

The purple dragon sailed out of the portal, landing in front of it on a soft floor, his supporting partner, the dragonfly Sparx hovered above him. This world wasn't what Spyro expected, leaving him uncertain how to feel.

When news had spread of a large sum of gems going missing from the Dragon Realms as well as the reappearance of gnorc gem warriors- creations made from the jewels - that served as an army for Gnasty Gnorc. It was an easy assumption that the selfsame villain who Spyro had beaten before was behind it.

Furthermore, though they checked the known hideouts for Gnasty, there was no trace as to where he'd fled nor even how he'd recovered after his previous defeat.

What Spyro had found was two of the more confident dragons trapped in crystal, reminiscent of the attack that had happened years before. On rescuing them, they had been disgruntled over their failure, yet they'd been able to tell the smaller dragon that after being frozen, they'd overheard their attackers directing each other to a portal to the 'Slime Pit'.

Both dragons turned up their nose at the thought of the place, as though put off rather than threatened, simply not relishing the idea of going there. The two dragons took off and flew away while reminiscing about what a revolting location it was.

If dragons were deterred that made it a perfect place to go to remain unseen, but Spyro was not one to baulk at such flimsy reasons.

His determination had led him here, he'd braced himself for the worst, yet the only thing that immediately struck him was how surreal the area was. For a place with 'Pit' in the name, it was quite spacious and open, with plant life, trees and rolling hills. The portal gave him a good vantage point. This high up he could at least appreciate why it got its name, a gooey basin, with oddly coloured pools where he'd otherwise expect to see water.

Still, he came in contact with the slimy namesake immediately. From each blade of grass to even craggy rock walls, everything had a gelatinous, softening and rounding coating of many colours, thin in some spots, much thicker in others.

Fortunately, it seemed set like a dried gel, the slimegrass bending under his weight but the tension didn't break. The only ways to leave were by flight or by portal, especially as with an experimental claw, he found that the slime on the walls rounded out the rocks to make finding a handhold even more difficult.

He wasn't here to sightsee, though, he had a mission. Sure enough there were gnorks aplenty, too oblivious to his presence and to the concept of hiding in general that they stuck out despite the range of colours before him. They seemed more densely clustered around a building - though calling it that seemed generous - at the far end of the Pit. Large blocks of gelatinous goo had been stacked vaguely like the most simplistic drawing of a castle. Maybe the gnorks had built it, which would explain some things.

“Alright, time to flame some fools and recover some treasure, just like last time, eh?” Spyro said with a confident chuckle to Sparx before leaping off the ledge, gliding to meet the first of the gnorcs head on.

“Whew, rougher than I remembered. How are you holding up?” Spyro said, panting a little. He looked to the dragonfly who had turned from a bright yellow to a duller red. Spyro winced, “Sorry, bud. Guess I’m out of practice.” He added.

The dragonfly shielded him, protecting him from otherwise dangerous attacks though each time it cost some magic, the loss of which was reflected in the hue of his body. Sparx could block one more strike before he’d be down for the count, if they couldn’t find something to feed him with. The landscape didn’t look promising in that regard.

“In fairness, that first hit was a cheap shot!” He’d insisted, he’d blasted the first gnorc he’d seen, one seemingly covered in a gooey film of its own, with fire and it had laughed it off, so Spyro had done what he had always done as a follow up, a charging ram with his horns.

While it had worked, it hadn’t worked as soundly as before, as that same flame blocking slime reduced the impact, he’d thought the gnorc defeated and lowered his guard taking a bash from a slime-encrusted hammer. He’d needed two rams before the gnorc had poofed out of existence, the gem creating it falling on the floor with a soft squish rather than the clear ‘tink’ he was used to.

The second hit had been from a massive gnorc that while damaged, had held his ground, managing to strike the dragon back before Spyro could finish him.

Thirdly had been a fire trap within the slime castle, hotter than the dragon himself could stand unprotected yet the slime-coated gnorcs could charge through.

It was a challenge for certain, needing to hit each opponent twice and knowing that his buddy could only take one mistake added to the exertion. Still, he didn’t back down, clearing room after room, reclaiming gems that had been hoarded and those that had been transformed.

He worked through the castle, confidence rising even after he’d found a deep hole that required him to glide just to reach the bottom safely. There was still no sign of Gnasty, though.

His exploration soon reached a dead end. A room oozing with slime lay to one side with no hidden surprises once he’d cleared it of treasure, only that the slime within was tackier, lacking the tension of the rest of the settled gel. To the other end was a long tunnel-like corridor where a massive gout of flame roared every few seconds with only the smallest pauses. He stuck his head down the side during a calm moment to see how long it was. Far too far for him to run between blasts and with Sparx exhausted, he’d not make it down even if his dragonfly protected him as best he could.

Furthermore, if there were any stairs, ramps or portals to return to the upper level, they were beyond the flame tunnel, as no matter where the dragon looked the rooms had been cleared of anything useful. "Ugh... I think I know how to do this but... it's gonna suck for both of us." He said.

He walked slowly to the oozing room, dipping his front claw into it. It was sticky, feeling even worse than he initially feared the place would be. It made his scales prickle as he gingerly sat and scooped up a double handful. "You wanna go first or should I?"

Sparx dutifully lowered himself, standing on Spyro's palms, whose fingers gently rubbed some of the slime onto the dragonfly. He did his best to avoid the delicate wings, though Sparx himself scooped a little over them instead, beating them quickly and actually managing to get a thin covering to spread. The dragonfly accepted it without complaint, still able to rise and hover just fine. "Well, you're braver than me." Spyro said with a smirk before he took a deep breath and belly flopped onto the sticky floor. "This better work like I think it will." He grumbled as the gooey mess stuck to him, coating him in a translucent dark green.

He rolled onto his back, pushed his wings and horns into it and scooted around. His shoulders and hips had to really work to get an even coating. With that done he rolled to his front spreading it over the rest of him with his limbs until just his eyes and snout were uncovered. "I guess on the bright side, if this works for me as well as it works for them, maybe I'll be able to stand up to more hits myself!"

Sparx nodded excitedly, trying to encourage him as if saying 'that's the spirit'. The goo had stopped dripping off the dragonfly, having nearly finished drying and setting, showing that he might be on the right track.

The dragon rose to his feet waiting for the gel. It weighed on him moderately, and as it set it pushed against him, feeling like a tighter fit, though it was still flexible enough to move in. "Alright, as long as I don't stare the fire head on... do you think this'll work?"

Sparx shrugged, willing to take the hit if not.

The two made their way back to the tunnel, with the dragon bracing himself, worried about it. Three belches of fire passed with him still not sure. His dragonfly companion gave him a look to which he replied, "What? I-I'm just counting the timing of it is all."

Sparx rolled his eyes, waited for the next flame and then flew directly at it.

"Sparx!" Spyro gasped in shock, seeing the dragonfly sent rolling in the air from the force, yet he levelled out, managing to hover but more importantly remained totally unscathed.

With a grin, Spyro bounced to his side. "Okay okay, I get it, you really *are* braver than me." Emboldened but still wary, Spyro waited for one more gout of flame, lowering his head and horns. It pushed like a strong wind, making it tricky to stand his ground, yet the slimy coating

suppressed the danger of it to an even warmth. Certainly uncomfortable to endure for too long but nothing worse than that. "Alright! Race you to the end!"

His legs thundered as he charged down the lengthy tunnel, though the softening coating prevented the satisfying click of his claws. The floor had its own layer which squeaked softly as his feet rubbed along them, yet despite that he was able to get to full speed before the half-way point. It always felt good to be able to run uninterrupted. He even forgot the stakes for a moment and spread his wings during a couple of the fiery blasts, purposefully letting them carry him back a bit with the draft. Yet after having his fun, he focused on making it to the end of the tunnel, remembering they still had a job to do here.

He crossed to the end, moving through a narrow door into a larger room and only relaxing on seeing no gnorcs waiting in there. "Braver than me and a better racer. Sorry for the wait, it was just too fun." Spyro said to the air. "Huh? Sparx?"

He looked around in the air, finally spotting his companion resting on a wall. "Oh there you-" Something was wrong. The dragonfly wasn't resting; he was stuck, embedded in a blob of the slime!

A sixth sense tingled, making Spyro turn his head just in time to roll away from an airborne ball of slime aimed at him. A small mistake as the slime on the floor was thicker here, coating him, yet it was still better than letting the glob hit him. He turned to the source, a bulbous puddle of slime was rising from the floor. It was alive, some manner of massive goo-monster irritated at having its lair intruded upon.

Spyro took another look around the room, it screamed of 'boss arena', from how the door behind him had slid shut to the grate at the far end of the room through which he could see a portal!

"Oh you wanna fight? Let's fight!" He yelled in challenge. The thick sticky floor was slowing him but not enough to be a real handicap.

The reflected light on the glistening monster's body twisted as it prepared to shoot again, the dragon counted and waited, dodging the attempts easily. He let himself get close and let out a breath of fire from his mouth. As suspected it didn't have any effect, yet he had needed to try.

The slime seemed unable to keep up with him, only able to start shooting from a difficult to discern 'front' end. Spyro ran most of the way around behind it before he broke off toward the wall where Sparx was, leaping, grabbing the stuck dragonfly in his front claws and pulling. The blob came free of the wall but maintained its form!

Spyro's claws were too thickly coated into rounded balls from their repeated pats on the ground for him to even try anything like scraping it off. The monster had turned, firing again while he was distracted. He had to drop Sparx with an apology and despite wishing to avoid it he

had no choice but to roll or be hit. All the same, a thick splat struck Spyro's shoulder at the end of the dive, sticking to the floor.

"Nngggh, come on, come on!" He grunted, tugging hard. The monster shifted a little, ceasing its shots and starting to move closer, inching toward him and rearing up slightly. "Oh you want me stuck, is that it?"

He wrenched free at last, to which the monster quivered, returning to its approach of ranged attacks.

The longer he waited the harder it would be, the monster's mass didn't seem diminished, yet the coating he'd rolled in was thicker and heavier. If flames weren't going to cut it, then he'd have to use horns!

He sprinted at the monster, lowering his head. His horns stabbed against its side, the goo keeping tense as it was indented around the points and then pushing back, bouncing him away. "Waaah!" He landed on his legs, looking sharply up. The point of impact was still visible as an imprint but that was rapidly shrinking too.

Still, the gnorc's had been protected by slime but it had only cushioned the blow, he'd just need to keep hitting it!

He ran behind its tracking, weaving in to give it another bash with the horns every now and then. Was it stretching more each time or was he imagining it?

The thing was struggling to turn, unable to keep up, trying to rotate the other way to catch him off guard but Spyro felt satisfied, as long as he could keep out of its firing line, he could charge until he was certain it was or wasn't working.

His wings stretched to flap experimentally but it was no good, already they were too weighed down or else he would consider a dropping head bash.

He managed to land a strike on the monster, directly at what he understood as its back, with his horns going so far in as to touch the slime against his head before he was sprung outward again. Still, that told him one thing, there were weaker parts.

The gears in his head spun, there was always a way to win. He thought back to the only time it had changed its attack, when he had been stuck. Maybe there was something he was missing then!

The dragon ran round in front of the beast. Strutting confidently at it. "Come on then, try and hit me!" It wordlessly obliged, launching a fresh volley. Spyro ducked and dodged, watching carefully. "Missed! One more, come on!"

It fired in a similar arc to which Spyro quickly leapt, landing right near where two blobs struck, stretching his legs behind them. "Oh no!" He gasped, acting as though caught. He didn't

know how the slime sensed things but if it was sight, it would certainly have looked convincing. True enough it approached once more, rearing up as it did. The underside! If it was vulnerable anywhere that would be the spot!

It rose up and up while drawing closer. Spyro's eyes studied the beast and saw a patch of its body that didn't look as tensed. He surged forward, charging it, horns jabbing at the vulnerability.

He surged with elation as the thing quivered in shock and tried to hop back, it hadn't liked that! Joy quickly turned to panic as it flew backward but pulled him with it! His horns were stuck! The coating of gel on them had turned back into fluid, stretching and not wanting to come loose.

Reeling from its own injury the blob started to bounce around blindly, hopping this way and that, waving Spyro around. It landed on one side, then the next, then on its back again, making the dragon feel dizzy, though his horns were close to slipping free.

Tugging twice more, he felt a shift, just as the monster tensed up and sprang into the air, inverting such that the dragon was dangling from below it. Spyro let out a laugh as he felt his horns come loose, yet in that same instant, the blob surged downward, pounding the ground before Spyro could move from underneath it. The soft weakness he'd found was still lined up with the dragon and it fell on him and then over him!

The full weight of the gooey monster caused not just his horns to embed but it swallowed over his entire body! Spyro found himself stretched upright with the resulting force pinning his forelegs to his front, his wings to his back and his rear legs and tail to each other. "Uhhh ohmm." He mumbled, keeping his jaws shut firmly to avoid catching any of it in his mouth.

Through the translucent body he saw the slime quiver, adjusting itself, bouncing a couple of short hops as though looking for him only to stiffen as if noticing him within itself and then squashing down. It flattened out, as if making sure to block off as much ground between his point of entrance and the freedom of the room. Then he felt a tight full body squeeze as it compressed, pushing him around, laying him on his back, suspended within.

The gooey layer he'd applied to get through the flames was melting, sloughing off only to be replaced with a denser coating. The tension had shifted, allowing him to pull his limbs apart and struggle, yet it was like swimming through liquid amber, resisting him. "Mmh, dumb thing!" He groaned twisted around, seeing Sparx's blob on the floor change colour as the dragonfly lost the last of his magic. This was an attack?!

The blob quivered again, stiffening up and then squeezing around him. Spyro's limbs felt tension from all sides as it compressed down, gasping as he realised how much more crushingly intense it felt without his partner's protection. "Nnnghh!" He groaned, back arching as the last of his stamina gave out.

The surface of the monster shifted, Spyro was slowly being pushed to one side, that 'front' end. The glistening tension held around the dragon as he was pushed into the air, tail first. Yet he still felt the goo!

One last clench from the slime squeezed around him as it fired the dragon out of its body, encapsulated in a thick gelatinous prison! It stuck where it landed, squishing in against a corner where the floor met the wall. "Mmmgh! No!" He said trying to squirm desperately, to breath fire or claw at it, yet the liquid was setting around him, building a double layer of the firm gel with the thick slime between them. It had even made a full body glove, the setting inner layer cut his arms off from touching his chest or his claws from reaching his face.

He heard the grate and door slide open as the monster returned to its rest, was it that confident?

His body began to tire before he'd made even a scratch of progress. He was helpless! But no, he had to get free, he had to!

"Gahaha, I'm so glad I installed that crystal to watch. That was pathetic, dragon!" A cruel voice taunted, accompanied by the slapping footfalls of steps on the slime. Spyro tried to squirm to see for himself yet he couldn't manage until the two shadows fell over him. On one side Gnasty Gnorc, on the other- his stomach twisted. None of the dragons had even surmised that Ripto had come back!

"To think we were gearing up to fight you when you'd broken through here. I'm disappointed."

"Nnngh, l-let me out of this and I'll give you a fight alright!" Spyro yelled, though it was getting harder to strain his jaw.

"Oh, I wanna!" Gnasty jeered from his side, hands reaching to take the bait. Ripto rapped his knuckles with his sceptre, shaking his head sharply. Gnasty huffed "Yeah, he's right, you've already lost! No fun beating a loser."

"What do you jerks want?!" Spyro demanded of them.

"The same thing we did last time, my muscle bound friend wants a nice quiet life ruling the dragon realms without those pesky creatures getting in the way and I want them to suffer helplessly while I take Avalar back! We figured you were the only one who could stop us, so now, we'll get our prize, and our discussed bonus."

"Bonus?!"

"Why tell when we can show. If you would..." Ripto began. Gnasty moved to Spyro, hands scooping under the gel-blob and hoisting until it came loose from the ground. Ripto meanwhile

strode to where Sparx had fallen. "You know what, here's as good as anywhere." He said as he got a twisted idea. "And it means that no last second turn of fortune will strike."

"Ha ha ha." Gnasty laughed as he slammed the trapped dragon down on the floor and set his hammer down beside him.

The gnorc boss's massive hands pushed against the slime blob, squashing in until his palm was as close to Spyro's belly as the slime allowed. The added pressure made the dragon gasp desperately. "What are you- nnngh, doing?!" Spyro asked in a worried demand.

"Down here, yes, that's right." Ripto said, gesturing with a hand, ignoring the dragon. Gnasty followed Ripto's instructions as he continued, his strong fingers able to push in enough to guide and position Spyro's legs. The purple dragon's resistance was ignored, the gnorc was posing him as though he and the powerfully elastic slime-gel were nothing.

His tail was kneaded to rest at his side, his legs and haunches on the ground as though sitting and his front legs put together. His neck and head were pulled and pushed up and back until his proud chest stood as though puffed out, even though he looked anything but proud. "This is weird! Get off me!" He demanded, trying to quiver, to which Ripto set his foot down on the gel above Spyro's flank, further pinning him down.

"That about covers it. Hold that pose, dragon." Ripto said mockingly. Spyro tried to strain and pull away but the elasticity of the gel had been reset by sheer strength, pulling him back as though fixed in place.

Gnasty turned and once more hefted his hammer, a green gem wedged above the head of it started to crackle. "You dodged me the first time for being small and quick. Lets see you dodge when you're stuck!"

"Wait!-" Spyro gasped as Ripto raised his sceptre to touch the gem. A zap of magical energy shot into the slimeball, rolling over the whole of it.

"What did you do?" Gnasty asked in confused suspicion.

"Oh, I just made sure it'd take longer and be more ... fitting."

As the glow faded, small arcs of magic traced down through the slime to the dragon's body, he felt it striking over his tail and feet first. Making them tingle at first only to fall stiff and still. "S-stop it!" Spyro gasped "Stop this!". The tingle crept half up his tail and over his rear knee before hitting his front legs and the tip of his wings.

"Oooo, hehe, I see!" Gnorc said, dropping his hammer and rubbing his hands as the spell took hold.

Spyro scrabbled and struggled in the gel, feeling his limbs stiffen as the tingle crossed the joints, he couldn't turn enough to look yet he'd seen the spell before, he knew what it was doing,

encasing his body in a solid crystalline shell, like the dragon's he'd saved on the other side of the portal.

Ripto's sceptre glowed again as he shot more magic into the slime, causing the front end of it to burst. Freeing Spyro's head to the air.

The dragon tried to take a breath to let out a shot of desperate flame at the magical implement, but the crystal had reached his chest, stopping him from filling his lungs in the right way. Instead the diminutive dinosaur sneered in cruel satisfaction, he was hoping Spyro would yell or try something like that. His other hand jammed forward, something soft and squishy pushed into the dragon's open jaw- the goo ball that contained Sparx! "Gmmmhgh!" He whined, trying to push it out and spit the ball free. Gnasty's heavy hand settled over his neck, holding it, and pinching his head between a thumb and finger.

"There! No companion to fly off and alert anyone! Now try to make the most worried expression you can, yes, that's it!" Ripto jeered as the edge of green crystal sprung around Spyro's neck and horns, meeting at the back of his head and slowly hardening over his concerned brow and wide eyes. Gnasty removed his hand, it was no longer needed.

The crystal crackled audibly as Spyro tried to resist, but he couldn't even move. Moments later the last of the purple and yellow scales became covered in faceted green.

"Gahahah!" Gnasty yelled in a belly laugh. "Finally the Spyro Problem is gone!"

"Indeed." Ripto laughed. "And I know you can still hear us, dragon. I hope you enjoy your time in there, but I doubt you'll like what comes next! After all, that bonus I mentioned... is us keeping you!"

"....!" Unlike the crystalline traps that had covered the other dragons in the same shape and pose, whatever Ripto had done had made this one perfectly match both the pose they'd set him in and the appearance of the dragon within. It rocked from side to side as Spyro tried to move yet nowhere near enough to hope it might tip over.

Gnasty lifted the statue easily, closing his fist over the dragon's head and lifting there to further his humiliation as he and Ripto walked back to the portals.

In a new, shared lair, the encased Spyro was set down in the centre of the room. He'd been made to listen as Gnasty Gnorc fired off his spell once again over the Dragon Realms, rendering each of the larger dragons as their own imprisoned statues as he had done before. This time, there would be no smaller dragon to save them.

"I've upheld my end of the deal, now shall we see to yours?" Ripto remarked.

“With pleasure.” Gnasty took his hammer and with a twist of effort, removed the gem from its socketed position.

Ripto grinned with glee, letting out a heinous laugh. “With your gem-warrior gnorcs and my rhynocs, Avalar will fall!”

“Make sure you bring it back in one piece.” Gnasty said, looking at the gem.

“Of course. After all, I’ll want my turn with our new trophy.” He said, fingers scratching Spyro’s chest as though petting a cat. “If I master the spell, too, I might even bring one of his friends back to join him instead of just destroying them.”

“Gahaha! I’ll give you lessons on it if you want. And I’ll only charge another month of custody over our bonus.” Gnasty said, falling back into his chair. His legs kicked up and settled on the dragon’s back, using him as a glorified footrest as he relaxed.

Ripto gave a long satisfied look over Spyro’s frozen expression before stowing the gem and striding out to conquer *his* new realm in turn.

Immobile yet aware, still with his dragonfly companion exhausted and wedged between frozen jaws, Spyro dimly heard voices as Gnasty turned on his television set, watching the aftermath of his victory.

The dragon hoped his friends would learn about Ripto’s return in time to defend themselves and then rescue him. Though he was starting to fear that the next time he saw them, they would be in as dire a predicament as he...