

## Chrysalis 1229

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#### Chapter 1229: Travelling As Always

*Hello dear readers! It's been some time, but it is I, Travelling Tolly, at your service to bring you my tumultuous tales from the lands of the Colony!*

*As we all know, the third stratum isn't the most welcoming to tourists. The weather is simply dreadful, the air filled with choking ash and the heat is positively suffocating. Naturally, being the incredibly accommodating hosts that I have learned they are, the ants of the Colony have gone to great lengths to make conditions more convivial.*

*"They call this 'air conditioning'," Emilia explained to me, pointing to the strange contraption on the wall. "It will keep your room cool for you, and the temperature can be changed according to the dial on the wall there."*

*"How wonderful," I exclaimed.*

*Of course, such technology wasn't unheard of in the Silver City, but I have learned not to feel superior around the remarkable engineers of the Colony. When I carefully inspected the dial on the wall, I realised I didn't recognise the measurements.*

*"What units does the Colony use to measure temperature?" I asked Emilia, and the young woman smiled.*

*"They use different units depending on the task. When smithing and crafting, they use the same universal units as everyone else, but for comfort, they measure it in grubs."*

*"Grubs?"*

*Emilia gestured for me to examine the dial carefully. In the centre of the dial is a 0, and I see I can shift it to the left or right.*

*"The default setting is the perfect temperature for rearing grubs. Turn it to the left, and the room will rise in units of grubs, turn to the right and it will grow cooler. One grub is the difference in heat that will add exactly one day to the rearing time of larvae."*

*"Fascinating."*

*I was quite chuffed to learn of this little kernel of Colony culture, and I greedily filed it away for you, my dear readers! Of course, such enchanting work is difficult and expensive, so I decided to confirm something with my guide.*

*"Just to be certain, does every guest room in the nest have this feature?"*

*"Of course," Emilia smiled. "The Colony doesn't really believe in social hierarchy. All of the guest rooms are the same."*

*My guest 'room' was a well appointed and spacious apartment with a separate bedroom, sitting room and bathroom, but no kitchen. The Colony would never let a guest cook for themselves, or so I'm told.*

*“And how many guest rooms are there?”*

*“There are fifty thousand rooms in this nest.”*

*“Of course there are.”*

*Naturally, since we were here in the third stratum I was excited to see the wonderful sights of the Colony here in this realm of demons! Emilia was only too happy to accommodate my requests, though my two guards were growing increasingly nervous the longer this trip went on.*

*So what if we are currently surrounded by millions of ants? They’re more likely to bring me a cup of tea than kill me! At this point, I think even if they came to kill me, they would bring scones and cream.*

*“The first place we should visit is the temple,” Emilia told me. “Amongst the Colony, this nest is simply called the Roklu nest, but it holds greater significance for us who live alongside them. We call this place ‘Great One’s Descent’, since this is where the Eldest came down to the third stratum, the first ant to place a claw here. It’s considered something of a sacred place.”*

*“How interesting! Is the temple here in the nest?”*

*“No,” she shook her head, “it’s in the city itself.”*

*I turned to my two guards.*

*“You hear that, boys? We’re going to the demon city!”*

*They didn’t seem as excited as I thought they should be. Of course, going into a demon city isn’t that unusual. If there’s one good thing about demons, it’s that they don’t discriminate. Anyone can go into a demon city, but you can’t necessarily leave. Especially if you catch the eye of a Kidnapping demon.*

*But Emilia only laughs.*

*“You needn’t worry too much. You’ll find Roklu isn’t much like other demon cities.”*

*And she is so very right.*

*The six plates of Roklu are all fully grown, expanding kilometres out from the central pillar to create a truly massive city that teems with demons and ants alike. What is truly shocking is that there are even people living here! Not many, to be sure, but still, for any civilian to be willing to live amongst the obsessed demonkind is rather surprising.*

*I have to say, readers, Roklu was the most orderly demon city I’ve seen! Wide roads, neat houses and structures. Even the many varied sizes of the demons were accommodated! Naturally, everywhere I looked, there were also ants, keeping the peace and ensuring the smooth running of the city.*

*However, Emilia didn’t take us to see the various sights in the city, but instead led us directly to the centre of the city where we found the temple Emilia had referred to.*

*Naturally, we saw it well before we arrived. The Colony doesn’t seem to believe in doing things by half measures. What was a little surprising were the two gargantuan statues standing guard on either side of the gate that leads to the temple. The two figures flank the gate which opens to a wide set of stairs leading up to the temple itself.*

*"Who are these two?" I asked my guide, curious.*

*On the left was a young girl, fire burning in both her open palms, and on the right was a heavily built young man, a massive hammer resting on his shoulder.*

*"These are the first two of the temple favoured. On the left is Alis, and on the right is Jern. Both of them are celebrated as the first two disciples of the Great One, rising to prominence during the first crusade."*

*The first? That certainly piqued my interest!*

*"How many crusades were there?"*

*"Two dozen."*

*"That's a lot of crusades."*

*Emilia blushed.*

*"The followers of the Colony tend to be passionate people," she demurred.*

*Another question bubbled up, as you knew it would, dear readers!*

*"Are Jern and Alis still alive?"*

*I'm seeking that exclusive interview, of course!*

*Emilia's smile faltered.*

*"They are," she said, "but they are standing guard. I'm afraid it will be all but impossible for you to meet them."*