

Chrysalis 1223

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Chapter 1223: Sink Your Teeth Into It

Pleased by the positive reaction to their first suggestion, the three golgari shapers launch into their next suggestions with gusto.

[Well, I had Corun work on a suggestion for your mandibles, since you haven't mutated them after the reset. We know you had a few different mutations in the past, but you made a fair bit of use of the infusion mutation, right?]

It was true, infusing mana into my mandibles had been one of my earliest offensive mutations after the acid. By powering them up with raw mana, they were better at doing what good mandibles did, namely biting and crushing stuff, even dirt. The real sauce was infusing them with mana that had taken on an attribute. Fire bite? Sure thing, stuff some fire mana in there. My favourite effect was infusing them with gravity mana, which gave my mandibles the ability to yoink someone towards me.

Ahhhh, good times.

[Yep,] I confirm happily. [I had the savage mutation as well, for more chompy mandibles.]

A normal formica ant has mandibles that are a bit stubby, for gripping rather than cutting or puncturing. You might ask, what use are mandibles that can only grip in combat? You forget that for ant-on-ant warfare back on Earth, one of the main strategies was to grab hold of your enemies' legs and pull the darn things off. Ditto when battling other types of insects.

Of course, that wouldn't really work as well in the Dungeon, so I took that mutation to give my mandibles more of an aggressive shape. Longer and more spiky, they worked wonders with my bite Skills.

Corun steps forward, a serious expression on his face for once.

[Yes, well. I think this time around, you would agree that a different approach to your mutations will yield better results. Although the infusion mutation is flexible, and can be powerful in certain circumstances, we're not sure that it's the right mutation for you.]

[What makes you say so?] I ask, curious.

Corun coughs, looking a little embarrassed. Granin speaks in a flat tone of voice before his younger triad member can gather his courage.

[Because you're too forgetful. The main benefit of mana infusion is the many different effects you can manifest with it. There's no point for someone as scatterbrained as you to take it.]

There's dead silence for a second as I absorb this critique.

[Ouch.]

The big golgari folds his arms.

[Am I wrong?]

[No, you aren't wrong at all. I just didn't realise after all this time that you thought I was so dim.]

[I don't think you're dim, Anthony, I think you have the highest potential of any monster I've ever seen, and somehow you've managed to create an entire ant society, the first of its kind. You're clearly doing something right. However, we need to tailor our suggestions to who you are as a... monster. If you won't take full advantage of something, then there's no point to it.]

[Very true!] I declare. [Continue!]

Corun looks relieved.

[So we wanted to choose a set of mutations that would be strong and tailored to your own personal style. Firstly, a form-changing type of mutation along the lines of Savage isn't a bad choice. Although your mandibles aren't the same as they were when you first hatched, they aren't ideal for battle.]

Indeed, my current mandibles aren't as short and blunt as they were in the beginning, but they aren't as brutal and fearsome as they could be.

[We have a short list of mutations for you to consider that includes the Savage mutation, Razor, Warlord, Guillotine, Spiked and Toothed.]

[Toothed? I'd have teeth?]

[It's not like it sounds. That mutation would give you a lining of inwardly curved 'fangs' on the inside of both mandibles.]

[Isn't that the same as Spiked?]

[No. Spiked would give you three long spikes of varying lengths, shortest close to your face, longest at the tips, on the inside of the mandibles. It's intended to help punch through hardened defensive shells.]

[And guillotine?]

[That would adapt your mandibles for cutting, rather than piercing. Considering how hard your mandibles are, you could cut through just about anything if you made them sharp enough.]

But... would I be able to dig?

[Rejected. I think I like the Savage mutation.]

Trusty and reliable.

[It does give a good shape and we thought you might like this one the best,] Corun nods. [A little bit of everything, it doesn't excel in any one department, but it improves both cutting and piercing while extending the mandibles for added range. We recommend you take it twice and reinforce it at +15 to gain sufficient benefits.]

[Fair enough. Then what about from +20 to +30?]

[This was a lot harder and there are literally thousands of options to choose from. In the end, we thought you'd like something similar to the infusion mutation you had before, but more narrow in focus]

and would synergise with your gravity powers. Instead of infusion, have you ever considered the injection mutations?]

[Injection?]

I don't remember ever seeing them. Perhaps my eyes just glossed over them?

[Like, injecting poison or something?]

[Sort of,] Corun waves a hand back and forth. [It's a set of mutations, rather than just one. You can set your mandibles to inject just about anything, including mana. In this case, rather than a generic mutation, we recommend you take the option which allows you to inject gravity mana, specifically.]

I'm confused.

[Inject gravity mana, what would that do?]

Torrina takes over.

[To make the most of this mutation, you would need to train your external mana manipulation. But you are the best person to answer that question, since you know this mana type better than us. What could you do with a concentration of gravity inside your opponent's body?]

I mean.... A lot. If there was enough of the stuff, I could form a gravity bomb... inside them.

[Oh, that's *nasty*.]

[We thought you might like it,] Torrina's grin is wicked.