

CHRYSALIS

Chapter 11 Forced relocation.



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The Path is not a creation of any mortal kind, not even the Chal, at the height of their strength could affect such a change to our world. No, the Path descended from above, and it has illuminated the way forward for the world ever since. The Path sees no race, colour or creed, it embraces all and in return all must embrace it.

The Path is our road to ascension, to a greater state of being, the system will uplift us, but only if mortal kind is united will we be able to pursue the Path to its final destination.

Exert from the Holy Book of the Path.

Yesterday was a little too hectic for my tastes I have to say. It's my dearest wish that today will be a little more calm. My only aim is to try and secure one more biomass so I can mutate my eyes to +3 and then perhaps relocate my nest to a location a little more distant from the surface.

However it doesn't appear as if my day is going to as peaceful as I'd hoped.

Why on earth are there all these soldiers out here!?!

When I emerge from my nest and move into the cavern there are already human soldiers everywhere! They are moving systematically around the cavern, luring monsters out of their side tunnels and exterminating them with superior force. From my position huddled on the ceiling in the shadows I can see they've established some sort of formation around the water pool. Wooden tripods extend over the water surface and hanging from each is some sort of crystal or device that appears to be absorbing light from within the water?!

What on Pangea is this fancy technology? What are they absorbing? What are these funky crystals?!

More importantly, how am I getting out of here alive!?

The cavern has been completely occupied by them! Even if I try and rely on my stealth, I've already seen the monster detecting equipment they have available. I'd be stupid to think I could sneak past, and even if I could, there is only the large tunnel down halfway up the tunnel for me to head to, but that is clearly how they are going to advance further into the dungeon!

Can I hide in my nest successfully?

No, I don't think so. When they see all the dirt I've shifted into the tunnel they may even realise that it's the work of a monster and start to clear it out. Possibly they already have knowledge of that tunnel and will realise something is off when they notice the dirt obstruction!

In that case, what the hell am I supposed to do?!

Stupid humans!

There is only one option left available to me, but that choice is almost certain death! I have to escape past my nest and further into the tunnel towards the area I saw my first Croca-beast!

Isn't this a classic case of out of the frying pan and into the waiting jaws of doom?!

As I cling to the shadows near the entrance to my tunnel the disciplined soldiers are already beginning to sweep around to my side of the pool, waving torches to illuminate shadows and identify every stray nest and tunnel that may be hiding. I haven't got much time left before they make their way to my tunnel.

Why do these soldiers need to work so hard? Take a break guys! Relax! No? Dammit.

I've no choice. Time to face the music/death.

Moving quickly I skitter back into my tunnel and make my way to my nest. My heart pangs a little as I crawl through the small gaps I left on the ceiling and leave my temporary lodgings behind.

This was my place of (somewhat) safety in this world, my only refuge. It was only for a few days, nest, but we had good times. If I'd had a few of my fellow ant bros to stay with me it would have been a real home.

You know what? If I could find my birth nest then that may be the safest place for me. I've already seen the kind of reception I get from surface society in this world (it wasn't great), so maybe it's time I try and get along with my own kind. Ant kind!

After all, how far away from my nest could I possibly have been dragged before I was born? The nest may be closer than I think!

Stay positive Anthony! Charge forth and find the queen! That is to say, Mum!

However I will do so in a safe way, without being seen, I hope.

I emerge out of my nest and into the unexplored side of this tunnel. I haven't been out here since the first day I awoke in this place and saw one of my brethren being chomped to death by a horrible, bipedal crocodile.

Things have changed a little since then though! I'm level two now, have a few Biomass points spent. I'm not as weak as I was!

I latch onto the roof tightly with all six of my claws and begin to carefully make my way forward. My antennae are waving in all directions and my eyes are staring hard at every shadow as I advance.

Is it just me or does the tunnel seem brighter than it did last time? I swear the veins along the wall are glowing more brightly and are pulsing with slightly more frequency than they did before? What is that?

Gingerly, I approach the corner around which I saw I first monster.

I have serious trauma about this place dammit!

Please no monster, please no monster.

I sneak a peek and thankfully there is nothing to see.

Phew!

Casting my eyes around I can't see any signs of the ant who was eaten here or the beast that did the eating. For now the tunnel seems to continue to a wide curve to the left (my right since I'm upside down). I can also tell, perhaps, that this is my tunnel sense kicking in, that the tunnel is slowly starting to slope downwards, away from the surface and further underground.

This is fantastic news! Take me away from the cursed surface and its nasty human armies!

I once again advance boldly whilst sneaking the entire time.

Wait. My antennae are starting to pick up something in the air. Only a hundred meters further into the tunnel I sense a change in the air. Very quickly it becomes apparent why. The tunnel splits into two paths.

Hmm.

Using all of my senses I try to determine if one path is safer than the other.

I can't see anything nearby, and despite wiggling with all their strength my antennae aren't picking up anything either.

I'm not happy about this setup. One of these tunnels could mean instant death! BOTH of these tunnels could mean instant death!

I can't hold back any longer.

[Do you wish to improve Antennae? This will cost two Biomass]

Do it!

BUGAAAA!

I can't even try and scrape at my itch right now since I'm trying to stay hidden. Why are you like this Gandalf!?

Eventually it passes and my antennae have now grown noticeably longer than they were before I upgraded them the first time.

With my new and improved senses I again try to determine if either of these choices is less death insistent that the other.

Hold on! What the heck is that! My whole ant body starts tingling as I grasp the faintest wisp of a scent from the left tunnel. There is something about this scent that speaks to me. What on earth could it be?!

Drawn by this sensation, I will choose the left tunnel. Whatever this is, it doesn't feel threatening to me, so I will investigate. I really have no other information to go on anyway.

Disregarding the right tunnel I move into the left, sticking to the ceiling and moving cautiously as always.

As I move forward the subtle smell becomes more and more noticeable, from a distant waft of a mist it has now grown to the strong tendrils of a smoke.

The walls of this tunnel are almost entirely stone, webbed with the now familiar branching lines of blue light that seem to permeate almost everywhere inside this place. My claws make soft scritch scratching noises as I grasp the rock in my tiny claws, supporting my body with four legs at all times as I reach forward with two.

I'm still not a fully coordinated ant but I'm making a lot of progress in this body, if I do say so myself. To go from four limbs to six isn't easy at all but to go from two legs, two arms to six legs, no arms is even greater a shift!

It only takes a few minutes before I locate the source of the scent.

But there isn't anything here?!

Confused I glance around, there definitely isn't anything. The tunnel continues to curve to the left and slightly down but there I cannot see any bodies or creatures or food of any kind.

I use my antennae to feel the stone in front of me and gradually follow the scent down off the roof and onto the floor of the tunnel. As my antennae tip tap here and there, suddenly I am zapped with inspiration.

Pheromones!

How do ants keep in contact without being able to speak? How do ants create those long trails away from the nest to sources of food?

The answer is pheromones! By using a pheromone gland they can lay a trail of scent for other ants to detect and follow. Something is telling me that this is a pheromone trail laid down by a scout ant seeking either food or perhaps trying to locate the stolen brood from the nest!

My people are calling me home!