

Chrysalis 1224

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Chapter 1224: Skillful Ant

[Before you get too carried away,] Granin chips in, [remember that manipulating mana outside of your body is much harder than the mana inside it. Manipulating energy within someone else's body is another level of difficulty above that. You'll need to train hard before you can even dream of setting off those insane bombs you can make.]

That makes sense. If it was easy to manipulate energy inside an opponent, then almost any other method of fighting would be completely redundant. Even so, I like this idea. It would give me an almost unstoppable trump card if I can master it, and I can think of a few other uses for it outside of just the gravity bomb.

[I like it a lot!] I declare.

The triad has really come through for me and exceeded my expectations, so I tell them so. I never would have considered some of these ideas. I'm glad I finally opened up to them.

The three look pleased with my words, Corun grinning up at me, Torrina wearing a slight smile, and even Granin looks less grumpy. That could just be a trick of the lighting.

[We're working on mutation packages for your legs, regeneration gland and your whole acid... collection, in the event you reset those next,] Granin tells me. [For now, though, this is what we've come up with. It's more difficult for us to contribute to your Vestibule, Nave and Altar, since we haven't worked with those organs before.]

I'm a little disappointed, but Granin frowns at my drooping antennae.

[We still have to talk about your Skills,] he says, and I perk up immediately.

New Skills! This is what I've been waiting for!

[What have you got for me, Granin? Some sweet fusions? The mega-instant-death-to-all-foes Skill?]

[That is a good one, but no.]

[Wait, that's a Skill?!]

[Of course not! And don't forget, I've warned you before, learning too many Skills will become a weakness, not a strength. Without time to train them properly, you'll have a ton of Skills that aren't suitable for battle. Certainly not against powerful and prepared opponents.]

Sometimes I wish I could roll my eyes.

[Yeah, yeah, yeah. Surely, you've got a little something for me?]

If not, why bring it up at all?

[Yes,] Granin hurrumphs. [We've been carefully analysing the list of fusions for what we think will be the most optimal combinations for you to work towards. I set a hard limit of two for this exchange, despite the protestations of my pupils.]

Torrina and Corun look a little disgruntled at this, but hold their mind-tongues.

[First, there's a neat little fusion you can aim for which should help significantly, particularly with your sharp reflexes and foresight. We had you pick up the Coordination Skill. Now we recommend you add the Balance Skill, as well as one other. Took a bit of research to find this, since there isn't a lot of documentation on ants, but there's also a six-legged version of the Defensive Footwork Skill. These three, along with Predictive Thinking, can all fuse with the Grace Skill at rank four or higher to create the Precognitive Agile Defense Skill.]

[Ooooooo. Sounds fancy.]

[It'll make you lighter on your feet, harder to knock down, recover faster and more coordinated in tight spaces. Combined with your organs and mutations, you'll be pushing those advantages to their limits.]

Being hard to hit is one of the best ways to defend yourself. No need to absorb the blow that misses! I'm a fan of this idea. Combined with my sturdy carapace and plating, not to mention my extraordinary regenerative capacity, my multi-layered defence will only grow stronger. Am I an ant, or a fortress? MUAHAHAHAHAHA!

[I can see you like it,] Granin huffs. [For the next, we wanted to focus on the mental side. You've been throwing around some pretty mighty spells lately and handling a vast quantity of mana. I know you've got a lot of high rank mental abilities, but with a few added pieces, you can make the most of them.]

[Oh? I didn't realise I was missing anything significant.]

[That's why you came to us in the first place. We know a lot that you don't.]

[Right.]

[In this case, we suggest you take Concentration, Mana Weave and Divergent Thinking.]

[I've heard of Divergent Thinking. I thought I didn't need it, due to the brains that I'm packing.]

[At the time, we thought that way too. You have your multiple brains to help manage the mind constructs necessary for the complex mana manipulation you need, but there's a particular fusion for which the Skill is necessary. By combining those three, along with Meditation, you receive the Divergent Focus Skill.]

[Which does what?]

[Effectively, it layers the benefits of Meditation across each of your brains and constructs, giving a multiplicative boost to focus. A slightly unknown benefit is that adding the Mana Weave Skill into the mix boosts each of those minds in their capacity to manipulate mana. This will be almost a requirement if you're to succeed in using the mana after you've injected it.]

[At what rank can I achieve this fusion?]

[Four.]

That's doable.

[There's probably some super awesome high rank fusions you're keeping from me, aren't there?]

Granin nods.

[But what would be the point in me telling you now? It would take years, possibly decades, to achieve them, which won't help you survive *now*. If you don't already have the Skills necessary and aren't actively using them, then what are the odds you would get them to a sufficient rank?]

Pretty darn low.

[You're subject to the Call, Anthony. We both know what that means. Even if you resist with all your power, you'll have to go down eventually. It's dangerous down there, you need strength now.]

[You aren't wrong. Thanks for the advice, guys, I really appreciate it.]

[It's the least we can do... for the twentieth Ancient,] Granin replies, a little twinkle in his eye.

[Yeah, yeah. Now, got any advice for my pets? They should be ready to evolve by the time the wave ends.]