

Chrysalis 131

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 131: Flee from fire!

I'm almost so close to the back of the crowd I could reach out and poke a person with my antennae, please let them not hear me!

The little worker is still struggling in my mandibles, trying to get free to go and investigate the fire. What the heck are you so interested in?! Is it the Biomass? Are you just upset that they are burning the monster bodies and not eating that sweet, sweet Biomass?

I don't think they can eat that, kid! Different people have different cultures ok?

"Stop your wiggling! I'll feed you when we get back to the colony ok?"

Upon hearing that I'm prepared to feed it the worker stops her escape attempts, causing my panic to subside a little, then she happily clacks her mandibles, making an audible *clack* sound, causing my panic to skyrocket!

At first there is no response, but then a middle aged gentlemen in the middle of the crowd slowly turns around, a frown creasing his forehead. His face goes completely white as he is met by the sight of a giant ant lying flat on its belly with another, smaller ant in its mandibles only a few metres from his back.

Uh.... Hi!

I try waving to him with an antenna but he flinches back from the movement, his mouth opening in closing in soundless panic. He reaches with shaking hands to tug on the clothes of the people around him and they turn, irritated at first but when they see his expression and he points with a trembling finger they turn and behold my glorious backside as I have already begun to flee!

Time to motor out of here!

I can hear angry shouts behind me, followed by the soaring voice of the priest before the pounding of feet alert me to the movement of the people behind me. Turning my head slightly I can see the crowd has recovered from their early shock and have starting giving chase! Crude farming tools and rusty swords held at the ready!

Holy smokes Gandalf! These people are a little too into their monster killing!

As I sprint through the fields with a horde of shouting humans behind me the little worker is happily clicking and clacking her mandibles, thoroughly enjoying the ride. I'm speechless at her lack of awareness, just who's fault do you think this situation is!?

Illuminated by burning torches the crowd looks like an angry horde summoned from the depths of hell! Their raging eyes have become devoid of fear as they rush along in my wake.

Daaaaamn it!

I don't particularly want to kill my way through an entire village but at the same time I don't want to lead them to the colony. Think, Anthony!

I may just have to give them a taste of my magical prowess!

Working quickly I try to shape a Gravity Spear as I run. Being so distracted I naturally lose a little speed as I stumble here and there and the crowd begins to gain on me. Its ok, don't fail the construction!

My practice has helped me become more familiar with the shape of the spell, like a tune that I've practiced more often. I still need to do a heap of practice before I can 'play' it with total ease but I can do it a heck of lot better than I could the first time!

After just ten seconds of frantic mental work I've prepared the spell and start pouring in the gravitational energy to charge it. In my haste I don't properly control the flow of energy and pour in a ton too much, overcharging the spell!

Gah! I don't have time to make another one, just fire it!

Turning my head I pick out my target, the first gentlemen to notice me, no longer terrified but maniacally shouting as he leads the charge, what looks like a woodcutters axe in his hand.

Sorry bud, you drew the short straw today!

With a concerted though I fire of my Gravity Spear, the intricate dark purple construction streaks through the air like an arrow, piercing the man directly in the chest!

Screams and shouts erupt from the crowd as the target falls to his knees a disbelieving look on his face as his hands rise to try and grasp the ethereal spear emerging from his chest. Then they scream once more, their momentum completely broken, as the rings of light expand out in a flash, encompassing much of the crowd!

Then the pulling force of gravity kicks in!

At first they don't seem to notice, but the force grows stronger with each passing moment until they cannot resist it! At first they try and hold on, bracing their feet and leaning their bodies as if fighting against a strong breeze but the potent pull cannot be denied and eventually they all 'fall' towards the bewildered gentlemen who's chest still proudly sports the spear.

Even I'm a little stunned at the potency of this spear and momentarily stop running to admire the sight of almost fifty people squashed together like sardines in a can. I can't even see the guy I target anymore, he's become buried under the bodies of his fellow townspeople.

That isn't something I'm going to see every day.

Muahahaha!

So long suckers!

With a jaunty wave of my antennae I turn to dash away into the darkness!

I'm not exactly sure what has happened in that village but at the very least they are taking their community safety seriously. I'm still a little concerned that despite their committed attitude, eventually something too badass for them to handle will poke its head out of that hole and the people there will be food.

I may have to advance some of my plans.

Rushing back to the trees we meet up with Tiny and I command the little worker to climb back up onto my head before we rush back to the nest in darkness. I've noticed that in the forest the monsters we encounter level up a little during the night time. I hadn't realised it at first since they still pathetically weak. In any case, we make it back home without any stress.

Once we hit up the farm and ensure we've all had a good feed, leaving a heap disabled monsters for the colony and extracting another fresh core, I head back to my chamber and dig out my collection. The little one seems to have had enough excitement for the time being and decides to have a nap to help digest her meal.

Once I've assembled my selection of treasures I take all of the cores that are completely unmodified and place the Jellymaw core to one side. I need to go through all of these cores and alter them as much as possible in my final push to level up Core Engineering.

Summoning all of my intellect I focus on the first core and begin the arduous process of making adjustments to the energies contained within.

After several hours of mind shattering work, it has been completed. I managed to take five cores and make all of the changes I can, successfully grinding out two more levels of core engineer.

Argh! My heads is thumping! Core engineering is ridiculously taxing on the mind, like shoving a boulder uphill using only your thoughts.

I take ten minutes in order to refresh myself and then bring myself to face the Jellymaw core. I was super impressed with this monster when I fought against it, the terror it had managed to illicit, even from other monsters, was something I had never beheld before. Not to mention I suspect that this is a creature that has only evolved once, meaning that not much growth potential has been lost.

Yes, I intend to make the Jellymaw my second pet!

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 132: Crafting the JellyMaw!

If possible I'd wanted to wait a little longer before reconstituting my second pet. With higher levels of core engineering I'd be able to customise the creature to better fit the intended role I had in mind.

Sadly events are pressing me a little faster than I would have liked and mining the cores in the farm has proven to be a little slow. If I had a month then I could afford to wait but I feel that things always accelerate faster than I want in this world. I mustn't forget that I still have to raise a reconstituted monster from an infant form up to the mature, combat ready form it had when it was killed. That process will take a fair amount of time and has to accounted for in my planning.

If I'd had time I would have been able to grind out a few more levels and then, with my skills raised I had hoped to embark on the kind of mastery that Formo had displayed to me. The Sophos have carved out a life for themselves within the Dungeon using their hyper modified and specially raised pets, showing just how strong this technique can be.

I want to supplement my own strength with a few select pets also. I can't be in every place at once and defending the colony whilst also hunting to raise my own strength is proving difficult. Eventually the colony will be strong enough to look after itself, with a number of more highly evolved workers and sheer numbers to overwhelm more powerful monsters. Until then I want to be able to leave the colony for a stretch of time and be assured that it is well protected.

The Jellymaw is an incredible defensive creature. Within the confines of the Dungeon, inside a narrow space, even without the power of sight there is nowhere to hide from its fearsome tentacles and incredible strength.

Imagining an enemy attempting to assault the ant hill, sending soldiers down the main shaft to hunt the Queen and ants huddling within, only to meet a wall of brutal tentacles that rip the flesh from their bones and devouring them whole.

.... Yuck. Effective, but yuck.

Ok! Bringing my antennae forward I throw my mind into the dark gem resting on the soil before me. Immediately a flood of information invades my mind, all of the details of the JellyMaw as a creature, its body type, organs, limbs, musculature, stats and evolutionary pathway are laid bare in my eyes, ready for manipulation.

The first thing that strikes me is the stats. I'm kind of surprised at how intelligent the monster is. I hadn't thought the creature would need much of a mind and had prepared myself for another all brawn no brain associate like Tiny. As I investigate deeper it starts to make a bit of sense.

By not included sensory organs, no eyes, sense of taste, smell or hearing, a tremendous amount of ... space ... was left available within the brain. It's a little hard to explain but when I explore more deeply all of the things that contribute towards the final 'stat' value the intricacy and complexity of the system starts to become more apparent.

So if there was only ten 'points' worth of energy available to devote to a monsters brain, then you would need to spend that developing all of the aspects of a brain for a rounded mind. Some of the energy would go to unconscious body management, like how a person doesn't have to think about making their heart beat, a good chunk of it would go on memory, more on increasing the speed and efficacy of the brains connections, that is to say, intelligence. Since sensory organs are quite complex the parts of the brain that deal with those are also quite complex requiring a heap of energy to properly form them. By not including any of these, large amounts of energy was instead devoted towards pure intelligence and memory, gaining a relatively high Cunning stat fairly cheaply.

Interesting!

Similarly the JellyMaw has no bones, much like a regular jellyfish. Without having to spend energy on a skeletal system, more was devoted to the powerful musculature. I'm still not exactly sure how the monster manages to function out of water without bones though, I'll need to dig a little deeper.

The more I look the more impressed I am with the way this creature is constructed. That incredible power has come about as a result of a series of trade-offs that have been made everywhere. Limited senses, no bones, reduced nervous system, very simple selection of organs, all cut back to produce that fearsome strength I'd been able to witness.

However, this is still room for changes. Since the JellyMaw already has greater than expected intelligence, I want to push that advantage a bit further. Intelligence will ultimately trump strength, the human race rising to supremacy on Earth is living proof!

Besides, the JellyMaw is already crazy strong, any power I shave off now can be made up for in future evolutions by ensuring that the core is maxed out.

I begin to put my mind to the changes, forcing and shaping them with my will and then holding them down until the new form holds steady within the core. Reducing the strength of the tentacles a little here and there, adjusting the musculature of the face to pour more energy into the brain. All of the extra energy is devoted to pure intelligence, raising the cunning little by little.

I manage to squeeze another four points of intelligence before I stop. I don't want to take away the creatures strength too much.

My mind is already aching by this point, the adjustments are becoming harder and harder to accomplish. I'm not sure how much more I'll be able to do. Girding myself I dive deeper into the core, probing the limits of the information accessible to me at my current skill level.

Aha! More answers are forthcoming here.

It seems the creatures body manages without bones since its flesh is formed from of bizarre, rubbery substance that is partly infused with mana. If I'm reading this right then the JellyMaw won't be able to survive without a constant injection of mana since it will absorb it directly into its body! Crazy!

I'll need to keep this in mind for future and make sure the little thing manages to get enough mana at all times. This may prove slightly tricky on the surface but won't be an issue in the Dungeon.

I can also see the future evolution paths of the JellyMaw. There are a few selections but most them are focused on providing various physical buffs and organs that directly increase overall combat proficiency. There is something else I want for my JellyMaw. By scrapping most of the existing options I create my own custom evolution and in doing so I get to set the bonuses granted by choosing that evolution.

Modifying a creature at this level is a first for me and the change is excruciatingly hard to make. I feel as if I'm about to burst a vessel or completely pass out by the time it is finally done.

That's it!

I'm out, Gandalf! No more of this torture!

I think that is all I can do.

After taking a few minutes to recover I reach forward to tap the core once more.

[Compatible monster core detected. Would you like to reinforce your core or reconstitute the monster?]

Reconstitute!

With my command the core begins to glow emitting brighter and brighter light with each passing moment. As it grows more intense, the form of the core itself becomes more elastic, changing and shaping itself into the new monster.

Eventually I have to turn my eyes away as the light has grown too radiant, casting shadows across the walls of our cosy chamber within the nest. Some eyelids would really come in handy right about now...

Soon the light has faded and I turn back to behold my new creation and friend!

Its.... A ball....

Sitting on the ground in front of me in the space that the gem previously occupied is now a small dark sphere the size of a tennis ball.

As I watch, tiny tentacles start to tentatively poke out of the ball, wiggling their way out to poke and stretch across the ground as the completely blind JellyMaw tries to find something in its environment.

Internally I sigh. I knew it was going to be like this but somehow I hadn't quite mentally prepared myself for just how small and unthreatening the newly formed JellyMaw would be. Don't be discouraged, me! Feed it up and it'll become the brutal killing machine you remember in no time!

[I'm over here] I tell the new monster and reach across with one my legs to place it touching one of the seeking tentacles.

The creature wobbles happily in response and reaching across with more tentacles to grasp my leg. It takes a few moments but eventually it manages to scale up onto my back, taking the position that Tiny once occupied when he was still small.

Sheesh. I feel like I spend half my time giving rides to small creatures in this life, what am I, a pony?

The dazzling display created by the core reconstitution has managed to awaken the little worker as well and she rushes to take her place of pride on my noggin before we set out.

I feel pleased but also exasperated.

Fine. You can ride on my back for now but you'll work hard once get large enough!

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 133: Digging is the song of my soul

With my new JellyMaw pet, little worker and Tiny in tow I head over to the farm. I've occasionally been letting the workers in to battle on their own, since I think every creature needs real combat experience rather than just raw Xp. So long as they attack in numbers the ants are able to quickly overwhelm their opposition, smashing the enemies and pulling them apart without any resistance. If they trickled in with smaller numbers it would be a hugely different story, the weaker individual ants would get pulverised, so I only let them in after piling up enough workers at the entrance.

As every day passes the colony is growing stronger. Everywhere I look there are more workers with mutation advancements of all sorts and when I flip on my mana sense there are the soft responses I get from low level cores all over the place.

Muahahaha! Our power grows! I believe I even spotted the first double evolved worker, a beefy looking ant with a larger head and powerful mandibles. This may be the first 'soldier' in the colony!

It's all looking good right now!

Tiny and I descend into the farm chamber and smack the heck out of everything in there until they are almost dead. Only then do I let my two burdens loose on their meal.

As the little worker excitedly leaps off to grab her experience I take a moment to have a word with her.

"I'm not sure if you can understand this much, but try to spend your Biomass on your pheromone gland, if you can get it to +5 you'll be able to take Pheromone language and talk to me and the Queen! Think about it."

She looks back at me for a long moment before jumping onto her first victim and starting to saw away with her mandibles. I use one of my antennae to reach onto my back and poke the JellyMaw there.

The JellyMaw has been sitting in the center of my back, tentacles expanded out to grip my carapace to stop the little ball from rolling straight off. When my antennae prods into its body it reaches out with a tentacle and grabs onto it.

[I'll take you to some food, grab on].

The young monster grips onto my antennae and I lift it up into the air before heading over to a defenceless beast. I don't think the JellyMaw is able to fight at all yet so I finish off the monster with a single chomp of my mandibles before dropping the little creature onto it.

Like a small black tennis ball the JellyMaw rests on the Biomass, feeling it out with its tentacles before starting to eat.

Once again I'm treated to the horrific sight of the main body somehow unfolding to reveal that dreadful maw filled with razor teeth! Only this time the entire process takes place in miniature, the fanged mouth is probably too small to fit an apple in at this point.

Nonetheless the newborn starts ripping into the Biomass with gusto, taking in far more food than really seems physically possible until the main body has inflated from tennis ball size to nearly football size.

..... Gross, but impressive!

I nab some food as well, after this much time I've managed to accumulate a few Biomass points, I'll need to think about what I want to prioritise my spending on soon. For now I gather my crew together and we exit the farm.

Things are going well here with the colony, it's time to try and develop my own strength, and let Tiny exercise himself a little. The big guy is looking more depressed every day. If I don't let him fight something soon I'm worried he's just going to fade away.

We run about half the distance back to the village and I begin construction of a new tunnel! It's so easy to fall into the rhythm of digging. My inner ant is being nourished by the act of shifting dirt with my mandibles.

It doesn't even take long until I've made significant progress. My powerful body combined with my digging skills is a powerful combination, not to mention the burning joy of my ant soul towards the digging of tunnels!

My aim is to connect a stealth tunnel to underneath the human church. There are a lot of reasons for this, a little bit of protecting the humans from the monsters further down the Dungeon, preventing the humans from absorbing Xp and wasting Biomass, using the existing tunnel connections within the escape tunnel to push deeper into the Dungeon to get some juicy monsters to fight in order to push Tiny and myself to the next level.

Always scratching away at the back of my mind is the potential of the next evolution. After evolving into the Mind Ant I've experienced a tremendous growth in power that I'm still working to explore. Since each subsequent evolution has seen an exponential amount of growth and I have to admit to being super curious what will happen if I max out my core and evolve again.

An ant can dream dammit!

After furiously digging for half a day I eventually convince Tiny to help me out by telling him I'm trying to get him something to fight. To my surprise he willingly throws himself down the tunnel and starts tearing into the ground with his hands, pausing every few minutes to haul up arm loads of dirt to dump on the forest floor before charging underground again like a deranged miner.

It almost brings a tear to my eye to see him so active again. Welcome back Tiny!

Whilst he's digging I make a quick trip back to the colony to help them harvest the farm and feed the two children who are still using me as their own personal transport.

The faster I feed you little runts the faster you'll grow up and prove yourselves useful! Eat well! Muahahahaha!

After seeing to my duties I rush back to relieve Tiny of his digging duties and press onwards with the project. We don't have time to waste right now, the foreboding feeling that started rising in me yesterday has only continued to rise. This is another thing driving my desire to get back into the Dungeon and level up.

After digging down and angling the tunnel I rely on my Tunnel Map to guide our fledgling tunnel to connect with the escape tunnel far enough down that we shouldn't have any risk of being heard or observed by the humans battling the monsters in the church. After another four hours of solid earth chomping we finally break through!

Time for fighting!

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 134: Once more into the breach

It is a known phenomenon that not all monsters of the same species are created equal. From as far back as the Rending, when monsters had first appeared on the surface of Pangera, it had been noted that some monsters boasted far more individual strength than others of the same kind. The difference was so pronounced it could not be explained by a simple difference of levels.

Indeed, over the centuries, as all the sentient species of the surface delved into the Dungeon, eager to unlock its mysteries, it was discovered that some monsters are simply spawned stronger than others. Faster, more powerful, more intelligent and altogether more deadly.

When these monsters reached maturity they typically were able to display a leadership type quality amongst other monsters of their own kind, gathering together bands of followers, groups of monsters that grew in power rapidly due to the leadership and guidance they received.

It is generally accepted that this is the reason such monsters came to be known amongst scholars as 'Champions'. Mercenaries and freelance explorers were more crude and direct with their naming, out of fear these elite monsters caused in them as well as the strength they displayed, the common name for such monsters became 'Brutes'.

It isn't known why such monsters spawn, or how. They appear infrequently in normal times but numerous studies suggest that in times of great conflict or upheaval in the Dungeon the spawn rate of champions rises tremendously.

Some have claimed that Champion monsters can grow so powerful as to exert their controlling influence over monsters not of their own kind, forming armies of mixed monsters in the depths that rampage endlessly until they burn themselves out in endless conflict, or settle down and go into hiding.

Such claims are often rebuffed, as little evidence of such has reached the surface in the time of writing.

Excerpt from Chapter 4 - Dungeon Champions, from 'The Dungeon Monsters, a primer' by Hedger Oldfinger.

After breaking down the final bit of dirt the now familiar glow of the Dungeon assaults my eyes. The screaming of the monsters, the sound of claws tearing at flesh and pulse running through the mana veins on the walls, like the pulse of the very planet itself.

I almost missed this. Not quite, but almost.

Tiny certainly did though. Crouching in the narrow tunnel behind the sounds of vicious combat are like music in the ears of the ape. In an incredibly short amount of time he can no longer contain himself and shoves me forward out of the way, leaping into the Dungeon with a bloodthirsty roar!

Tiny is back in town!

I however, am crumpled on the floor with a rather heavy ape standing on my back.

[Get off me you goon!] I shout.

I don't think he hears me, or if he does he clearly chooses to ignore me. Screeching with rage the giant ape hurls himself onto the centipedes, hounds, lizards and rabbits in his path, fists blazing with electricity.

We are not significantly deeper into the Dungeon here than the farm is but I can already see that the monsters spawning here are visibly more powerful, with some of the more dominant low level monsters appearing.

Even this little upgrade is enough to pump Tiny's blood and wake his thirst for battle!

As the giant ape leaps into action the enemies rapidly crumple one by one as they are unable to resist those potent fists. Body after body is being blasted into the walls or smashed into the floor, never to rise again.

Hold on! Leave some for me!

I scramble to get my feet under me and hurl myself into the fight!

Ten minutes later we have cut down everything in our way in this section of tunnel and have settled down to munch on some Biomass.

[You happy now Tiny? You got have a decent fight finally] I say to my gorging pet.

He doesn't even pause his eating but a frown creases his bat forehead as he ponders my question, turning the words over in his mind.

[No] he replies.

I'd figured as much. Although it was a little tougher than the farm it simply isn't enough to satisfy the big guy. That's ok though. We'll keep digging deeper until we find something and start to level up once more.

Speaking of levels I actually gained one in this fight! Nobody was as surprised as me to finally get my level up from killing a thorn lizard but hey, there it is.

The little worker and JellyMaw have also leaped off their transportation (me) to stuff themselves once more, packing their miniature bodies with absurd amounts of food. I really have to name these two, thinking of them as 'little worker' and 'JellyMaw' is starting to feel a little rude.

Surely a bit more consideration wouldn't hurt, right?

The worker is small and hyper active, full of energy and a complete pain in the gaster. Her name should represent her curious and exhausting self. I'll call her Vibrant.

I'm not sure why, but the name just speaks to me.

Satisfied, I turn my attention to the ball of magical black rubber that is busy feeling its way around with small tentacles, trying to locate the next mouthful. So far the young JellyMaw has been fairly quiet, mind you I'm not sure if she can even talk back to me at this stage of her development.

I don't have too much to go on.

Also, should I give a boy or girl name? Tiny is fairly gender neutral, maybe I should go down that road again.

What sort of name would fit a blind, tentacle monster of endless doom though? I'm fairly stumped. I may just have to pick something that sounds fitting and not worry too much about the meaning.

..... Crinis?

Eh, sure why not.

Sounds sort of Latiny, like most of the monster species names. I'll roll with it.

I'm not the sort to put too much thought into these things.

We find three cores amongst the remains and I take two, leaving one for Tiny to absorb. I make sure to give him a hard stare until he does, in fact, absorb the thing. He knows what'll happen if he doesn't!

Although it would have been troublesome, I could have taken these cores to the surface for skill grinding but I decided to straight up absorb them and return to the path of powering up my core. It feels nice to once again be on the path of strengthening oneself.

As we rummage around in what used to be the tail end of the escape tunnel I make something of a discovery.

It appears as if the loosely packed soil the colony had left behind was not enough of a deterrent to the Dungeon veins and they had remained inside the dirt we had left behind. It may have been spawning the odd monster inside the earth or something may have followed the trail of veins and dug its way through but certainly something has followed from below.

Right at the end of the old escape tunnel I find a hole that opens into a narrow passage that retraces the colonies steps back into the depths of the Dungeon.

..... Nards.

I was afraid of something like this. This means the human church isn't only exposed to the small monster producing space we left behind but is potentially connected to the entire Dungeon!

[Tiny! Crinis! We have to get moving. It's time to explore a little deeper]

Tiny is visibly pleased with the news but I don't get a response from the small blob. Oh right I didn't tell it what its name was.

I walk over to it and tap it with one leg.

[Climb on up. From now on your name will be Crinis. Pleased to have you on the team!]

The little ball wobbles with what I think might be joy before latching onto my leg and climbing up onto my back. Once Crinis is securely positioned I go to collect the little worker.

"From now on your name is Vibrant! Make sure to get the pheromone language mutation and then we can chat. Let's go!"

Vibrant twitches back and forth with nervous energy as her eyes focus on me for a long moment, then she leaps up into her normal position and we descend further into the Dungeon.

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 135: Rising

We venture forth, squeezing into the narrow tunnel and descending into the depths. Every now and again I can detect a monster forming and this prevents us being ambushed as we pick our way down.

I've managed to pile up a healthy amount of Biomass over the last while and none of it has been spent. While I wasn't paying attention it stacked up to twenty one! This was unheard of wealth when I was just starting out, completely ridiculous. Now, I've managed to not even realise I had so much as I devoted all of my attention and energy on my skills.

With this much I can purchase the +6, +7 and +8 upgrades for a single organ, but which to pick? I could go the new hotness of the gravitational organ or the old reliable of the infused mandibles, even hark all the way back to the eyes?

I think I'll go something that is directly combat relevant and upgrade my mandibles to +8. I don't want to run into anything else I can't tear through with my trusty face scissors. Combined with the power of my shattering bite skill this upgrade could have a powerful effect!

[Do you wish to improve Mandibles to +8? this will cost 21 Biomass]

Go for it!

OH GOD!

My face! MY PRECIOUS FACE!

Once again the horror of the mutation itch has somehow slipped my mind completely and has stormed back to remind me just how mind meltingly irritating it really is.

My face is on fire. FIRE I SAY!

There was a distinct leap in the level of itch from +4 to +5, but I had assumed that was largely because of the mutation advancement. Apparently not!

Eventually the feeling fades and I came back to my senses. Tiny is impatiently standing behind me whilst I have been wibbling about the place madly scratching at my face. Don't look at me like that you lousy ape! Why is it I never see you scratching away yourself when you mutate?

I'm going to try and keep a closer eye on these pets of mine and see if I can spot them having trouble as they upgrade themselves. To help them? Of course not! I shall point and laugh! Let's see the look on your face then, Tiny!

Having recovered we continue on our way down the tunnel and we come to the section of tunnel were we had connected to an existing section of Dungeon in order to hunt and feed the colony. Here the trail stops. It looks like whatever had drilled out the old escape tunnel had started from here and not from the old nest.

Thank goodness!

If those horrific beasts I had heard but not seen had followed us all the way up here we would have had some serious problems, not to mention the human town would have been in some strife. This is by far the better outcome.

This time I make sure to leap into the active Dungeon tunnel before Tiny can lose his patience and shove me down. What greets my eyes is the same bustling scene from the first time we invaded this place. Low level Dungeon monsters fighting each other furiously in twos and threes up and down the tunnel, fallen monsters on the ground being contested fiercely as creatures try to heal and sustain themselves through the endless fighting.

[Get 'em Tiny!]

This tunnel is barely large enough for the big ape to move comfortably, being the kind of smaller offshoot tunnel that I had been born in rather than a main thoroughfare. He makes the best of it though and gleefully starts smashing his way down the tunnel whilst I follow along with my passengers aboard.

Whenever a monster from behind us tries to attack I subdue it with a quick blast from the business district. The unfortunate target is quickly set upon by nearby creatures as its movement becomes restricted and the acid begins to eat away at its health.

My goal is to try and find a larger, main tunnel. The monsters we find there should be more on our level and provide a larger boost to our growth. If I'm lucky we might even harvest a decent number of cores from such a location.

With Tiny in front we follow the twist and turns of the tunnel for thirty minutes, punching our way through every step of the way, before we come to what it is I've been looking for.

Ahead of the us the smaller tunnel suddenly opens wide into a much larger passage, the sound of fighting and the roar of monsters is our welcome.

Perfect.

Before us there is a rolling brawl of the sorts of monsters we had become accustomed to seeing in the forest. Bear Tyrants, Lion Ogres, Wolf-Dragons and others that I've never seen before. Armoured lizards the size of horses with mighty club like tails and two heads are facing off against huge creatures with snakelike tails that lead to an upright body festooned with claws and spikes that they whip about with blinding speed.

Tiny has become very still for some reason. I shuffle forward a little so I get a good look at his face.

[You okay there buddy?]

His face has gone completely slack as his eyes drink in the scenes of glorious carnage before him as if he were dying of thirst and staring at the freshest of pure mountain streams.

The infatuation, the adoration in those eyes... He looks like a giant bat faced ape in love!

Are you that desperate to fight things?! Really?!

Fine! You stand there and take in the sights. I'll jump in and steal your Xp!

Bwahahahaha!

With my two passengers clutching on tightly I leap down into the main tunnel, mandibles ablaze with energy as I channel mana into them.

Shattering Bite!

The illusory jaws of energy extend from my mandibles and crunch down on the nearest monster who, refreshingly, doesn't collapse from the first attack.

The blood is starting to pump through my body as the excitement rises in my chest. Finally a good battle! I can stretch out and move at last!

I can test out my new techniques!

As I feint forward and back against my opponent, a battered Tyrant Bear who rumbles and slashes at the air in response to my provocation, bearing its tremendous fangs, I begin to craft my new magic within myself.

I hope you're ready for some of this flava! Taste my Gravity Bolt!

My practice has certainly paid off! It only takes me a few seconds to shape the magic and pump it full of energy until it is ready to launch. I lunge to one side, causing the bear to rear back out of my range as it prepares a retaliatory attack. At this precise moment I fire the Gravity Bolt! The foe has no time to react before the spell impacts it in the side, right on target! Immediately the magic takes effect and starts to drag the bear down.

Gweheheh.

I'm impressed though. The raw physical strength of this monster has allowed it to remain on its feet as opposed to being pressed flat against the ground like the weaker beasts I'd practiced on. The powerful gravity is still having an effect however, the bear is using so much strength to battle against the pull its legs are practically shaking, its eyes are still fierce but a tinge of fear is there for the first time.

How are you going to fight in that sort of condition Mr Bear?

You can't!

Shattering Bite!

Trying not to get cocky I keep an eye on my surroundings as I circle around the bear and begin my assault on its tremendous defences. In order to puncture that insanely tough hide I need to close the distance and use my physical mandibles. This is made fairly trivially easy however since I am quite nimble but the bear is struggling to turn and keep me in its eyes.

Shattering Bite!

Shattering Bite!

More mana into the mandibles!

Shattering Bite!

[You have slain level 8 Earth Bear Tyrant]

[You have gained experience]

Behold my power!

As I'm glorying in my triumph a shattering screech echoes down the tunnel. Tiny is ready to fight!

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 136: Brawlin'

The ear shattering screech out of Tiny has only gotten stronger over time. As the sonic waves roll over my precious ear canals the stunning effect slams into my soft brain(s) like a sledgehammer.

Thanks to my sturdy willpower I can shake it off after a second and see how the rest of the monsters are doing.

Generally, not great.

There are plenty of beasts reeling or stunned completely from that vocal blast whilst a few larger creatures seem to have managed to resist largely as well as I did. Having announced his mighty presence, Tiny leaps down into the cavern, the rocks cracking under him when he lands with a boom.

The long hair on his arms and back is slowly starting to rise into the air as he glares hungrily at the monsters before him, who can only shrink back from this intimidating beast. I can only imagine that seeing such a beefy, strong looking monster land in their midst is not exactly what they had expected or hoped for. Tiny's hands and body are starting to spark in earnest now, little zaps of electricity rippling over his body and swimming across his fingers.

ROAR!

Not intimidated by the fearsome display one of the armoured lizards bellows a challenge from across the tunnel! Tiny's bat ears twitch in outrage and he screeches back, the sonic blast physically impacting some smaller monsters and knocking them right off their feet!

Crunch! Crunch!

As the two monsters stomp towards each other their heavy tread shatters the stones beneath their feet. Not willing to be caught in the fray the smaller monsters back the hell up, desperate to get out of the way of what is about to take place. Even I can follow their logic. If these two big fellas' want to fight each other, that is a hell of a lot better than them picking on us! Let's move to the side and eat each other whilst they do their thing.

I have to admit I feel like a proud Dad as I watch my once little ape stomp towards a fiendish armour beast in preparation for a no holds barred battle to the death.

...

Should I cast a sneaky Gravity Bolt in there to help Tiny out? Besides from the risk of hitting my own pet accidentally, I'm not sure he'd be ok with me interfering in his long awaited battle. I might just have to keep an eye on things and play it by ear.

As they two monsters draw closer to each other the pressure in the air increases to unbearable levels. Two monsters enter! Only one will leave!

Suddenly swinging his fists in wide arcs Tiny is the first to act! Electricity crackles in the air as he raises both massive hands in the air before leaping forward and crashing them down like a thunderbolt!

Reading his move the massive lizard dives forward fearlessly! By shifting the point of impact in this way the blow will fall on its back where thick bony plates will absorb the damage, rather than straight onto its head.

CRASH!

The feet of the lizard are forced three inches into the cavern floor as that titanic blow, with all the weight of an angry bat-ape behind it, shudders through its body. It isn't the physical damage that troubles the beast though. Bright rippling arcs of electricity discharge from Tiny's fists as they impact, piercing straight through that hard shell to roast the tender flesh beneath.

Gasp! Is this the legendary Ape Thunder Strike?!

As I'm absorbed by watching this clash I manage to notice something in my peripheral vision. A second of the large shell lizards is positioning itself for a charge to one side! Clearly the monster is planning to intrude on what is clearly a thrilling one versus one battle! How rude!

Sneakily I begin to prepare a spell. Let's see how you like this tasty little dish!

After being damaged by Tiny's strike the lizard shakes itself vigorously before turning its large body with deceptive speed! The clubbed tail behind it whips through the air so quickly it almost can't be followed by the eye!

[Look out Tiny!]

The big ape appears to see it all coming, hardly needing any warning from me! He rotates his body and flashes out a clean right hook, connecting flush with that bony tail and smashes it away!

Holy hell! That was so fast!

Punching in such a way isn't without cost however, a clear crunching sound can be heard from Tiny's fist in the moment of impact. He must have broken at least some fingers!

With his back turned however, the interloping lizard has found its moment to charge! Unleashing a furious roar it pounds the rocky floor with its mighty four-legged tread, its incredible mass and hard armour shattering any stone pillars or monsters unfortunate enough to be in the way.

Ha! I've been waiting for you my friend! I skitter forward until I am facing down the rampaging monster who clearly intends to crush this pitiful ant flat on its way to assist in taking down the fearsome gorilla monster.

If only it were that easy for you big guy.

Try this dish! The Inverse Gravity Bolt!

With malicious glee I release the powerful blast of purple magic that shoots through the air like a bullet. With its large frame and momentum the lizard has no chance of dodging my strike and can only choose to continue head on!

I can almost see the flicker of surprise in the beasts eyes as my spell impacts and it feels no pain at all. Did the spell have no effect? In fact, not only did it not hurt, my body feels lighter than ever! I feel like I'm flying!

Huehuehue.

You sure are buddy!

Confused growls followed by panicked squeals erupt from the beast as it realises that it is rising from the floor and instead of smashing me to pieces with an irresistible charge it has sailed gracefully over my head, legs wagging in the empty air.

As its forward momentum peters out the poor monster is left hovering in mid-air close to the ceiling, legs and tail thwipping about as it tries to control its body and move the way it wants to.

Not to worry big guy, you'll be coming down sooner than you think!

As I prepare another spell Tiny has pivoted back to his foe and swung out with his fists once more, smashes the lizard so hard he knocks it several feet to one side, unleashing another charge of electricity as he does so.

Once again the scent of roasted flesh fills the air as the lizard roars in pain, unable to resist this fierce elemental damage!

Then its eyes fiercely glow and it unleashes something I didn't expect!

From the floor of the cavern the rock suddenly becomes soft for a moment before reforming into a sharp lance that pierces through the air like the fierce thrust of a spear!

Unable to predict the stealthy attack from below, Tiny is caught unawares! Unable to dodge the spear in time it pierces him in the side. He manages to catch the tip in one hand, preventing the stone spike from penetrating any deeper as it continues to extend, lifting the massive ape from the ground!

Earth magic! I hadn't expected that! These monsters must be double evolved to be able to use something nifty like that, surely? My eyes light up with greed at the thought of the Xp and Biomass to be harvested from battling against monsters as evolved as I am for a change.

Tiny seems to think the same as me. Far from panicking at being wounded, his fangs are revealed in a manic grin, his eyes wide open and blazing with hunger. He looks even fiercer than before, to be honest.

Still holding onto the spear with one hand Tiny bellows and clutches the other fist before his face. Instantly dazzling blue electricity begins coursing through his body and concentrating on that fist.

I know what this is!

I manage to turn my head away just in time as Tiny thrusts his hand forward, discharging a blinding arc of lightning at his foe! This time he doesn't cut it off after one blast however and I turn my head back, expecting the attack to end but instead get an eyeful of blazing lightning as Tiny continues to channel it through his hand, electricity pouring out from all over his body and rushing to his hand in unending streams.

Under this ferocious attack the lizard cannot maintain control over its magic and the spear of stone crumbles to nothing as Tiny continues his electric assault.

Actually isn't it about time...

Glancing up towards the roof I think my floating friend is just about to run out of charge.

My sense of timing is close to spot on as the beast roars in triumph, the sensation of floating has started to fade! Soon it will drop back to the floor!

Oh, you'll fall back to the floor alright.

Gravity Bolt!

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 137: The beating goes on!

Impacted by the second Gravity Bolt the poor lizard experiences a brief moment of suspension. A narrow window of time in which the effect of the upwards gravity is fading and the new, downward force is only beginning to kick in.

The tentative balance is suddenly broken and with sensational effect!

From hovering in place like an awkward levitating turtle the monster suddenly descends so quickly my eyes almost cannot catch its motion.

BOOM!

A tremendous impact occurs, sending dust and debris flying into the air, obscuring my vision and showering the cavern with shards of rock.

Holy moly! I didn't expect that to happen! Well, not quite so spectacularly at least. Scurrying quickly I use my antennae to swipe at the air and try to clear my view and inspect my prey.

Eventually I have to stop in place as I feel I may have walked too far. Where the heck is it? Is this dust ever going to settle?!

On my back the two interlopers are just as blind as I am, although, for Crinis, it is a fairly standard state of affairs. Turning on the spot it takes a moment for me to realise the texture of the floor beneath my feet is slightly different.

Looking down I notice that I'm standing on the back of the monster!

It's been squished right into the floor!

Slowly the dust falls to reveal that the lizard has been completely submerged in the rocky floor of the cavern by the impact and somewhat lacking it tact, I've wandered directly onto its back. Even worse, the monster is still alive, groaning painfully as the downward pressure continues to compact it straight into the ground.

Sorry about that buddy! I'll er... ease your suffering?

Piercing Chomp!

Crunch!

Phew, this shell is seriously tough!

Piercing Chomp!

Crunch!

Still not there!

Again! Again! Again!

By the time I finally break through those tough armour plates my face is feeling extremely sore and I've managed to level up my piercing bite once! No wonder Tiny was struggling to crack it with his hands. Even using my armour penetrating skill it took almost twenty strikes.

[You have slain level 12 Os Lacerti]

[You have gained experience]

Feel my wrath you dinosaur wannabe! Moohahahaha! Vibrant seems somewhat confused by my domineering victory pose, her antennae are wobbling about in a confused manner until she eventually decides to somewhat copy my dynamic stance, one leg raised to punch the air.

...

Don't copy that! For starters you didn't even do anything! Second, you're making me feel childish in my moment of victory! This battle was the first in which my incredible magical superiority played the decisive factor, allow me my moment of pride dammit!

Meanwhile Tiny has also completed his battle. After sustaining his brutal lightning attack until the enemy was almost completely roasted he then approached his incapacitated foe and punched its head in.

Instead of expressing his dominance to other monsters by posing coolly, Tiny instead approaches his defeated foe and immediately starts ripping into the Biomass, tearing it apart with his bare hands and shoving it into his face.

You know, looking at the response of the other monsters in the chamber, his method may be more effective in the intimidation department, but it lacks style!

Indeed the other monsters in this section of tunnel are giving both Tiny and myself a large berth as they continue to battle amongst themselves. Incredibly, I actually see a few of the normally battle crazed beasts slinking off down the tunnel, disengaging from fighting entirely!

Is it just me or are some of these creatures getting smarter?

In the early days of the wave they would hurl themselves into bloody slaughter the moment they were created and clawed out of the dirt, regardless of the odds! I couldn't possibly imagine for a second one of those creatures would voluntarily escape from battle. Calculating the odds just wasn't something they seemed capable of!

Now though, it looks a little different. Between a monster who can decide if a fight is too dangerous and tactfully retreat, or a monster who suicidally charges forward no matter what, which is more dangerous? In the short term, the suicidal monster is a little dangerous, in the long term, the sneaky one is by far the greater threat! In this world the potential for growth of monsters seems nearly infinite! All

we need is time and resources. For a monster, surviving to fight another day is the only thing that matters!

I'll have to think about this development later. For now, the stupid monsters who decided to stick around shall become my food!

Tiny finishes crunching on his Biomass and then turns his greedy eyes towards the other monsters battling on the fringes of the cavern. None shall be let go!

The two of us catapult forward to continue the battle once more. Having discharged most of his electricity Tiny is reduced to smashing his opponents with just his raw strength whereas I have plenty of juice left in the tank.

Instead of just chomping everything to death I try and work on some new tactics. The Gravity Bolt combo I used on the lizard is just one of my new strategies, I have other ideas as well! The first is to test the Gravity Spear in combat situations!

After launching a spear towards a cluster of monsters the pulling effect is strong enough that none of them are able to escape, instead being sucked into a comical ball of writhing monsters who stab and snap at each other viciously with no way to escape!

Heheheh. Now is the time to apply some AOE damage. Shattering Bite!

CRUNCH!

Pouring forth my stamina I manifest the two ethereal mandibles around the condensed monsters and savagely bite, crushing the creatures between them!

[You have slain]

[You have slain]

[You have slain]

It's so easy it almost feels mean...

THIS is the strength of the Mind Ant! Being able to wield these powerful spells and destroy my opponents with ease! It was for this sort of effect that I've been striving from the very beginning, practicing my magic skills and prioritising the growth of my core, grinding away all of those hours and finally choosing this evolution, sacrificing strength, sacrificing toughness, all to boost my capacity to wield magic in this new world.

All of it was for this!

And it was totally worth it!

I start to run around the cavern, gleefully hurling a new gravity Spear every time I form one and running towards the hapless targets to crunch them with my mandibles. Even as my flagrant use of my own stamina and mana mounts up and exhaustion sets in I don't stop until every monster I can see has been defeated.

So much fun!

I even went up a level!

This trip into the Dungeon has certainly been profitable! Being able to cast my spells so smoothly in combat feels so rewarding! I still feel it's possible to bring them out faster but I'll need a lot of practice to make that happen.

I also shouldn't overestimate my strength either. There will surely be some forms of counter to magical attacks, shields of some sort or magic dampening abilities. Just because I can beat up on these small fry doesn't mean I should start celebrating too much!

Keep it cool Anthony!

With the main bulk of our work complete we try and wrap up the rest of our task as quickly as possible. I get Tiny to help me locate any cores we find and I get him to hold onto them for me before we settle down to have a rapid meal.

The two lizards we defeated are undoubtedly the strongest monsters we fought here so they are the Biomass of choice!

[You have consumed a new source of Biomass: Os Lacerti, you are awarded one Biomass]

[Basic profile of the Os Lacerti unlocked]

[Os Lacerti: Bone Lizard, This monster is famed for the powerful armour covering its body, its immense physical strength and the devastating power of the clubbed tail. Although not too powerful, the beast is capable of simple earth magic spells, be careful.]

Yeah, now they tell us.

Drained but satisfied, Tiny, myself, Vibrant and Crinis tuck into into the Biomass enthusiastically. I personally manage to pick up another nine points!

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 138: Family

Overall we managed to harvest six cores from the wide section of tunnel, including two tasty looking ones from the Bone Lizards. All in all this has been an extremely profitable trip! It feels good to get levels and Biomass again so freely like this! Now that I don't have to worry so much about the colony surviving the terror of the wave, I'll be able to head down here with Tiny every now and again in order to make sure my personal strength isn't lagging too far behind!

I can already feel more heat readings from the walls growing with every passing second. A new wave of monsters is about to spawn and I'd rather not get tangled up with them. I collect my passengers and tell Tiny that it's time to leave.

The big ape has mostly healed up after consuming all of that Biomass but his fist still looks like it's in rough shape. Not too surprising considering what he punched! More importantly he looks relaxed and happy, something I haven't seen for over a week now.

Being a little careful with ourselves we begin the long trek to the surface one more, clearing out the monsters who had spawned behind us as we'd descended. The two little ones are probably the

members who gained the most from this trip. I'm not sure that eating more advanced Biomass expedites the growth of young monsters but it probably does, I'll be interested to see how much Crinis has grown tomorrow. Since Vibrant is a fully grown monster, albeit a small one, she will have gained a truckload of Biomass from consuming a creature two evolution levels above her, perhaps as many as fifteen points!

Considering how limited her stomach capacity is, getting so many points from one meal is quite an amazing haul!

Eventually we make our way back to the surface. I climb out first in order to detect if there are any humans or other creatures around the opening to the tunnel. We need to be somewhat careful moving in and out of here as we aren't too far from the human settlement. Some caution goes a long way in avoiding unnecessary complications!

Since we've cleaned out the lower tunnels twice there shouldn't be too much there for the humans in the church to fight, just the very weakest monsters who spawned above where my new tunnel connects to the old one. Not only have I protected their lives, I've also robbed them of experience. Truly giving with hand and taking with the other. Gweheheh.

To be honest, I haven't hurt them at all, and taking little steps like this to protect my colony, my family, is surely permissible right? Gandalf?

Eh. My conscious is clean.

The four of us begin the long trek back into the forest, well, two of us begin the long trek back into the forest. I'm fairly certain that Vibrant has fallen asleep on my head. Judging by the rhythmic expansion and contraction of the little ball on my back, Crinis has also!

Why I oughtta!

Ah fine. They've had a big day I suppose. The faster they digest that Biomass and grow the sooner they'll be off my back and working hard for the colony. Just you wait you little freeloaders...

It takes a few hours to walk back to the anthill and things are perfectly peaceful on the journey.

However, when we are almost there, faint sounds of battle attract my attention.

My heart slows in my chest as I recognise the sound of human voices shouting and the clash of steel. People are fighting near the colony!

Immediately I start sprinting forward at top speed, not caring that my rapid movement has jolted my two passengers awake. Tiny seems to detect my rising panic and rumbles after me as quickly as his long arms reach out and seize the ground.

With every step my heart is pounding and a scream is rising in my head. Not my family! Not my family! Not my family! NOT AGAIN!

The sickening sounds of weapons crunching through monster flesh are enough to bring tears to my eyes. I mean, if I had tear ducts. Just let my colony be safe!

In a few moments that felt like hours we finally burst onto the scene. The anthill rises like small mountain to my right, dominating the center of the clearing, workers pour out of the top, mandibles clacking with rage, antennae twitching angrily, no doubt sensing the call to arms pheromones that have summoned the workforce to battle!

To my left are ten humans, each equipped with glittering weapons and armour, intricately adorned with insignia and embossed filigree. Two mages stand at the back, ornate staves in their hands and flowing robes running over their shoulders. These are some of the most elaborately equipped humans I've ever seen.

And they are massacring the ants.

The workers swarm forward mindlessly, desperate to defend their home, but they cannot get close enough. The magicians have conjured some type of shield that pushes the workers back, allowing the warriors to swing freely and unleash their sword skills, sending waves of sword light slashing through the ants. The acid fired from above is likewise blocked by magical means, scattering harmlessly and running down the invisible barrier.

In the center of my view is the most horrifying sight of all. The Queen has come out! Her huge frame is shuddering with rage as she tries to heal her children and push forward to rend her enemies at the same time.

My family is dying!

[TINY! KILL!]

I'm barely coherent enough to roar this words to my companion before my mind goes totally red. My precious siblings are being killed, torn apart like paper, right before my eyes. I have to save them!

In one movement I vigorously shake off the two little ones and start sprinting at the enemy. They dare to attack my family! I'll bite them to pieces!

Blinded by rage I act without any sort of plan, rushing directly forwards. Closer, closer, closer! When I'm just a few metres away one of the spell casters turns his head and almost contemptuously flicks his wrist towards me.

Immediately I feel an impact on my face, as if an invisible barrier just rushed at me, trying to bounce me away.

Not today Mr Mime!

I dig in with my claws and crunch down with my mandibles, trying to rip this wall to pieces with sheer physical force. At the same time, the blow to my head has returned some of my senses. Charging blindly into an unknown force may not be the best idea Anthony, but if it saves the ants it'll be worth it!

Even as I wrestle with this barrier I engage my sub brain to begin construction of a Gravity Spear, if any one spell is going to disrupt their formation this'll be it. The mage seems a little confused at first by my stubborn resistance to his spell, somewhat surprised that I wasn't simply knocked back, possibly even killed by the impact of the barrier. I glare at him as he studies me a little more close, taking in my

advanced size and mutated body parts, then he smirks and thrusts his hand forward, doubling the pressure on me in an instant!

Not enough!

Determined, I hold my ground, refusing to budge. I don't have time to waste with this idiot! Every moment that passes those swordsmen cut their way through the workers like wheat, getting ever closer to the Queen!

[Where the hell are you Tiny?!]

At that moment a thunderous screech blasts the ears of everyone present. The sonic wave so intense it feels like my ear drums have been punched directly. Charging with all of his might, Tiny takes a huge running leap, raising both fists over his head to hammer down on the barrier!

The mage facing me pales in fright when he sees this massive ape monster burst out of the trees, leaping towards them in just a few seconds. He screams something in their language and the second mage, a woman, turns quickly and the two of them raise their staves in one motion as Tiny descends from above.

The pressure on me is released instantly.

Infected by my own desperate rage, Tiny's eyes are completely red as his massive body descends, lending all the weight of his mass to his strike. His fists hammer down like meteors, slamming into the defensive barrier with a colossal impact!

BOOM!

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 139: Monster unleashed

Under the impact of Tiny's mighty fists the barrier flickers in and out of existence, on the verge of total collapse. The two mages recoil physically from the power of that strike, one of them is even driven to their knees. Still, their eyes are burning with determination and they keep their staves raised to the sky, apparently reinforcing the barrier with everything they have.

To resist that full bodied strike from Tiny the shield up there must be incredibly strong!

The shield down here near me however...

Infused mandibles!

Still desperately constructing the Gravity Spear within myself I start to charge my mandibles as well. The strain on my mind is so immense I would have blood flooding out of my nose if I had one! Straining with all of my spirit I desperately control the mana, directing it into my mandibles whilst leaving as much of the load as possible to the sub brain. It feels as if both of brains are on fire, cooking themselves with the strain.

As the traces of mana flow out of my core and into my mandibles they begin to emit light, a glow, that grows stronger every moment. My face is already pressed against the barrier, its invisible resistance pushing back against me. My mandibles are spread wide, digging in but not penetrating through the

barrier. As the mana flow grows from a trickle to a stream and the light emitted grows more intense I begin to feel the tiniest bit of give.

Yes! With Tiny distracting their attention they have reinforced the barrier above but it has grown noticeably weaker below. This is my chance!

Straining with every muscle fibre of my face I push my mandibles to the limit!

Break through, dammit!

The barrier gives a little more under my assault, then a little more! Seemingly sensing something, the closest mage lowers his head to turn from Tiny to me, noticing my fiercely glowing mandibles he tries to redirect his attention to stop me from breaking through, raising his free hand at the last second.

Too late!

Tearing through the barrier my mandibles close with a mighty snap! The invisible shield before me cracks and dissolves, the forward pressure I'd created with my legs sends me flying forward, tumbling inside the dome!

Snapping one section of the barrier has a visible impact on the mage closest to me and he wilts under the strain. I don't have much understanding of barrier spells to this point so I'm sure exactly how this recoil works but I sure as heck am going to take advantage of it!

Snapping to my feet I use all of my mental power to complete the Gravity Spear as quickly as possible. Cutting off the flow of mana to my mandibles relieves a lot of the pressure on my mind and the spell construction continues at a blistering pace!

Before the mage closest to me can recover, I dart forward, mandibles wide open.

Shattering Bite!

With all of my strength I bring my jaws shut upon the mage, I don't even rely on the manifested mandibles but instead ensure I'm close enough that my mandibles crush him directly.

CRUNCH!

With a sickening noise the pulverizing force of my mandibles closes on the mage before he is able to recover. When I release him from my bite he collapses to the ground and doesn't get up.

[You have slain level 43 High Mage]

[You have gained experience]

[You have reached level 11, one skill point awarded]

[You have reached level 12, one skill point awarded]

The second mage turns in time to see her compatriot fall from my jaws and her face is filled with horror, but she hasn't time to act against me as Tiny has prepared another strike against the shield!

She is in a dilemma now, does withdraw her mind from maintaining the shield and attack me, letting Tiny smash it to pieces and robbing the warriors of its defence or does she leave herself vulnerable to my attack and try and maintain the shield.

I expected her to fight to maintain the shield but instead she decisively brings her staff around towards me, hands weaving patterns in the air as she manipulates the mana around her.

Of course, this means Tiny gets a free swing.

From the corner of my eye I can see the massive ape rear back with his good hand, rotating his body so far that his back is to the barrier before he unwinds and unleashes his fist as if firing it from a cannon!

With a shattering sound like a thousand panes of glass breaking at once, the invisible dome collapses, diffused shards of mana fall like rain upon us even as they dissolve into nothing, no longer controlled or shaped by any mind.

The soldiers pause in their butchery out of shock, several turn to witness the situation behind them and become aware of my position for the first time.

I don't have much time to act, this mage is going to blast me right in the face in one second! How is this spear still not ready?!

Finally the spell hums into life as it finally finishes charging having being completed construction just a moment ago.

I hope I'm in time!

Without a thought for my own safety I decisively turn and fire the Gravity Spear towards the warriors on the front line, desperate to prevent their swords from killing any more of my siblings.

Before I even see my spell impact against the warriors the female mage has completed her spell, dozens of blades of ice have formed in the air hovering around her. With one wave of her hand each of the blades blasts towards me with supersonic speed!

Holy moly!

I can't even dodge if they move at this speed! Before they impact all I can do is tuck my legs and antennae under my body and tilt my head down in order to protect my eyes, then receive the blow head on!

Just before they impact me something strange tickles my awareness. The ice blades are registering on my heat sense as immensely cold, the temperature of the air around the female mage has dropped precipitously. Now that those blades are screaming through the air towards me they leave vapour trails of cold behind that is detected by heat sense.

With all of this cold in the air... What is that source of heat on my left? There isn't anything there?

Before I have time to properly think about it the ice blades strike home against me!

Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash! Slash!

Immediately intense pain erupts throughout my body as the magical blades slice into my diamond carapace, cutting my flanks, back and directly chopping off one leg plus an antennae!

Holy MASOIUGLKASNF Gandalf!

That stings like the dickens!

My whole body is screaming with pain! Those numerous blades have cut through me all over! My diamond carapace was specially chosen to defend against physical attacks, it is clearly not up to the task against something that is imbued with mana.

Activate the regeneration gland!

I try to slump forward as if on the verge of death even as the regeneration fluid rapidly spreads through my body, closing over the cuts and repairing my damaged muscles. Thankfully none of those blades was able to penetrate deep enough to damage my core!

I can only imagine that significant damage to a monster's core would be completely disastrous if not immediately fatal! Once it has been created the core is central to a monster's life force, the storage and nerve center of the monster as a magical being! Much like the brain operates as the center of thought, the core is the center of mana and I'm not confident a monster can live without it once they have adapted to it!

Certainly it isn't a theory I want to try out...

My ruse seems to have worked, in the heat of the moment, with the barrier destroyed, there are other threats than me that these humans need to deal with! When the mage turns her staff away from me I push my healing legs underneath myself, ready for my next move!

Chrysalis

Chapter 140: The human menace

I can't afford to let the mage attack Tiny, if she is able to disable him or even heavily wound him with her magic then we might lose our best chance to deal with those deadly fighters. Not to mention the terrible possibility Tiny might be killed!

Quick as a flash I spin around to present my b-zone towards the mage. My sudden energetic and rapid movement takes her completely by surprise as merely seconds ago I'd been cut to ribbons by her magical barrage.

Victory is always decided by the one who thinks the fastest! Receive the famed produce of my commercial district!

POW! POW! POW!

At this close range I don't worry about aiming and punch out three blasts of acid as rapidly as I can. The jets of acid streak through the air and impact hard against the mage. At this close range the physical force of the acid spray is almost enough to knock her off her feet. She manages to retain her balance by falling to one knee and using her staff to prop herself up but by then the restrictive nature of the acid is already kicking in, making it difficult for her to move.

So long as she is delayed from effecting the rest of the fight then my purpose will be served, more than taking her out straight away I'm most concerned with stopping the dreadful slaughter of my siblings.

Using their blade skills the warriors have been able to maintain a distance from the fearless workers, relying on the barrier to keep the ants from pressing forward and giving them the space to unleash their advanced sword skills, slashing out arcs of energy, much like my own shattering bite skill, that carve apart three or more workers with every strike!

When I see the broken and destroyed remains of my family members littering the ground my heart twists with pain. These warriors are too good at their work, most of these workers are already dead, beyond what the Queen's healing can fix. They didn't even have a chance to drag their damaged bodies clear of the fight.

Disrupting the warriors from striking at the colony is the number one priority!

Thankfully my Gravity Spear is starting to take effect!

I'd been careful when I constructed the spell to ensure the gravitational fields range was controlled so as not to be too large. So when the target of my spell realises he has an ethereal purple spear sticking through his guts his first instinct seems to be to scream in horror, unaware that the true terror is yet to be unleashed.

The target itself feels nothing from the spell, no effect at all, but it isn't long until the warriors nearby, most of whom are still facing the ravenous ant tide, begin to notice something is wrong.

Inexorably the pulling force of the Gravity Spear begins to show its effect, the warriors are finding themselves thrown off balance, having to exert force in their feet in order to resist this unknown force. The disruption is so strong that the barrage of sword attacks ceases almost immediately as they try to identify this new threat.

To my shock they remain disciplined, quickly barking words and instructions to each other as they resist the building force with all of their might, gradually falling back to the source of the pull without losing their feet.

These guys must have some serious physical stats to be able to resist the gravity in this way! They haven't even lost their feet! The calm way they dealt with this new situation worries me immensely. These warriors are so disciplined and powerful they can't be ordinary, not to mention the mage that I killed (not thinking about that too deeply just now!) was some ridiculous level over 40!

Still they have retreated and grouped up, which is nice of them.

[Tiny! Smash those guys!]

After destroying the shield Tiny has been impatiently waiting for it to completely dissolve before advancing. Now that I've given him a target he bellows his anger, eyes blazing with wrath as he charges towards the grouped up warriors.

One of the soldiers barks a quick command to the others and steps forward, glittering sword in one hand and imposing tower shield on the other. Clearly he intends to face off against Tiny himself and leave the ants to his fellow soldiers.

Glancing quickly at the mage who is yet to rise back to her feet I decide to gamble and leave her be for the time being so I can intervene and assist Tiny.

Skirting to one side I open up the angle a little and once again unleash my potent range of products from the commercial district!

POW! POW!

Two rapid fire shots blast into the warrior, one catching him on the leg whilst the other hits on the side of his chest. Hopefully the restrictive properties and damage are enough to help Tiny batter his way through!

With a little momentum behind him the giant ape lumbers forward and unleashes his devastating fist straight on! The warrior doesn't lose focus for a second, his eyes show no fear or surprise at all, even when my acid splashes against him. Faced with the massive fist of Tiny rushing towards him he shouts aggressively and steps forward like lightning, rotating his body and smashing his shield into Tiny's arm, deflecting the blow!

Holy heck!

This guy is insane! He actually managed to defend himself against Tiny? I'd expected we'd be finding parts of him in the next postcode when that fist was unleashed! Clearly my restrictive acid isn't enough to deal with him!

Tiny isn't perturbed in the slightest. When his fist failed to destroy the target he simply wound back his other hand and unleashed a vicious hook. His fist cuts through the air so quickly a shrill whistling sound can be heard ringing in the ears of everyone in the clearing.

I can also see the subtle signs of Tiny winding up his electrical engine. Little sparks are beginning to appear on his body and the hair on his arms is beginning to rise.

Shockingly this blow is also deflected but not quite as gracefully. Ducking low, the warrior braces his shield against his shoulder and angles it to deflect the punch, which he manages to do. The shield buckles when that colossal fist smashes into it but it is successfully deflected, a solid imprint of one of Tiny's knuckles has been left on the patterned metal.

The warrior wasn't able to completely deflect the force however, his whole body is rocked by the impact and it looks as if his bones have been rattled, nonetheless he quickly lashes out with his blade, opening a wound on Tiny's chest.

I'll have to let these two go at it and hope Tiny can hold his own, the rest of the soldiers are already preparing to unleash their skills upon the onrushing horde of ants! To my dismay the Queen herself has pushed forwards to the frontline now. Fury blazing in her eyes as she marches over a carpet of her own destroyed offspring in order to attack their killers.

Dammit!

I really wish she wasn't so damn brave! These guys will cut her apart!

Just as I'm preparing to leap forward and unleash my mandibles upon the clustered warriors I notice another development in the corner of my eye. The female mage has stood up and her entire body is

glowing softly with blue light. Looking more carefully I see that my acid is rapidly dissolving, lifting away from her robes and skin as if fades away into the air.

ARGH!

Now this mage is going to start flinging spells everywhere again! I don't want to get sliced up by that magic again and I sure as hell don't want to expose the workforce to it!

Making a split second decision I turn back to face off against the mage and begin weaving a Gravity Bolt as fast as I can even as I dash forward to threaten her with my mandibles! She mustn't get a chance to cast a spell!

As she sees me charge toward her the mages eyes flicker with panic and dart to her side. For some reason I get the feeling she isn't worried about herself?