

## Chrysalis 1228

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#### Chapter 1228: Hold The Line

Morreliablinked the sweat and blood from her eyes as she bared her teeth in a snarl of rage. Berserk fury pounded in her veins, empowering every movement, every strike, but also narrowing her vision. Every fibre of muscle yearned to be unleashed, to slash and cut and stab until the fighting was done. However she couldn't lose herself to the rage like she used to, not anymore. With a monumental effort of Will, she restrained herself, took hold of her own mind and forced it to heel.

"Reform the line!" she bellowed, tearing her gaze from the monsters in front. "Where's the cover fire?"

"Monster spawned behind them, tribune," Gyrex reported, most of his centurion's plume burned away, "they'll clean it up shortly."

"They better," she growled as she shoved her two swords into their sheaths.

It was teeth-grindingly painful to force herself back from the rage, but she did it, recentring her emotions to that point right on the brink, where she might reenter berserking at any moment. It was a mental exercise she had been forced to improve rapidly, and one that she still struggled with. Apparently, her mother was a master of it, able to dip in and out of rage at the drop of a hat, but Morreliawas far from that level. With her new rank and leadership role, she simply couldn't berserk as she pleased anymore.

To her left and right, the massed ranks of the Abyssal Legion stood strong against the tide of monsters. Before them yawned the same opening to the below ground tunnel complex she had been defending for weeks, and in all that time, the Dungeon spawn had never stopped coming.

"The backline is occupied for a few more minutes," she snapped to a runner, "inform the centurions."

The woman tore off at an incredible pace. She would cover the whole front in under a minute before returning for the next instruction, waiting alongside the other two runners.

Gyrex yawned widely as another deep roar echoed from the depths before them, rising over the din of battle.

"Not entertaining enough for you, centurion?" Morreliasked, an eyebrow quirked in irritation.

"I haven't had a full night's sleep in well over a week, tribune," he excused himself. "Surely, a brief yawn can be forgiven."

"Life would be great if we could get eight hours a day, but sadly, we don't have the numbers for that."

A curious expression flickered across the man's face.

"Why do you suggest eight hours? I could sleep ten, personally."

She grunted as her eyes ran up and down the line, assessing how her soldiers were doing.

"Seems like a good number. I want the fourth and fifth reserve group committed to the blue line," she snapped, judging that area needed reinforcement.

“By your will, tribune,” Gyrex said, turning to the runners. Before he could speak, Morrelia interrupted.

“You go with them. Some more time on the front should shake you out of your fatigue.”

“Yes, tribune!” Gyrex snapped out a crisp salute and she chuckled with amusement as he rushed off to the front.

With her advisor gone for the time being, she returned to her contemplation of the fighting, wondering at what point she had become so accustomed to the grim calculus of war. Aside from those precious moments where she permitted herself to fight, she was immersed in the role of a leader, her mind running constantly as she fretted over tactics, the condition of her troops, the odds stacked against them and the never ending logistical nightmare of maintaining an army in the field.

How had her mother ever been able to stand it? Despite being her daughter, or perhaps because of it, she knew better than most just how much the famed berserker hated everything that took herself away from the frontline.

Nevertheless, Minerva had not only managed to cope with the demands of leadership, but excel, as she always did, to the point she had been appointed as Consul. It may be difficult for her to admit, but Morrelia was self aware enough to understand she was more like her father.

Commander Titus had attacked his duties with the same grim determination he attacked everything in life, and she found herself modelling her decisions more and more on his patterns. Namely, as simple and straightforward as was possible.

She found herself tightening her hands into fists repeatedly and forced herself to stop. It was a bad habit and displayed a lack of confidence to the legionaries. Instead, she folded her hands across her chest and tried to look stoic as she watched the fighting unfold. The reinforcements crashed into the battle, shoring up the weakness in the line, which held long enough for the archers and mages to start firing once again. With the added support, the line stabilised, giving a much needed reprieve to the exhausted legion.

“Gear check for everyone with the time,” she snapped to another runner.

Armour could malfunction and weapons could crack in the heat of battle. She’d lost too many that way already.

Once more, the roar echoed up from the tunnel, closer this time, and Morrelia closed her eyes, listening. A dragon type? A mythic beast type? The latter, she thought. Her hands reached for the hilts of her two blades.

“Bring Gyrex back to the command post,” she ordered, “and inform him I’ll be on the front.”

“Yes, tribune,” the next runner in line saluted before sprinting away.

Morrelia drew a deep breath, focusing as she drew her blades and ran forward. The moment she passed the last legionary, she allowed her control to slip and the rage rose up to consume her once again.

All her fears, all her concerns, were incinerated in the white hot anger that ignited once more, surging along her veins and turning her vision red. As the giant beast forced itself up out of the tunnel, jaws snapping, a barrage of sword light met it head on.