

Chronicles of Okalatl

There is one immutable law in the universe, "you cannot get something from nothing". Oyo Taki, one of the oldest gods in all the realms knew this better than most. After all he was responsible for countless worlds that now resided in the eternal void. Once again, he would make a new one.

But to do so required sacrifice, effort, tears, blood. Nothing was off limits, nothing was sacred, for a new world required much, and even gods struggled with such tasks.

The first task usually being the hardest. The origin of the world, the very seed of its creation. Most couldn't do it on their own, and Oyo Taki was now too old and worn from creating worlds to do this without aid.

Knowing his limitations Oyo Taki had gone to the edges of the realms, where a creature even older than he resided. In the land where dark and light collided to form the sparingly few islands that one could reside the oldest of the world builders resided.

"Greetings Enyut, my old and great friend" Oyo Taki said with a smile as he saw the colossal snail shell resting on the black sands as the bright white sky loomed above.

"You want something don't you, Oyo. Otherwise, none come to these treacherous lands" Enyut said as the slimy humanoid torso that was came out from the snail shell.

"Oh, you know me so well Enyut, but you know that these lands are nothing compared to what I'm about to do" Oyo said as he gazed up towards the towering creature.

"More creation? Is it never enough for you?" Enyut said as he began to lean forward.

"Until I am no more, I will always create, and we both know that I am not what I used to be" Oyo said with sadness in his eyes.

"And have the worlds you made been worth it, worth your health and youth?" Enyut continued.

"Yes, even if most have now been swallowed by the void, they were all worth it" Oyo declared.

"Well, you know the rules, what will you sacrifice for my help?" Enyut said.

"How about a wager, we haven't done one of those in a while..." Oyo said as he averted his eyes from Enyut

"If you want a wager, I ask for a favour first, after all you get nothing for free" Enyut said coldly.

"I see, then what favour do you need me to do for you?" Oyo said knowing full well that this would hurt.

"I came to this realm a long time ago, in search of a pearl of pure dark light. a paradox that could only be found on the edges of creation. After billions of years searching, I have finally found it" Enyut said as he pointed to a pool of darkness.

"At the bottom of that pool is the pearl, now I could swim to get it, but we both know that it would be beyond painful for one as slow as myself to reach it" Enyut said with a smile.

"Ah, but you also know that I will be badly hurt trying to pull such a stunt. So why don't we make this task part of our wager?" Oyo said.

"Please, do you believe me naïve enough to believe that you could fail such a simple task? In your youth we both saw you dive into the raging inferno and the endless void itself; this pool of darkness will not kill you, no matter how long you stay in there" Enyut said.

"No but I will bleed, my body is not what it once was. After all such feats have taken its toll on me, slowly weakening me, slowly killing me." Oyo said.

"Well, you have heard my demands, now tell me yours, for if we are to do a wager, I want to know what it is that you desire from me?" Enyut said as he continued the game.

"The origin of creation is the hardest and as the master of light and darkness I need someone to split the day from the night. We both know that such a feat would almost be impossible for me to accomplish on my own. But for you that should not be that hard" Oyo said looking away from Enyut again.

Enyut laughed for a minute before he spoke again.

"I see, that is why you wanted a wager, you have nothing to give me in your old age that would be worth my time. But I have spent a lifetime looking for my pearl I will not lose this opportunity that fate has brought me. Fetch me my pearl and then we will play this game of yours Oyo Taki." Enyut said as he waved an arm to dismiss the old god.

Disrobing until he was naked Oyo took a step into the darkness. He could feel his flesh bubble away very slowly as the darkness began to consume him, little by little. As Oyo stood with his feet in the darkness he took one last breath, one that would be his only air in the dark pool.

Gingerly he dove into the darkness. With each stroke of his arm, he could feel his fingers being eaten away, as if tiny ants chewed at every inch of his flesh. Oyo had closed his eyes, for there was nothing to see. there was no smell, no sound, and nothing that could be seen.

It felt like hours, but eventually he reached the bottom of the pool, he could feel the sand, and so he opened his eyes. They burnt as if someone had poured vinegar into them, but off in the distance Oyo could see a bright light. he closed his eyes and moved in that direction.

Counting the number of strokes, he reached his destination precisely. With his hand he grabbed the perfectly smooth orb, he could tell that this was the pearl. Firmly in his grasp he pushed with all his might away from the sand. With his effort he reached halfway back to the surface, and he calmly kicked the rest of the way.

By the time he had reached the shore his flesh had split in many areas, his once wrinkly fingers were now bloody stumps of flesh, his eyes were blood shot, and he could hardly see.

As Oyo stepped out, he took one last look at the pearl to make sure that he had picked the right one and feeling that he had he walked to Enyut who had retreated into his shell again.

"I have come with your pearl Enyut" Oyo said triumphantly.

Enyut came out with a flat bowl made out of bone, and he placed it in front of Oyo.

"That is to collect your blood, might as well not let it go to waste" Enyut said as he stretched his arms towards Oyo. Oyo calmly placed the pearl in his hands and then stood over the bowl letting his blood drip there as they talked.

"So, I have done what you asked, and I have to say you were right such a task would have been incredibly difficult for one such as yourself" Oyo said with a fake smile.

"Yes, it would have been" Enyut said barely paying attention to the conversation as he admired the pearl, that glowed with a light that made others darker.

"So, what do you need that pearl for anyway? the amount of sacrifice you have put into it must mean that it is incredibly important" Oyo murmured as he continued to bleed.

"Oh, I too wish to make a world, but unlike yours I don't send my creations into the void. No, I wish to make something that will last longer than I have. For that I need to collect many, many more things of this calibre. After all it will be the legacy that I will be remembered for" Enyut said as he finally placed the pearl inside his shell.

"Well, I look forward to such a marvel, after all if you are willing to put this much into such a project it will definitely be worth it. The only regret is that I don't know if I will be alive to see it" Oyo said with sincerity.

"Well, I don't know when it will be completed, after all I may not live long enough to even begin to make such an impossible goal into a reality. Only time will tell if our efforts amount to much, old friend" Enyut said with a small smile.

Both entities then stood silently for a moment. To them it felt like an eternity, for their next words would once again reshape their relationship. It was inevitable, for all things change, and even the gods and their peers could not stay in limbo for ever.

Before words were spoken Enyut motioned for Oyo to step off the plate. With one hand Enyut grabbed the plate and drank the dark liquid, and with the other he motioned Oyo to follow him as they both began to march across the dark sand.

They both marched in silence until Enyut arrived at an area that had 5 huge pools of darkness. In the middle of the pools stood a withered tree, with bark made of darkness. Here and there one could see the sap of the tree leak, each drop as bright as the stars in the night sky.

"Here is the Tree of Existence. Its sap tastes of defeat, death, and despair. But those that are not consume by the sap will not be able to die, gaining immortality. Well one that will keep you alive as long as this tree

exists. On the other hand, this will not give you regenerations, nor pain relief." Enyut said.

"How do you know this? Have you been using it?" Oyo asked in surprise.

"Yes, but not this one. Beyond the horizon I have been growing a forest of these things, but mine are but little saplings at the moment" Enyut said.

"For your project?" Oyo asked almost knowing the answer.

"Yes, for my dreams are greater than any taboo" Enyut said giving Oyo a knowing glance.

"Well, there is no such things as taboos when making worlds, so neither of us has broken any rules" Oyo said with a smile but knowing full well that he was stalling.

"Well let's get on with the wager, shall we?" Enyut said darkening the mood.

"This is going to hurt, isn't it?" Oyo asked quietly.

"More than anything else, but it was your idea to ask for a wager, so here it is. Unless you are too cowardly to accept your own proposal" Enyut said, jabbing at one of the few nerves that Oyo had.

"So, what I need to dive into those pools?" Oyo asked determination gleaming in his eyes.

"Oh, not so simple my old friend. You see these pools hold the wretches of other worlds. Those things that remain before being entirely consume by the darkness. Now this isn't an impossible task, there is a finite number of things in these pools." Enyut exclaimed.

"So, what is the wager? That I can't clean them all before giving up?" Oyo Taki asked now curious of what the snail creature had in mind.

"No, I don't think you have it in you to do all five. So, if you can do 3, and fully empty them, I will carry out the deed you asked of me. Now if you fail or refuse, then you will be my slave until my goal is finished" Enyut said.

"I will accept those terms, but only if we make a second wager, unless you are afraid of raising the stakes?" Oyo said with confidence.

"Oh, and what would that be?" Enyut asked with genuine surprise.

"If I do all five pools then you have to let me help you with your project once it starts" Oyo said.

"Then if you fail to make all five, ha-ha, you have to collect all the things for the project and not interfere once they are finished" Enyut said.

"Then as my word is my bond I agree to these terms" Oyo exclaimed.

"My word is ever lasting, and I too agree to these terms" Enyut said.

With a couple of breaths to calm himself Oyo Taki began to move towards the first pool. His hubris and pride had gotten him into trouble yet again, but he could do it. For he could not afford to fail. Or let others create greater works of creation than him. As he moved closer, he pool began to concentrate on himself. He would not let the darkness defeat him, for he had greater projects to work on.

With one last breath he gulped as much air as he could, and swiftly he dove beneath the darkness. Again, his flesh began to be consumed. He could feel himself slowly withering into dust.

Oyo Taki pressed on and on, with each kick, each stroke, he dove deeper and deeper. This time he could tell that the pool was deeper than the last, for he kept his eyes open the whole time. However, time moved faster for him now, for he knew the gravity of his task. At the bottom of the darkness, he could barely see anything, so with a click of his fingers he began to map the area with echo location. Something he had learned long ago how to do.

Before him was an area the size of a small planet covered in recks, bones and other trash that slowly decayed in the darkness. His body would not hold out even one pool if he continued with his current strategy. With more clicks he eventually found something he could use. A large ship from a race long ago forgotten, one of his earlier creations. The metal vessel had been built to travel the stars, now all it did was rot in the dark. But the materials and construction would allow Oyo to make something that for him to survive the pools.

With all his strength he pulled the ship, and with it came the corpses of the long lost to the dark. Oyo was not a god of strength but even he could accomplish a task such as this. When he reached the surface, his entire body was bleeding, that one dive had almost killed him.

"Not a bad find for your fist dive, but you seem a little, worn out" Enyut said with a malicious smile.

"Ha, old friend you do like your 'impossible' tasks. You didn't tell me that each pool was like a planet worth of darkness" Oyo replied with a smirk.

"So will you continue to dive, or will you give up now?" Enyut asked.

"Neither, for I never stated that I had to fish all this, naked" Oyo replied. Realising what his friend was going to do Enyut began to laugh. After he eventually calmed down, he continued.

"You definitely got me there Oyo. Yes, I should have defined our agreement much better. Still, I don't doubt that this task is far harder than it first appears. For you see each pool gets deeper and deeper to the eternal void. None connect to it of course, no, not here" Enyut said.

"Well, we shall see how well my inventions hold then. My mind and determination against the dark" Oyo said as he began to construct a suit that would protect him from the darkness.

Oyo Taki laboured for the equivalent of days. However, in this realm the sky never changed, so for all anyone could tell only a few minutes had passed. When he finished, he had made 15 suits each one capable of surviving in the darkness for what he calculated would be years.

Although Oyo's confidence had begun to wane. For the toll of swimming twice in the darkness had almost ended him, he needed rest and food. In the barren land nothing grew, except for the one tree. Steeling himself he went over to the Tree of Existence.

"You sure you want a bite out of that? I thought that your inventions would solve this task for you" Enyut began as he moved closer.

"Well, I am too old not to have a snack while I work" Oyo said as he ripped a branch from the tree.

"Well, if you can eat that entire branch without complaint then I will lend you a hand in your task" Enyut said with a smirk.

"Well, aren't you generous today? why the wager, is this that bad?" Oyo asked as he looked at the sap flowing from the branch.

"Have a taste, and see for yourself, but before you do, do you agree to this little wager?" Enyut continued

Oyo nodded in agreement and with a swift motion he sank his teeth into the bark. Immediately his mind became blank, for he knew death. He saw his inevitable end continue, slowly burning into oblivion as nothing of his body remained, yet he lived. With each bite his torment would grow, his fate would be more sealed. He would become sentient dust, forever in torment, never knowing peace.

Most would have spat the mulch out; this was the worst fate that most gods could imagine. Yet Oyo Taki had a greater purpose, he could not falter from something as pathetic as eternal torment. He pressed one, chewing the bark and swallowing. Bite by bite he continued shattering his teeth on the branch, splintering his throat. He persevered, and when he was finished Oyo collapsed onto the black sand, he couldn't move from the pain.

"My, my, I really am impressed Oyo Taki. I would have never imagined yourself so driven by a mere world." Enyut said.

"Failure comes to those that can't see their work to the end. I gave you my word that I would clear all five pools, and I will see it through" Oyo said as he struggled to get up.

"With the determination that you showed now, I don't see how you could fail, if it wasn't for one small wrinkle." Enyut began.

"And that being?" Oyo said as he remained motionless on the sand.

"There is a monster in the fifth pool, a creature that you wouldn't be able to fight head on. Which is why I am confident that you will not finish the task" Enyut said.

"Ah, I see. well, you always were one to make challenges interesting, old friend" Oyo replied as he was still laying on the black sand.

After what felt like an eternity it suddenly dawned on Oyo Taki that he was not capable of moving, clearly his ordeals had left him far too drained to do anything. Silently he began, again and again to move, but his body was too battered to respond.

"Well, well. I feel that we could call it here. Your body is failing you Oyo" Enyut said as he slithered closer.

"Well, you did say you would help me...not that it matters too much. After all we didn't say by when the task would be finished by." Oyo said as he struggled to talk.

"Well, the Tree of Existence has its merits. Now you won't die no matter what I do to you" Enyut said.

"But its nutritional value is garbage" Oyo retorted, to which both laughed for a moment. Then all was silent for another even longer moment.

"Tell me Enyut, what will it cost me to get your help for me to move again?" Oyo whispered eventually.

"Your heart. See I need the heart of a god for my project. Something that few would give, and even fewer would do willingly" Enyut said.

"Ah, so the sap was so that I could give you this price, very clever" Oyo whispered again, his strength was fading fast.

"Yes, so what will it be, you want to move again, and I keep your heart, or you rather stay on the beach until something comes along and eats you. Either way I will take your heart" Enyut said.

"Oh, I know that, but I will tell you what to replace it with. I'm not going to fall for a cheap imitation" Oyo wheezed as his voice was going.

"Ok so what you want me to use?" Enyut said confused.

"The nuclear core of the ship I brought" Oyo breathed as he mustered all his strength to point to the scarps that were left, including the core.

"ha-ha, oh you are a witty one, Oyo Taki I will take you up on this, as my one act of help" Enyut said as he slithered to the wreckage. In moments he returned to Oyo with the core.

With incredible strength Enyut began to shape the core into that of a heart, compressing the material and shaping it with ease. As he did, he regurgitate the blood he had drank infusing it with the essence of the realm he inhabited. Once the heart was shaped, Enyut reached into Oyo's chest and pulled his original heart and replaced it with the new fake.

Oyo could feel his heart be preserved, each cell was still something he could feel due to the power of the sap, and on top the incredible pain that was suddenly introduce when the fiery blood began to pump throughout his body. However, he hadn't felt so energetic in years. After a few moments Oyo Taki got up.

After a few minutes of Oyo getting used to the new heart and blood that pumped in his heart he looked Enyut directly in the eyes.

"It wasn't just the heart and pearl that you want, so what else is in the pools, you mentioned a monster, but there is something else in there isn't there?" Oyo asked as he stared Enyut down.

"Always the smart one, yes there is one more thing down there, now you might be able to guess if I say that the one that is guarding it is none other than T'chi" Enyut said.