis, nor his Silver Stone Skin, nor his Aether of Constitution were enough to neutralize the overwhelming violence of these attacks. In the end, with each strike, a new impact would shake his muscles, bones and organs already reduced to mush, and from time to time a claw would manage to tear off a piece of flesh.

After another long minute of fighting, Jake had only his head and fangs to fight with, but thanks to his freakish Constitution and his accessories, he was still alive and kicking.

With only his head to protect and his killing intent still as strong as ever, he finally began to find some sort of balance between the enemy's offensive power and his own defensive might.

Using telekinesis and plasma jets to propel himself at breakneck speeds, his mental acumen and fighting skills gradually grew sharper. Just before moving, he would retract the liquid alloy into his Space Storage, then immediately rematerialize it before defending.

His ability to wield the liquid alloy was also in its infancy, and by applying the concepts contained in the Soul Stone, he began to manipulate this mass of liquid metal more and more boldly.

At first, Nylreg's attacks had no trouble piercing these metal spheres constructed on the fly, but soon he started to notice that Jake was quickly adapting to his speed and his counterattacks became increasingly more savage.

When Sigmar's son sank his long claws into a new liquid alloy sphere for the umpteenth time to gouge out his eyes or rip out his brain, the sphere instantly warped to form a steel wall several meters thick. At the same time, millions of Sharpening Aether points were injected by Jake from within and as he thrust his arm into it, Nylreg felt intense pain for the first time.

When he urgently pulled his right arm out, he found that the natural chitin armor had been damaged. Looking hard at the sphere of liquid alloy, his face fell as he discovered that it was no longer liquid metal, nor even a solid wall, but a mass of razor-sharp microblades.

'All right, you asked for it.' Nylreg snorted evilly.

Reaching out to the cosmos, he held his hand up for a few seconds until an object shot towards him with tremendous speed. When Jake saw the item after cancelling his liquid alloy sphere, he was appalled to recognize his right leg that had vanished earlier into the sidereal void.

Wondering what Nylreg would do with it, his eyes bulged out as he saw him bring it to his mouth, salivating, and then bite into it like a chicken drumstick.

Instantly, a sort of crystalline galaxy appeared behind the Digestor's pupils and a network of glowing veins began to show through his chitin. A fiery aura and a strong radioactivity began to radiate from his body, and Jake distinctly perceived how much stronger his body and mind had become.

'Crap... All right, it's a goddamned Digestor... Fine, I don't care anymore! If I have to die, I'll just beat the living shit out of him.' Jake swore inwardly as he finally decided to fight back with his whole Soul.

All of his Spirit Body and Killing intent merged into his Myrtharian left eye and with his remaining mental strength he used what was left of his telekinesis to push the Aether Sun Core back towards him.

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On the other hand, he got the burst of power he was looking for at the cost of unimaginable pain. At the same time, Nylreg's silver chitin also began to deform and steam under such heat and radioactivity and it made him more aware that the former Fluid Grandmaster was not invincible.

'DIE!'

When the mindblinding laser containing all of his killing intent, resolution, Soul and therefore True Will was released from his left eye,

along with the Apex Predator Glyph, the Harbinger of Chaos Glyph appeared vividly for the first time.

The white laser operating in both the physical and spiritual realms traveled the distance in an infinitesimal amount of time and Nylreg was stricken before he could even react. Even with his inhuman reflexes he could not avoid a Soul attack delivered at the speed of light.

‘Aaaaaaaarrggh!’

The agonizing cry of agony was by far the sweetest melody Jake had ever heard, but he was too transfixed by his own burning Soul to care. He did, however, see silver blood dripping from Nylreg’s molten chitin helmet as he grabbed his head with both hands, but his heart froze when he saw Nylreg straighten up indifferently not even three seconds later. When the silver chitin was restored intact a blink of an eye later, there was no trace left of his final attack.

As for Jake, he had long since stored the Purgatory and his Aether Sun Core. The back half of his head was gone and his entire face and brain had been roasted to a crisp. He was blind and deaf and without the Aether Vision on his bracelet he would have been in utter darkness.

Even after all this, however, his will to fight was still intact even though his Spirit Body was only one tenth of its original size and his True Will point had been completely depleted. Without it, the Corruption gradually took over and he felt his consciousness fade again.

His body having become useless, he stored it in his Space Storage and stood before Nylreg in his spiritual form, which emitted a tiny amount of heat and radiance not even close to that of a light bulb. Yet despite his debilitating weakness and agonizing consciousness, the way he glared at his opponent was still ridiculously valiant.

Io hmqqftrtut zulnuho, usur dzmq f Daeulomz.

‘I don’t quite understand you humans.’ Nylreg sighed with a slight frown that was probably the closest expression to discomfiture a Digestor could muster. ‘You are strong. If you had wanted to, you could have run. If you wanted to, you could have simply stayed under your Oracle Shield or returned to your home world. But in the end, just to protect your friends, you compromised yourself. If they were worth your sacrifice as mediocre as they are, they should have fought with you to the end. The weak exist to serve the strong, not the other way around. Never the other way around.’

‘Was it really worth it?’ Nylreg asked curiously at the end.

Jake didn’t have an immediate answer. He wasn’t sure himself, and he had doubted it more than once. If he hadn’t wanted to challenge Nylreg deep down to test his limits, perhaps he would have shared the same opinion. But in the end, protecting his friends was the goal of one of his Oracle Missions and he had already let too many die.

He had no regrets. As an answer, he steeled himself for his last fight, even though he was now just a candle flame about to go out at the slightest wind.

‘It was worth it!’

It wasn’t Jake who had shouted that. Turning around stiffly, he was thunderstruck to discover several familiar figures he thought to have saved with his suicidal fight.

He recognized the pink hairstyle and the innocent but fierce look of the two sisters. He recognized Kyle’s conflicted feelings of fear and courage, as well as Carmin’s mesmerizing beauty. At last, with unabashed disbelief, he recognized Wyatt.

It was he who had spoken.

Both Vampires were cyanotic from the lack of oxygen and were suffering terribly, but their undying Vampire bodies allowed them to endure the punishment. As long as their heads were on their shoulders, they would never truly die.

Nylreg had been so focused on Jake that he didn't notice any of it either and his stunned expression was as startled as he was. His legendary Digestor equanimity was definitely shaken and the lingering symptoms of the original Nylreg's existential crisis resurfaced at that moment, establishing that Nylreg's human and Digestor nature were indeed one and the same.

Upon seeing Jake's condition, the two sisters gasped in horror and his Soul was immediately showered with pleasant pink flames combining Fire and Healing Elements. His damaged Spirit Body and Soul were instantly rekindled and a new True Will point was produced with the resurgence of his mental clarity.

He then retrieved his charred half head from his Space Storage and let the pink flames wash over it without much hope. Nylreg let them do so, observing their reactions before reverting to his usual malevolent iciness.

'If you want to die together, who am I to judge. Come!'
