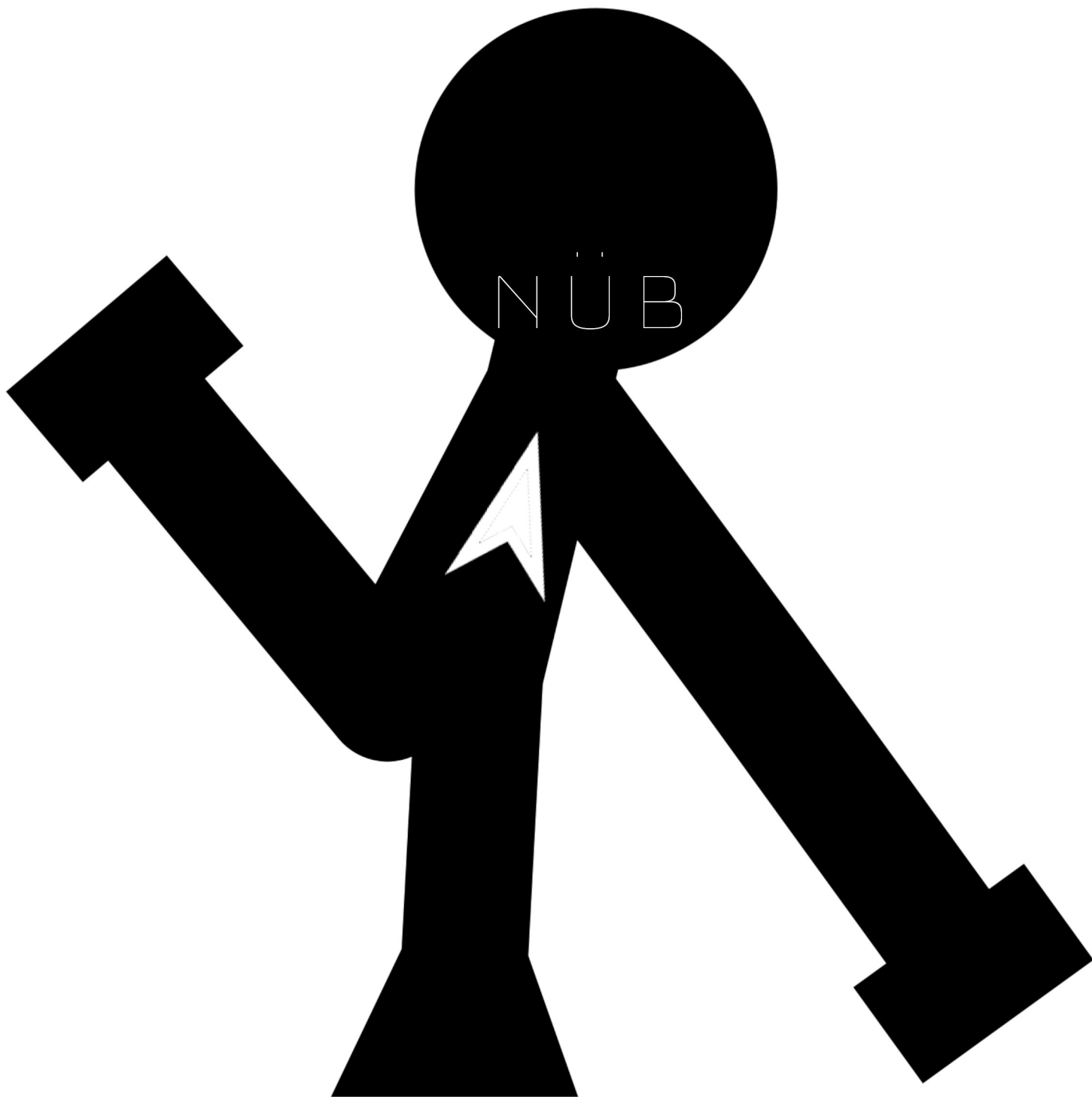


FLOWSTATE

1

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Prologue

The chamber, a stark void of black and white, vibrated with tension. Shadows danced along the edges of the room, not cast by light but by the sheer force of the beings gathered within. At the head of the table, 0-0E of the 0-RGN sat motionless. It was a being neither mechanical nor organic—a second-dimensional anomaly forged from the very fabric of the monotone plane.

“The war for supremacy teeters on the edge of victory,” 0-0E intoned, its voice an ethereal hum that seemed to emanate from everywhere and nowhere. “Yet we cannot strike without fuel to sustain our efforts. The energy reserves of our enemies must become ours. Their batteries are their lifeblood, and once drained, they will kneel.”

0-0E’s gaze swept across its subordinates. Each was clad in sharp armor, their mechanical augmentations gleaming like shards of polished obsidian. The senior strategist, 1-9I, stepped forward, his voice sharp as the monotone reality surrounding them.

“Our fleets of androids are ready to launch,” 1-9I said. “They are relentless, efficient, and precise. But...” His voice faltered for a moment. “Our own energy stores are insufficient to maintain a prolonged campaign. Without a new, sustainable power source, even the strongest of our machines will falter before victory.”

0-0E’s form rippled, an aura of menace rolling across the room. “Then find what we need, Strategist. The rumors are clear: there exist androids within our borders—artifacts from a forgotten age—powered by exotic cores that defy the constraints of this dimension. Secure them. Exploit them.”

“We’ve located several,” 1-9I continued. “But most have already failed—short-circuited beyond repair. Only one remains operational: a female unit designated 6-6A. She is the last of her line, one of a pair. Her core is unlike anything we’ve seen—capable of sustaining fleets for entire campaigns.”

0-0E leaned forward, its shifting form darkening into sharp edges. “Bring me 6-6A. Strip her core and integrate it into the fleet. Without it, our victory is uncertain. As for her counterpart... eliminate him. He is irrelevant.”

1

The monotone world stretched endlessly before him, a desolate expanse of sharp contrasts. Black and white sprawled in jagged, unnatural patterns, as though reality itself had been shattered and reassembled by an unfeeling hand. 3-3O stood at the edge of the path, his glowing optical sensors scanning the harsh environment ahead. This was no place for hesitation.

The path was narrow, winding between deep chasms of pure black and towering ridges of stark white. The air carried a static charge, faint but persistent, making his synthetic frame hum softly. He adjusted his balance and took his first step forward.

The obstacles came quickly. Sharp, jagged protrusions of obsidian-like material erupted from the ground without warning, forcing him to navigate with precision. His android shell, crafted for agility and endurance, adapted fluidly. He leapt over jagged spines and weaved between razor-thin cracks that yawned open as if to swallow him whole. His servos hummed with quiet efficiency, each movement calibrated to perfection.

Still, 3-3O felt the weight of the task pressing down on him. This was not his function, not his purpose. He had never been designed for exploration or endurance. Yet here he was, traversing a path that seemed bent on testing the limits of even the most advanced machines.

And he was doing it for her.

6-6A.

The thought of her filled his mind with resolve. She was more than his counterpart—she was his partner, his purpose. The 0-RGN's forces had taken her, and 3-3O had no doubt about their intentions. Her exotic power core would be stripped, exploited, leaving nothing of her but an empty shell. He wouldn't let that happen.

His internal systems flagged a warning: **Battery charge: 53%.**

3-3O paused for a moment, his optical sensors sweeping the environment. He needed to locate a battery—soon. His power reserves weren't built for long treks like this. The relentless expanse of black and white offered no clues, no sign of where he might find energy to sustain himself.

The landscape shifted again, this time presenting a series of towering obstacles. Vertical slabs of pure white loomed before him, staggered at irregular intervals. He analyzed their positions in an instant, calculating a path that would minimize energy expenditure. With a burst of movement, he scaled the first slab, gripping its rough surface with his mechanical hands.

Higher and higher he climbed, the cold silence of the dimension pressing against him. Every motion drained his reserves further. **Battery charge: 45%.**

At the top of the last slab, he paused, scanning the horizon once more. A faint glimmer of light caught his attention—far off, just barely distinguishable against the black and white backdrop. It pulsed faintly, rhythmically, like a beacon. Could it be a source of power?

He filed it as a possibility but pressed forward. He had no other option. This path was unyielding, and the terrain grew harsher with every step. He navigated across narrow ridges, through blinding whites that distorted his sensors, and past sudden gusts of wind that howled through the void.

Battery charge: 38%.

The warning grew more insistent now, a dull glow in the corner of his vision. 3-30 pushed it aside, focusing on the immediate task. If the pulse was indeed a power source, he needed to reach it soon.

His thoughts wandered briefly as he moved through the endless monotone maze. This was his first time attempting anything like this—no manuals, no directives, no clear protocols. He was acting out of desperation, driven by something deeper than his programming. Was it duty? Survival? Or something else entirely?

No matter. He couldn't fail. Not when 6-64 needed him.

Finally, the path began to widen, leading into what appeared to be a new section of the dimension. The obstacles ahead were less severe, the terrain leveling out into a long, empty expanse. The faint pulse grew brighter, closer.

3-30 stepped into the next set, his sensors on high alert. He didn't know what awaited him, but he knew one thing with certainty: he had to keep moving. For her.

2

The path before 3-3O twisted and turned in unpredictable ways, a jagged ribbon of black and white that seemed to mock his progress. He pressed on, his servos quietly whirring, each step deliberate and precise. The static-laden air sparked faintly against his chassis, and his optical sensors flickered briefly as he recalibrated to the shifting contrasts of the environment.

His internal systems pulsed another warning: **Battery charge: 30%.**

The urgency grew, but 3-3O shoved it aside. He didn't have time to panic. Somewhere ahead, either salvation or failure awaited, and he couldn't afford hesitation.

As he stepped into the fourth path, his mind drifted back to the moment that had set all this in motion. He remembered the cold, calculating voice of 0-0E's subordinate, a tone stripped of all empathy.

"She's the key to everything. 6-6A's core alone could sustain every power plant in the 0-RGN's territories indefinitely."

The words had burned into his memory. Back then, 3-3O hadn't fully understood their weight, but now, traversing this endless, barren expanse, their meaning grew clearer. They had taken her not just because of her uniqueness but because her core represented something none of their conventional energy sources could achieve: boundless, sustainable power.

Power plants.

The thought crystallized in his mind as he maneuvered over a series of narrow platforms suspended above white voids. If the 0-RGN's forces planned to exploit 6-6A's core, it had to be at one of their power facilities. Batteries might also be stored there—a resource he desperately needed.

It was the only logical conclusion. Either 6-6A herself or the energy reserves he required would be found at one of those sites.

The thought drove him forward, his movements becoming more focused. He stepped lightly over a series of sharp ridges that jutted out like spears, navigating the terrain with an almost mechanical grace. His android shell was holding up well under the strain, but his battery charge remained a constant shadow looming over his every calculation.

Battery charge: 25%.

The fifth path unfolded before him, a labyrinth of towering, geometric obstacles that seemed to grow taller as he approached. It was as if the dimension itself sought to challenge him, to push him to his limits. But 3-3O had no choice but to continue.

His thoughts lingered on 6-6A. She had always been steady, logical, unflinching in her purpose. Yet, there had been a spark in her—a glimmer of something more. Something that set her apart from the others, even from him.

Her survival wasn't just a matter of function. It was something deeper, something he couldn't yet define.

He scaled the geometric obstacles with methodical precision, his hands gripping sharp edges as his servos strained to propel him upward. The air grew denser the higher he climbed, static crackling around him. His sensors warned him of fluctuating energy fields nearby—an unusual occurrence in this barren expanse.

Perhaps he was nearing something important.

The sixth path stretched out in front of him like a jagged scar, its surface riddled with uneven, shifting angles. He took a moment to calculate his next steps, conserving as much energy as possible.

Battery charge: 20%.

Each movement now was a balance between urgency and preservation. Every leap, every calculated step forward, brought him closer to his goal. He pushed through the treacherous terrain, the monotone void around him an unending reminder of the stakes.

The faint pulse he had noticed earlier reappeared, flickering on the horizon. Was it a power source? A beacon? Or something else entirely? He couldn't be certain, but it was the only clue he had.

6-6A, he thought again. She's waiting.

The 0-RGN's forces might already be exploiting her. The idea ignited something within him—a determination that overrode the rising warnings of his dwindling battery.

He moved forward, through the sixth path and beyond, toward whatever awaited him in the next expanse of the monotone world.

He didn't know how much time he had left, but one thing was certain: he wouldn't stop. Not until he found her.

3

The seventh path stretched out before 3-3O, stark and unrelenting in its monotone simplicity. Its jagged contours, black voids, and stark white ridges offered no reprieve. He surveyed the terrain ahead, his optical sensors scanning for any signs of usable energy sources. Each step was calculated, each movement precise, but his internal systems were beginning to strain.

Battery charge: 18%.

The warning pulsed faintly in his mind, but he ignored it for now. It didn't matter how much energy he had left—he would keep moving.

As his servos hummed steadily, his mind processed the fragments of information he'd pieced together so far. The 0-RGN's subordinates had spoken in hushed tones about her core, marveling at its limitless potential. They'd said it could fuel every power plant in their territories—an energy source so rare it could shift the balance of power in the entire dimension.

But 3-3O knew better than to trust a single plan or assumption. If 6-6A wasn't at one of those plants, they would have moved her elsewhere. Her core was too valuable to leave unprotected.

That's why he had to take every battery he could find along the way.

His optical sensors scanned his surroundings again, the monotone path revealing no immediate signs of battery caches. Yet he clung to the hope that, wherever the 0-RGN stored 6-6A or her energy, they would also store backup reserves. He needed to stockpile everything he could—enough to ensure he could withstand whatever the 0-RGN threw at him.

With a large enough supply of power, he could not only survive but protect her. It didn't matter what enemies they faced; he would have the energy reserves to outlast them all.

The path ahead narrowed, traveling upward into a steep incline. Treacherous cracks and sharp edges dotted its surface, threatening to send him plummeting into the endless void below. He carefully analyzed the path, calculating his trajectory before leaping forward.

The incline was brutal, but 3-3O's android body handled it with mechanical grace. His legs powered him upward in sharp, deliberate bursts, each motion conserving as much energy as possible. His servos strained, and his internal systems pulsed another warning.

Battery charge: 14%.

He ignored it again, focusing instead on the goal. If he could secure enough batteries—more than enough—he could ensure 6-6A's safety. No enemy could stop him with a nearly limitless energy supply. It wasn't just about survival anymore; it was about preparation, about building a future where she would never have to face danger again.

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