

## Chrysalis 151

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#### Chapter 151: Fall like dominos

There is some debate about the largest monster in the Dungeon. For me, I can't understand the obsession most scholars in this field have with labels and lists. "Dungeons most deadly monster", "Biggest monster in the Dungeon", "Top five most horrifying undead in the Dungeon". Published works such as these seem more interested in grabbing peoples' attention rather than serious academia. A blight on the profession if you were to ask me, which nobody ever does.

I myself have only been drawn into this topic since there is no clear answer, making the research at the very least interesting, if not worth public attention. I know you are something of an expert on the Time of Rending Orlus so I wanted to write this letter to consult you on a few points. In the Dungeon explorations it isn't too hard to get reliable figures on monsters in the first two strata, even if some sound exaggerated.

Among the largest of these I've been able to confirm is the "Mega Death Python Emperor" at 250 metres long with a diameter of six metres. This monster has been confirmed and documented over six times in the last century alone. If we were to say length is not equivalent to height in our search for 'largest' we could highlight the tallest monster I've been able to find on record, the "Twilight Cyclops King" which was recorded in the same expanse in the second strata three times one hundred and fifty years apart. According to those reports the monster stood no less than fifty metres tall.

Both of know that these monsters, as enormous as they may be, are nothing compared to what legend says walked the surface during the Cataclysm. In the far east they say that one monster created a mountain range simply by pushing its head up through the ground. My frustration is that no records exist of these monsters at all! As far as I can tell there hasn't been a single sighting of such a creature in the thousands of years since. You've read much more on the subject than me Orlus, if you could give me some direction I would be eternally grateful.

"A letter to Orlus on the subject of monster size" sent by Scholar Scipio of the Imperial College.

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Apparently the Queen has achieved the class of "Royalty". Once the restrictions have been met a person can set their class to this one, the restrictions in this case are fairly self-explanatory. First, one must be royalty, second, that's it.

Humans and the other intelligent species on the surface all use a class base system as opposed the evolution process the monsters go through. Apparently each class gives unique stat bonuses, unlocks specific skills and can even be levelled up in different ways. A [merchant] can level up through trading and making money whilst a [farmer] levels up from growing crops. As long as the pre-requisites are met then a person can change their class to whatever they want, but most of the best classes are difficult to attain.

For example, to become a swordsman a person must meet the minimum physical stat requirements as well as achieve a certain level of skill with a weapon. This means that hard physical training, lessons in weaponry and experience battling monsters are necessary to make the jump from [villager] to a base

fighter class like [swordsman]. For an ordinary person to aspire to the even more powerful classes like [apprentice mage] or [soldier]? Difficult.

The Queen, given her class bonuses, enjoys incredibly high levels of oratory skill and persuasiveness. Apparently she levels up by inspiring her citizens and making the kingdom prosperous. Every year she spends four months touring her kingdom in order to give speeches to the common folk, visiting every town and village within her borders at least one every two years.

I hadn't quite believed her when she said the people would recognize her on sight but on the evidence I have to say she was right. Her punishing schedule has also allowed her to push her class level extremely high. According to her, she is fairly useless in combat but when it comes to governance and speeches her abilities really shine.

Looking at the stunned faces before me I have to agree. Her powerful words are already beginning to sway the people to our side!

The priest is too stunned by these revelations to properly react. The people in the crowd have listened to his tireless exhortations for days now, in their minds anointing him as their spiritual leader. Now their actual leader, the monarch they have lived under for decades is here before them telling them something different.

Don't kill the ants?

Let the ants assist against a different foe?

Too confusing!

At this point Enid steps forward to lend her voice to that of the Queen. Thankfully the mind magic connection is still active and the Queen passes on the gist of what is being said to me.

["Her majesty speaks truly! I went into the woods a few days ago and found her majesty living amongst these monsters as they supported her to protect our kingdom"]

The Queen once again spoke regally. ["These monsters have been delivered to us so safeguard our nation from that which currently threatens it. You are the chosen people to assist in this crusade. Will you answer the call? Will you help us?"]

On those final words the force of her presence becomes overwhelming, before they even realise the people nearby have fallen to their knees in respect. When the first few fall the rest are like dominos toppling.

The priest is the last to be on his feet. Bleary eyed he stumbles through the crowd as if in a dream, his eyes feverishly locked upon me the entire time. As he draws nearer I start to wonder if I need to book it, even if such an action would mean the Queen would fall flat on her face and ruin this moment. This crazy guy already smacked me in the head once, is he going to go nuts on me again?!

Eventually the maddened priest is standing right before me, clutching at the stump of his lost arm. Just when I think he's about to leap forward and try to do something weird like eat me, he begins to tremble and then falls to knees, openly weeping and crying out in a great voice.

Sounding somewhat stunned the Queen passes on what he says.

[Oh great one, I have sinned against the messenger of the System! Forgive me for striking you foolishly and failing to acknowledge your message of salvation!]

Ooooooooookaaaaaaay?

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### **Chapter 152: A tunnel is always the answer**

After that the crowd was quickly pacified and I was relieved the Queen didn't secretly sic the people on me. As we agreed she and I remained close to each other as we moved into the next phase of the plan.

With the people calmed, less suicidal and at the same time directed against her enemies, the Queen wants to turn her attention to her most potent and loyal forces. The ones she "cleverly" deployed in the Dungeon to assist other troops in a ploy to appear weakened and lure those who had been working to destabilising her rule into open rebellion. Too bad they had more backing than she had foreseen and with the soldiers she had left she had been soundly defeated.

She'd even kept her guard in the dark because they would refuse to leave her so vulnerable had they known about it. Even now those poor suckers are stuck in the top level of the Dungeon stabbing centipedes in the face whilst the Queen they swore to defend was forced to flee the city.

Honestly. All of these people are so stupid it pains me to be near them! Keep those precious cores in your mind Anthony! You'll walk out here rich and leave these morons to their own devices.

The way the people in Malgate react to me now is a little unnerving to say the least. As I pass by then back away carefully, making sure not to obstruct my path, many even bow respectfully. All of these displays of subservience are stirring Dark Anthony! Just ignore me people! I'm honestly happier sliding into the background!

It doesn't matter though. At my size it's getting hard to hide. I'm already the height and length of a desk basically. If I continue to evolve am I going to end up car size? Bus size?! Yikes. Regardless, as I move about with the Queen people are easily able to find me and continue to show their respect throughout the day.

The Queen speaks to people one on one, in small groups and addresses large crowds. Everywhere she goes the reaction is favourable and those prepared to go and fight are quickly prepared, packing supplies, clutching their crude blades and strapping into worn leather armour that probably belonged to a relative who fought in a war three generations ago.

Even the priest is fully pumped up for this. He spends most of his time following along behind me, eulogising my status as a holy messenger at the top of lungs. I had the Queen tell me what he was saying but forced her to stop about two sentences in. So embarrassing!

It's all for the money!

After one more day the people are prepared and depart the village for the forest, marching together in a spirited column. About an hour from the village, just inside the edge of the woods we find evidence of ant activity. This is where myself and a dedicated team have been labouring away in preparation!

How is the Queen going to unite with her soldiers in the Dungeon without getting into the city and putting herself at risk? What task could only a dedicated army of earth shifting experts take on?! The answer is ALWAYS more tunnels!

Heaped loose soil is everywhere throughout this area as we had to dump it somewhere that couldn't be seen from the walls. The footprints of ants are everywhere but not a single worker can be found. As the column comes to the opening of the tunnel in the ground the Queen gathers everyone around and explains what has been done. When she's finished the crowd's respectful eyes blaze with renewed fervour as they look at me and as one they bow together.

Down Dark One! These are not our slaves!

A little thanks for the hard work of digging is appreciated though. Making the tunnel took a long time since humans would need to be able to travel through it somewhat comfortably and they are a lot taller than ants. Even Tiny can move lower than them since he is almost designed to lean forward as he moves, weight on his knuckles. It's a rare moment when the ape actually stretches to his not insignificant full height.

The tunnel is damn long and we had to push fairly deep underground to ensure it wouldn't collapse. I don't know what strange physics governs tunnels in this world but they sure manage to hold up better than I expect them to. Perhaps it's the excavation skill at work that helps to avoid areas that might change the structural integrity, or maybe this world is fundamentally built to support underground spaces, the Dungeon exists here after all. Even the forest expanse we were in defies my understanding of what was possible on Earth.

Eventually we come to the final stretch of tunnel. According to my tunnel sense we have connected just to one side of the pool cavern that I first explored shortly after hatching. I made sure the workers didn't complete the tunnel since the soldiers on the other side would have surely killed them on sight. I wanted to dig the final few feet for myself and then push the Queen through first so she could explain the situation.

After shoveling away the last of the dirt, the very moment the last bit of dirt crumbles away to reveal an opening I back away hastily and place myself behind the Queen, leaning against the left side of the tunnel and trying to be inconspicuous.

Her face pinched with distaste, the Queen steps forward to push away the last of the dirt, widening the opening until she is able to squeeze herself through it. On the other side I can hear raised shouts and the Queens calming words. After a short while the Queen pokes her head through the tunnel wall and invites us forward.

I pause and allow the townsfolk who accompanied us to go first, squeezing myself to one side. Fortunately the tunnel is a little wider here and there is pace to push through. Once the last person has left our small connecting tunnel it's finally my turn.

Hesitantly, I approach the opening before suddenly poking one leg out. After a moment when nothing happens I withdraw the leg and slowly push my head through. It takes a moment for my eyes to adjust to the bright mana infused light of the Dungeon. As the light washes over me a comforting feeling comes

over me. Perhaps I'm slightly crazy but coming back to the Dungeon feels a little like coming home, particularly to this familiar place. I was born just near here after all.

Around the opening the townsfolk are gathered and as I emerge amongst them, my six legs taking purchase on the firm Dungeon walls they make space for me, staying close but giving me room at the same time.

At the forefront is the priest, Beyn. Wherever I go this guy is never far away. My very own human shaped pain in the gaster.

Beyond the villagers is a troop of fierce and worn looking soldier types. Their gilded armour and fine blades are quite familiar to me as was those same weapons that were turned on my colony. These must be the Queen's guard.

The Queen is amongst them now, speaking quietly and they listen intently, rage clear on their faces.

She must be explaining exactly what has happened whilst they have been down here. I step forward slowly, warily watching the soldiers as I move. They don't seem hostile, their anger and frustration appears to be directed more at the surface than towards me, most of them don't spare me a glance.

Alright... so far things are going ok.

After giving the Queen some time to inform her troops and get them planning the offensive she walks towards me and resumes our communication.

[My guards will need some time to digest this news and plan the next phase. I think we should allow the villagers a time of rest. They can gather on this side of the pool and eat. In five or so hours we'll be ready to advance].

[Very well. I'll stay on this side then. Alert me when you are ready].

As part of the agreement I am to be part of the forces to assault the surface. In order to secure my reward I'll need to liberate the castle anyway, hard to get to the treasury without first kicking out the rebels first. Since the Queen had witnessed my prowess in battle personally she was quite insistent that I be part of the attack. She also wanted Tiny to join us, not surprising after the display he put on, but I flatly refused. I was prepared to tag along myself but no way Tiny was coming too. He has other stuff I need him to do.

Returning to the tunnel entrance I settle down and prepare to rest, surrounded by my devout followers.

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### **Chapter 153: Assault on the surface**

I took a long rest, being careful that I didn't slip into torpor. It would be a little too risky to nap here with Queen once more amongst her soldiers. After four hours the Queen once more approached me to re-establish the mind bridge.

Apparently mind magic is fairly common amongst diplomats, governors and rulers. Although most smaller states such as this one are usually unable to find someone gifted enough in this esoteric branch of magic to serve as their liaison, in this instance the Queen herself was moderately talented. Having

someone capable of unlimited cross species communication was yet another factor that helped this country punch above its weight.

I'm not shocked that they can't find many people to learn this magic, the transformation is incredibly hard, even relative to other transformations that are already mind bending puzzles in their own right. I've continued to my practice but progress is slow. The day I can weave a dazzling mind bridge over thousands of metres long, like Formo, is a long way off.

Once communication is established the Queen informs me that her soldiers are ready and the time to assault the surface is fast approaching.

[Just outside the entrance is a Legion fortress that has been mostly abandoned. There is a moderate presence of my soldiers posted just around the opening and we just changed the guard so they know we are coming. Inside the fort a small force of mercenaries has been placed, probably to watch the entrance for movements from my people, once we leave the entrance they will communicate our actions to the rest of their force] she explains.

The Queen was quite cagey about these 'Legion' people when I interrogated her. I still know very little about them, but apparently I've seen some of them before.

[So we need to move quickly and aggressively. How far is it to your castle?]

[Around two kilometres. The castle is positioned defensively on a slope. We need to breach the gates quickly otherwise we risk getting locked out and surrounded. Even with the villagers to swell our numbers we are outmatched in a direct confrontation. If we can sweep into the castle and block the gate against the troops held outside we'll only have to deal with those mercenary forces who are inside the castle].

[Do you have a plan for the gate?]

She hesitates a moment. [We're still working on it].

[I'll take care of it] I say.

If I knock politely with a Gravity Bomb I'm sure the door will open for me.

Gweheheheh.

With our plans laid I gingerly walk with the Queen to the vanguard of her soldiers as they prepare to move out. Monsters are still spawning out of the walls here but the soldiers are clearly of a higher level, able to dispatch these weaker beasts with ease.

Together, with myself in the vanguard and my attendant priest behind me we begin to march up the tunnel towards the entrance. It isn't far from the pool before the familiar landmarks begin to stir my memories. Ah here is the staircase that leads downwards. Ah, here are the torchers that were lit when I was nearly chased to death. There is the side passage where I narrowly dodged an arrow and lured some centipedes to their death!

Memories...

Seriously, how desperate for human contact was I at that point? I became totally divorced from my senses. Now I have a family and followers of my own, I don't feel as lonely anymore. Not to mention I've had a belly full of interacting with humans. Nothing but headaches.

Gradually we approach the rising slope and walk past the inbuilt walls were I glimpsed my first humans. I can see as we pass them that each wall is its own little guard station, with an enclosed space inside with tables and chairs. Each one has a Queen's guard stationed there.

The walls become thicker and more frequent the closer we get to the top, the stairs more defined as well. Eventually the stairs widen out and a bright opening is revealed in front of me. The surface. Like ascending from a basement we climb the stairs and emerge into the light.

I don't wait for my eyes to adjust but charge forward, my six legs scrambling to accelerate ahead of the rest of the pack. When my blurred vision finally settles back to normal I can see I'm inside a ringed wall that surrounds the Dungeon entrance. A portcullis is cut into the wall and the gate is thankfully up. I keep charging at the gate as I hear frantic shouts from above. Soon after the pounding of feet on stone and a great roar erupt from behind as the soldiers pour out of the Dungeon entrance, followed by the villagers.

The gate twitches and begins to fall as someone frantically tries to wind it down before I can reach the opening but I'm having none of it!

Anti-Grav Bolt!

The magic I'd prepared blasts through the air and strikes against the metal gate with precision. No matter how hard the people above try they can't push it down as it continues to rise and then force against the joints that hold it in place, trying to rise into the sky.

Gleefully I charge forward through the gap and out of the ring wall. I sense heat! Ahead of me, to my left and right there are stairs from the upper level, multiple sources are rushing down to block my path!

Come to me!

When the first soldier leaps down the last few steps brandishing his sword valiantly he suddenly feels an immense pull, a force that defies the laws of physics!

YOINK!

Using my Gravity infused mandibles I grab the first soldier out of the air and he flies towards me!

Shattering Bite!

CRUNCH!

Caught completely by surprise and defenceless the soldier is completely unable to resist my shattering bite! His flimsy armour is shredded by my jaws and my mandibles bite into him.

Still alive? Have another!

Indeed, most humans are able to resist one or two bites. They are wearing monster material based equipment and have a few levels pumped into them after all. I'll use this as an opportunity to train my piercing chomp!

Chomp!

Chomp!

[You have slain level 23 Scout]

[You have gained experience]

Excellent.

This guy didn't have much in the way of levels after all. Apparently the humans level resets in some specific class changes but for most normal cases their level simply increases linearly over their lifetime. A level of twenty three is quite low from what the Queen told me, this dude must have been recently recruited.

His comrades charge down the stairs and into view just in time to see their friend being bitten to death. Imagining what this scene must look like from their perspective, it would be pretty horrifying right?

Your friend vanishes before your eyes and you leap forward to find a giant ant the size of a table, dazzling, glittering armour and impressive, large eyes, biting on your friend with long jagged mandibles. Gruesome.

They recoil in fear for a brief moment, giving me an opening to ...

YOINK!

Get over here!

Shattering Bite!

CRUNCH!

Once more I pull an unsuspecting soldier towards me and the others are terrified all over again as one of their number is pulled from his feet by an invisible force and shot towards the terrifying monster before them. Before he can even land on his feet he's been crushed by a fearsome skill!

Once again with the chomps!

Chomp!

Chomp!

[you have slain level 31 Scout]

[You have gained experience]

[Piercing Chomp has risen to level 7]

Haha nice!



Perhaps one more?

I'm denied my wish when the three remaining scouts (I assume) turn and run. Before I can think that they must have fled from my fearsome performance the Queens guards begin to charge past me, brandishing their weapons fiercely in their desire to rend the traitors.

Oh well.

According to the plan we need to rush forwards to try and reach the castle as quickly as possible. Without pausing to account for every foe our entire force rushes out of the fort and into the wide cobbled streets of the city of Liria. As we run a great plume of fire rises high into the air behind us, once, twice, thrice, before it is cut short.

That came from somewhere in the fort. The signal was sent.

Still, my first time in a fantasy city on my new world! The buildings are cramped together with tiled roofs and people are everywhere on the roads, pushing carts, shopping or riding in horse pulled carriages. I do notice the distinct lack of chimneys and smoke on the houses, no matter how poor and shabby looking. Apparently people in this world tend to use enchanted fire plates, perhaps the most common and inexpensive piece of enchanting that can be done. Drawing the mana out of the air and into a plate of metal to cook with or use as heating.

Pretty neat!

As I dash through the city there are screams of terror on all sides as the common folk catch sight of the monster rushing through their midst.

Where is the hospitality I ask you?

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#### **Chapter 154: Premiums are going up for sure**

The Queens' Guard and I charge down the cobbled roads. I depend on the guidance of the soldiers to point me in the right direction when we occasionally have to turn. The citizens are screaming and fleeing out of our way everywhere we go. To be honest, even if there wasn't a monster here they would probably do the same thing when they saw the soldiers. The common folk don't want to be anywhere nearby if the fighting is going to start again.

They had to put up with bloody street to street fighting in this city for a week. Even now I can see burned out buildings and collapsed walls. It must have been brutal in here.

I do have to wonder what happened when a supposedly savvy Queen (not sure I'm convinced) so dramatically underestimated her foes. She'd thought that with her preparations the foe would be quickly dealt with but after an whole week of fighting in the city, the castle was breached and the Queen forced to flee! It seems unlikely a collection of Dungeon fighters were able to take it to the army to that level.

From what I've been told, those who regularly fight in the Dungeon tend to have higher levels, better equipment and greater individual strength than regular line soldiers. After all, the bad Dungeon explorers are very quickly dead, leaving the strong core behind. The army tends to have more discipline,

coordination and better training. Not to mention that with the resources of a nation it isn't hard to build up a collection of elites, giving them gear and privileges that most Dungeon explorers can only dream about.

That would be the Queens Guard.

These guys and gals are packing serious heat, enchanted blades, double forged monster shell armour and each and every one of them has been on gruelling level grinding expeditions into the Dungeon. The Queen is rather confident in their strength. Still, there aren't that many of them, not enough to storm a whole city.

From a side street twenty mixed armour warriors burst forth, two mages in their midst wielding staves. When these fighters see me charging forward they aren't intimidated in the slightest, reacting only with mild surprise. These are Dungeon Mercenaries! It'll take a lot more than one ant monster to intimidate them!

After this experience that may change however....

Gravity Spear!

Expecting to be attacked at any moment I've pre-woven myself a spell and had it charged, ready to fire for a few minutes already! Holding a spell in place isn't easy and wears on my mind but it's totally worth it in these scenarios!

Before they can even prepare themselves and spread out to attack the spear slams home on a massive warrior in the middle of their formation. With a hostile spell suddenly flashing into their midst the enemy displays their experience by not panicking. They each drop into a defensive stance and try to move apart, only to find that their movement is becoming more restricted with every passing second.

Stay nice and bunched up for me folks. No need to separate. Muehehe.

Locking onto the mercenary force, the Queen's guard suddenly have a blazing light in their eyes. This is the scum they wanted to fight! Letting out a delighted roar they dash forward, several members blurring into streaks of light or vanishing entirely as they employ powerful skills to close on the clustered enemy.

Don't take all of my xp dammit!

Bracing for the sudden charge the mercenaries struggle to wield their weapons properly as the potent gravity constantly tugs at them, forcing them to divert attention and energy to resisting the pull. Despite this the mercs begin to employ their own skills to defend themselves.

A bulky mercenary, covered in scars, raises one foot high as his face twists with concentration. His foot instantly explodes with light and he slams it down into the ground! As if transformed into water, the surface of the road ripples outward from that foot, the ripples growing larger as they travel until they are over a metre tall!

When these 'waves' crash into the buildings they quickly crumble, as if their foundations were suddenly embedded in quicksand! Several of the charging soldiers have to cancel their dash skills as their footing becomes unsteady. Nimble they reposition themselves to the sides, riding out the disturbance and waiting for the ground to settle.

The huge mercenary with my spear imbedded in his chest unlimbers a huge great sword from his back. His knuckles crack as he prepares a two handed grip before bringing it down with blinding speed. With a flash a blade of light ten metres tall rips from the tip of the blade and streaks towards me, cutting through the ground as if it were paper!

Woosh!

I leap to one side, pushing hard off the ground with my six legs and the blade flashes past me before crashing into a house. When the dust settles a huge slice has been cut into the building, collapsing one wall in.

Holy heck! I nearly lost an antenna!

Settle down big guy! Need a lift?

Internally gleeful I fire off my next spell which I have just hastily prepared.

Gravity Bolt!

Let's see how you enjoy flight! Hopefully more than you enjoy the fall.

Before I can gloat too much the two mages step forward, staves flashing with mana as they thrust them forward to block my spell. The Gravity Bolt smashes into the heads of their combines staves and my spell quickly begins to lose energy.

This technique again!

I really want to learn it, dammit!

I scuttle off to one side, not prepared to act as the vanguard and charge into the midst of these clearly experienced monster killers. Instead I take a little distance and begin to weave my next spell.

It would be so good to have Tiny here right now! He would leap right into the middle and create a huge distraction, allowing me to safely operate on the edges. Or if Crinis was grown, the havoc she could reap here, with the enemy bunched up together.... Gah! I bite back my frustration. I didn't bring them for a good reason, they have their own work to do.

The powerful skills displayed by these mercenaries has shocked me internally. I knew from the Queen that humans and other surface races were capable of some fearsome abilities, but I hadn't seen anything quite like this with my own eyes!

To my shock, the show was only just beginning.

Once my spell had completely disappeared the two mages get to work on their own magic. One of them fiercely shouts out some words and a spherical shield of fire blooms around him, the scorching heat radiating off is enough to make my antennae numb! The second mage also conjures a shield but this one is of tightly rotating wind! An air barrier!

Their defences prepared the two immediately begin their next magic, concentrating for a moment before they each extend one hand out towards me with perfectly synchronised timing.

Why me?!

From one mage, a powerful blast of wind! From the other, a jet of flame!

The two spells converge together to form a massive gout of blue fire that hungrily reaches towards me!

A combi attack! What the heck!?

It's so cool and flashy dammit!

A huge jet of flame over thirty metres long roars from those two hands and covers the open street between us in a second! Caught flat footed the best I can do is stop, drop to the ground and roll to my right as the flame washes over me.

HOT!

That's a spicy meata-ball!

Searing pain erupts through my left side as the flames wash over me, barbequing my carapace and raising my internal temperature uncomfortably.

Thankfully, as an insect, the outside of my body is essentially my skeleton and inherently less cookable than say, human flesh. Even so I've taken a decent chunk of damage from that attack.

I think about using my regeneration gland but dismiss the idea. It's too early in the assault, I need to save it for a more desperate situation. Maybe if I can get some Biomass to eat....

As the flame dissipates it seems as if the Guard is ready for their counter attack.

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#### **Chapter 155: Gateway**

Having regrouped, the Queens Guard have positioned themselves to strike together. Weapons drawn they form a row ten across and as one stab forward with their swords. Instantly ten beams of sword light flash through the air, impacting against the mercenaries who are knocked off their feet by the impact. With the constant force of the Gravity Spear dragging at them they can't possibly brace themselves against this strike!

Three mercs slip and that's all it takes as they 'fall' towards their own leader, the enormous great sword wielding warrior.

Chance!

With the front line in sudden disarray I immediately activate my infused mandibles, feeding my gravitational mana into them at a furious pace. The warriors might be struggling right now but those two mages at the back have maintained their footing, thankfully the kerfuffle at the front has pulled their eyes away from my magnificence for a moment, so I have an opening!

I don't know how these guys are able to block spells but that is something I surely want to learn! I mean, it makes sense that mages would be able to defend themselves against hostile magic, otherwise a magical battle would always be decided by whoever managed to cast first. I just hope the technique doesn't rely on their staves and is something I can achieve in my mind, perhaps the neglected external mana manipulation skill holds a clue?

With no eyes on me, I stealthily scuttle to my left, circling around the mercs whilst maintaining a twenty meter distance. Soon I reach a point where the two enemy mages are lined up, fire mage in front, wind mage behind, their elemental shields flickering with power.

The fire mage recovers from his distraction and turns back towards me, eyes flicking about until he sees my position, not to mention my brightly glowing purple mandibles! He tries to shout a warning as he thrusts his staff in my direction but it's too late!

YOINK!

As my mandibles flare with power the fire mage flinches instinctively, lowering his stance to a defensive posture. Very alert these guys, I have to give them credit.

His wariness does him little good when his ally slams directly into his back!

BOOM!

As the two shields, one of swiftly rotating air and the other of mana fuelled flame collide, the air erupts with a wave of heat as fire climbs into the sky. The two mages, caught completely by surprise don't have time to react before their elemental shields begin to shred each other, the fierce wind merging with flame and shooting out amongst their own allies.

The mercenaries, grouped together and off balance, are licked by searing tongues of flame borne on sharp winds from behind. Their voices begin to take on a note of panic as the situation begins to spiral out of their control. Sensing weakness the Guards roar as one and charge again!

Now is the time!

Leaping forth I dash towards the flailing mercs.

My XP! Come to me!

If I'm going to fight here then I'm going to get my reward for it dammit! There is no chance the Queen's Guard will leave these traitors alive, if they have to die I may as well gain something from it!

After a few seconds the mages take control of themselves and shut off their shield spells before staggering back to their feet. Just in time to see the monstrous ant rushing towards them with its jaws wide and alight with power!

Shattering Bite!

CRUNCH! CRUNCH! CRUNCH!

Not willing to give them a moment of respite I snap down on them three times in rapid succession. The ethereal jaws crush the two mages together and they slump to the ground, reeling from the strike.

[Shattering Bite has reached level 3]

Finish them!

First on one then on the other I shower them with Piercing Chomps as they weakly try to fend me off with their staves. The traditional weakness of mages in close quarters seems to hold plenty true in this world though as their feeble efforts are unable to shake me off.

[You have slain level 36 Human Fire Mage Apprentice]

[You have slain level 34 Human Wind Mage Apprentice]

[You have gained experience]

[You have reached level 14]

Nice!

Oh crap!

Just I congratulate myself for the successful elimination of those threatening mages I notice the mercenary leader has charged towards me, massive blade poised overhead to strike!

Dodge!

Diamond carapace or no I do not want to take that thing head on!

CRASH!

The blade smashes into the stones with tremendous force, sending shards of rock flying everywhere and pinging off my carapace.

Phew!

Not wanting to draw too much heat I hit the ground running and put some distance between me and the mercs as the rest of the Queens Guard close in, continuing to launch attacks as they do.

Since my business district is facing the right way anyhow...

POW! POW! POW! POW!

[Improved Acid shot has reached level 6]

Tilting my head slightly for a clear rear view I shower the enemy from behind with my restrictive acid, giving the bulky leader two shots since he seems a little too eager to move at the moment.

I stop construction on the Gravity Domain spell I'd been working on and let it dissolve within me as it doesn't look as if I'll be needing it right now. I can see ahead of me is a massive gate sitting astride the street, blocking our way through the wall and into the inner keep.

I mean, a wall doesn't do squat to keep me out but it still serves to slow down these humans.

Seeing our target up ahead I start to pull mana out of my Gravitation Mana Gland and compress it into the fearsome Gravity Bomb. It'll take a minute or two to charge up this sucker so I may as well start now.

The mercenaries have fallen into an ever more hopeless position, assaulted from the front, shot at from behind and with their two support mages dead they have no chance of fighting their way out against the

furious Queens' Guard. Knowing they are dead already the mercenaries throw caution to the wind. Finally free of my Gravity spear they are able to unleash their skills to their fullest as they desperately try to take some soldiers down with them.

I figured a few would try and surrender but I guess not.

With the two sides battling to the death and pulling out all of their strength I scuttle to one side, into the shadows and look for an opportunity as I continue to charge my bomb. If I can sneak myself a little xp then I will but I've done more work than all of these soldiers combined so far, I'm not about to stick my neck out for the cause.

As they finally begin to fall a few of the mercenaries break and run, trying to dash into nearby buildings or down side streets and hopefully keep their lives. One unfortunate sap happens to flee right towards the little alley where I've tucked myself.

HALLO!

Shattering Bite!

[You have slain level 38 Human Swordsman]

[You have gained experience]

Letting the body drop to the ground I consider the option of.... Well.... Eating him.

I mean.... I was a human before, for quite some time as well... Just. eating a human seems a little...

It's not cannibalism though, I'm not human now! Embrace the monster within, Anthony!

But... hmmm.

Checking my HP I can see that I'm not missing too much, and I still have my regeneration gland topped off and ready to go. I don't think I need to push myself too hard here.

If only there were more mercs who utilised monsters like the Sophos did. Then I'd be able to munch on that Biomass without worry.

I'd asked the Queen about how common the technique of core reconstitution was, or if it was known at all on the surface, as I'd been so impressed by Formo I'd assume everyone who could would leap at the chance to raise such powerful monsters and have them take the risks for you.

The technique is well known apparently, and not just here but all over the place. Whilst some mercenaries do take that path, some of them even going all in and taking the [Tamer] class tree, there are a few considerations that keep it from being common. Firstly, cores are money to mercs, using even one of them to turn into a monster that you then have to feed and raise before it can fight is troublesome. Then, if you want to raise it properly you need to keep feeding meat from the Dungeon, which you either have to pay for (expensive) or constantly go into the Dungeon (dangerous).

Not to mention, to ensure it evolves well, you need to feed it even more cores! Literally throwing money into its mouth!

To the surface races, who rely on cores for enchanting, it isn't worth it except for the very wealthy, or some nations who keep guardian beasts. The practice works so well for the Sophos for a few reasons, they have such powerful minds that controlling monsters is quite easy for them, they live in the Dungeon itself so access to meat isn't hard and since they don't fight themselves they have little use for enchanted equipment, thus having reduced demand for cores.

I did notice the Queen hadn't mentioned anything about core engineering, which combined with their powerful minds, is the key reason for the Sophos' grand success in this field. I didn't ask about it though, since perhaps that particular skill may not be common knowledge.

With the mercenaries finished off the Queen herself comes forward along with the villagers. The townsfolk were looking a little wild eyed at the level of devastation wrought on the nearby houses. They might have levelled up some fighting skills but seeing giant sword cuts in the faces of buildings was a little hard for them to swallow. As they catch sight of me however their eyes light up a little. Not sure exactly why but they seem to draw comfort from my presence.

And oh great. The priest is back. He rushes right up to me and begins speaking to the other villagers, no doubt extolling my mighty powers, graced upon me by the system or some such rubbish.

As the Queen draws closer, surrounded by her Guard she reaches out with the mind bridge.

[We have reached the gate but we have to get through quickly. If we delay they will have more time to gather troops from across the city! Quickly monster, do you have a way to get through the gate?!]

I check internally on my Gravity Bomb. It's cooking along nicely.

Not bothering to reply I walk slightly towards the gates and turn my mind fully to the task of compacting the mana as tightly as possible. A few seconds later the transformation occurs and the tightly backed sphere takes on the ominous black hole like appearance.

Without hesitation I open my mouth and blast out the Gravity Bomb which shrieks into life the moment it leaves me body. The piercing howl of the wind as it is sucked towards the bomb causes all of the humans nearby to cover their ears and even shatters the windows in nearby buildings.

When it impacts the gate with a sickening thud the ball expands outwards in an instant, tearing and eating away at the gate. With a deafening shriek the gates lurch on their hinges before the protesting metal finally gives way and the gates are sucked into the bomb entirely.

When the bomb flickers out of existence the one proud metal gates are no more, torn stone and an empty swinging hinge the only evidence they were there at all.

I turn back to the Queen.

[What gate?]

### [Chrysalis](#)

#### **Chapter 156: Into the castle**

There is a stunned silence around after the Gravity Bomb flickers out of existence. The first thing I hear breaking the peace is a \*thud\*.



Twitching to one side I notice that the priest has fallen to knees, followed by the rest of the villagers. The soldiers are looking at me strangely also, their faces set in cold masks behind their helmets.

I look at the Queen.

[What?]

She too looks at me with an odd look in her eye.

[Those gates were mana warded. Your spell should not have worked]

Mana warded, is it? Doesn't look like it was too effective. Maybe they needed to put on a second coat? At any rate, is it really ok for us to stand around here with our thumbs up our commercial districts?

[Shouldn't we be going inside?] I prompt the Queen.

The elderly woman shakes herself a little and regains her dignified poise before shouting her commands aloud to her soldiers.

Roaring their battle cry the Guards' charge through the gate, some members dashing into streaks of light as they deploy their skills to close with their enemies. The ringing sound of steel clashing with steel soon fills the air as the defenders rush towards their breeched gates.

With the Queen in their midst the townsfolk also advance but at a more measure pace. Several of the braver ones run out in small groups to support the soldiers already engaged in battle but the rest remain defensive postured, watching all directions for threats.

[Stay with me monster, we will storm the throne room and Royal chambers, I'm sure we will find the masterminds there].

[hmm] I grunt in reply.

Surely we won't find the villain sitting languidly on the throne, ready to lure us with talk before springing the final trap? That would be way too predictable...

As we path through the gates a team of townsfolk rush to block the entrance behind us with whatever they can find, loose stone, a cart, someone finds the royal coach and they push it into the gap before tipping it on its side. Those with spears of long handled pitch forks stand in rows, weapons at the ready. Hopefully it'll do to hold out until they can be reinforced by the Guard.

After passing through the gate there is a wide road that runs towards the main doors and loops back through an elaborate garden with imposing statues placed at regular intervals. The entire setup screams royal luxury. I can't help but eye the Queen with a little disbelief. In the middle of the city you really want to take up so much real estate with your driveway?!

It just seems like such a waste... Perhaps I'm becoming biased because my colony basically lives on top one another. Even Tiny, Vibrant, Crinis and I packed into our own little chamber is odd and luxurious by ant standards.

My Queen sleeps with workers walking on her back for goodness sake!

As I grumble internally the great doors open and a densely packed group of soldiers charge out, weapons bared.

Although they may be dressed like mercenaries, these fellows look anything but. Determined faces, coordinated movements, tightly packed formation....

Aren't these soldiers for sure?!

The townsfolk in front me freeze at the sight of this mass charge, they are absolutely no match for this kind of assault! Not giving them time to decide to flee I jump to the fore and counter charge!

Have I gone insane? Am I suicidal? Or have I got my Gravity Domain on the boil?

Gweheheh.

As soon as I put one leg through the castle gates I knew the fighting was going to get close once we got inside the castle, much like it is inside the Dungeon tunnels. Naturally I started to reconstruct my most potent close range spell. How was I to know that the enemy would deliver themselves to me before I even made it to the door?

As the men with their shields and swords raised charge towards me, blades beginning to shine as they prepare to unleash their skills I continue to pump my Gravitational Mana into the construct, pushing with all the force of my two brains!

Closer... Closer...

Gravity Domain!

Just before the soldiers reach me and slash out with their skills my domain expands in a flash, the dark purple hemisphere expanding out to encompass the soldiers before me. Some of them cancel their attack skills and raise their shields to defend whilst others grit their teeth, determined to see their strike through.

BOOM.

With an almost audible impact the crushing force of gravity falls on the soldiers like a hammer from heaven, pressing them to the ground. A few blasts of sword light are released just in time, slamming into my Diamond carapace and buffeting me about but my defences hold firm and only minor damage is inflicted.

In a wide circle with a radius of ten metres the trapped soldiers are pressed downwards by an invisible, irresistible force. Their movements are slowed and some are unable to keep their feet, driven down to their knees.

You should never skip leg day!

Shattering Bite!

I unleash my fearsome mandibles upon these foes as they labour under the effects of my domain magic. So long as I maintain the spell the fight is one sided. As if their arms and legs were impeded with massive

weights, as if their weapons and shields were ten times as heavy, the soldiers movements become slow and painful. Mustering the stamina to activate their skills seems incredibly difficult.

Several soldiers are able to raise their weapons, or their shield, but never both. I run amok amongst them, snapping and biting at every opening I see, dodging away with ease whenever a soldier manages to muster a strike.

[You have slain level 39 human swordsman]

[You have slain level 36 human scout]

[You have slain level 37 human soldier]

[You have gained experience]

[You have reached level 15]

[Piercing chomp has reached level 8]

Muahaha!

It would have continued in this vain if the townsfolk hadn't for some reason become madly brave and decided to charge directly into my domain.

Who can say what madness possessed them? I personally suspect that the priest urged them to charge and assist me in battle since I had so successfully suppressed the foes.

Naturally the moment these brave and determined townsfolk charged into my domain they immediately fell flat on their faces, completely unable to stand up under the pressure of my spell. Idiots!

What's more they are now a target to those soldiers who can still swing their weapons. Rather than watch the townspeople be massacred whilst lying flat on their faces I sigh internally and release the spell.

These people really are a pain in the business district.

[Chrysalis](#)

### **Chapter 157: Battle to the doorstep**

Forced to withdraw my Domain, the magic flickers out of existence and the drain on my Gravitational magic gland trickles to a stop. The true benefits of the bottomless gland upgrade is showing now after this extended fight. Despite casting bolts, javelins, infusing my mandibles, the bomb and the domain, my Gravitational gland is kicking along at well over half full. Not to mention my own core is still topped off and ready to go.

Freed from the immense pressure of my spell the soldiers and townspeople scramble to their feet, brandishing their weapons. The townspeople outnumber their foes comfortably but they are individually significantly weaker. If it weren't for me having bitten the heck out of these soldiers whilst they grovelled beneath my domain they wouldn't have any chance at all.

The priest is the first to leap back to his feet, brandishing a heavy looking mace in his one hand like a madman, roaring at the top of his lungs. A times like these I'm glad I can't understand the words coming

out of his mouth. This priest has achieved a level of obsession that cannot be considered healthy in any way. If I were to poop in a field I feel like this guy would raise a shrine and worship it for one thousand years.

This guy can only thank his lucky stars that the only things I can dispense from my back zone are acid and justice.

The battle quickly breaks down into a brawling melee, several townsfolk surrounding each enemy soldier and relentlessly stabbing them with incredible fervour and selfless courage. In the grip of their religious zealotry the poorly trained and armed farmers ignore their own wounds, ignore tiredness, pressing forward relentlessly.

Almost like ants! These people are doing the colony they worship proud.

Much like I had for the workforce in the past I run throughout the field of battle running interference wherever I can, biting and legs and arms, tearing weapons from hands or charging into soldiers to bowl them over, preventing them from grouping up.

Every now and again I fire off a Gravity Bolt, sending a soldier sky high before they come crashing back to hearth. Shockingly some of them don't die immediately on impact, utilising some sort of skill to absorb the tremendous impact or increase their survivability, but even so most die straight away and the survivors are greatly wounded.

Of course, I try to ensure my targets on the outside of the battle so they don't fall directly back on top of us.

Of course, I remember to exclusively use my piercing chomp skill for grinding purposes and also to ensure that no allies are caught up in my attack. The melee is too tight for me to deploy aoe skills and expect to not incur some friendly fire.

After twenty long minutes the battle is done and the townsfolk have been triumphant! Covered in sweat and wounds the people raise their weapons and cheer! Some of them have given up their lives for the cause here but they are not disheartened. In fact, the sacrifice of the martyrs has inspired them even more!

These people need help...

I myself managed to harvest another level from raining my enemies down on the hard stone as well as increasing my piercing chomp skill by one level. One more and piercing chomp will reach ten! Then both of my primary jaw attacks will become advanced skills.

According to the Queen's information on skills, once a skill is able to project the users' stamina outside their own body it can be considered an advanced skill. Surface races, with their class based system, have the ability to slowly raise skills associated with their own class type through training, without having to risk themselves in battle. Usually a trainee soldier or mercenary will be confined to the training yard to raise their skills to at least this level before being allowed in the field.

After all, what use is someone who can wave a sword or spear around against someone who can send out a wave of light to strike their enemies from ten metres away?!

Whilst some of my skills are raised through constant, passive use, such as Tunnel Map, I don't think it's possible for a monster to raise their attack skills through, biting trees or rocks, for example.

Yet another example of system prejudice against monsters.

It does help explain why monsters can experience more rapid growth than the surface races. Training is quite slow apparently, whereas a monster will only get stronger by constant combat, raising skills, gaining levels and consuming Biomass all at once. A young but strong monster can grow powerful and evolve in a matter of days whereas a human would be on the training field for months, if not years, to raise a single skill.

This also makes it clear how human mages are able to learn faster than I can. By studying, reading and conducting mental exercises the humans can raise magic related skills passively and then raise them again when they actually practice, whereas I can only repetitively practice over and over again. In this way humans are able to train their mage skills much more quickly. Monsters are compensated by the possibility of magic specific glands, basically shortcutting the process of learning proper magic.

It was only in this way that I was able to confirm with the Queen that the route I chose to learn magic is essentially the surface way, which all the advanced and sentient races use. Building the fundamental skills up from the ground. According to the Queen, monsters who can cast spells as humans can aren't unheard of but are exceedingly rare, and are only found deep in the Dungeon.

After five minutes or so to catch our breath the Queen, flanked by a small team of her Guards, lead us inside the castle. When the broad doors were opened a warm light from the entrance hall spilled out. I was a bit confused at first, the light looked almost like artificial light from Earth. When I scuttled inside alongside the townsfolk I could see that the light was produced by lamps placed at regular intervals along the walls.

What was stunning was that these lamps didn't seem to have an energy source that I could detect, no flame or gas or wire at all! What is up with these? Curiously I broke away from the huddled fighters around the Queen to climb up the high walls to get a closer look at this marvel from another world.

As I get closer ....

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

.....

Don't tell me...

Looking closely at the gold lamp stand attached to the wall and at the light source itself I can see that it is in fact, a small glowing gem. A core!

This is the attitude of the wealthy, right here! Whereas mercenaries had to scramble for every core they could, the Royalty was using them to light their castle! Such a flagrant waste of resources was almost offensive to me considering the circumstances I'd endured in my previous life... unbelievable!

Looking about cautiously to ensure nobody was watching as they advanced further into the castle I quickly confirm with Gandalf.

[Reinforce!]

There are six lamps in the entrance hall and naturally I refuse to let any of them off. Quickly zipping around on the walls I absorb all six of the cores before re-joining the strike force as we move towards the throne room.

Gweheheheh. The perfect crime!

I'm certain that nobody was able to see that.

As soon as I reach the back of the group I notice a twitch of movement behind me. What the hell?!

Turning my head slightly to get a rear view I can see the priest walking behind me, hand raised before himself in reverence.

....

This guy! He was waiting behind me this entire time! How still was he that I didn't even notice?! Creepy!

Sigh.

I guess I won't have much chance to keep this secret since he'll probably preach about the first chance he gets to open his mouth...

Not bothering to hide it anymore, every time we come across one of the glowing lamps I quickly clamber up the wall and absorb the core, nabbing myself another four before we make to the throne room.

Naturally as soon as I enter the throne room, shuffling in at the rear of our force, the first thing I notice is the abundant lighting in the room, causing my mouth to immediately begin to water.

So many cores!

I only need a few more to max out my core at 100mp! After that a special core to push me over the top and I'll be ready to evolve as soon as I hit max level! At level 16 now I'm more than halfway there!

The anticipation that only a monster can enjoy towards evolution is beginning to mount in me once more!

Our group has stop advancing so I push my way to the front to see what is happening. Sure enough, lounging nonchalantly on the throne is black leather clad mercenary lady, surrounded by flunky looking rich people and a force of soldiers between us and the dais.

....

This whole thing is too predictable!

### [Chrysalis](#)

#### **Chapter 158: The Queens circumstances part 1**

The revered Queen Verita of Liria, second of her name, defender of the frontier and upholder of the Lion tenants of her ancestors was pissed.

Long had she puzzled over how the enemy had been able to gather so many more troops than she had been able to anticipate. Her closest advisors had worked with her on their strategy. The careful plotting, endless information gathering, debates and planning had been overthrown when her soldiers had been

soundly defeated and outnumbered when the trap had finally been sprung and her enemies dashed out of the shadows into the light.

Where had all these fighters come from?

Seeing those organised warriors at the castle door was one thing and now looking at these disciplined soldiers dressed in mercenary gear arrayed against them before the dais of her own throne it all became clear.

These were not mercenaries or hirelings brought in to bolster the numbers for the fight. These were trained soldiers from a nearby kingdom! There must be a hundred of them there! This isn't a small number by any means. Someone must have wanted to interfere in the political situation in Liria desperately to commit so many of their people to a coup in another country!

Seeing the Andron ambassador standing beside Corrin as the filthy Mercenary Union lounged on Verita's throne she could easily guess who it had been.

"Great Queen Verita, how nice of you to join us" drawled Corrin, one leg dangling over the side of the throne, "we were just wondering when my coronation should be held. You wouldn't have any input on the matter would you?"

Verita disregarded the mercenary as beneath her notice and turned instead towards the ambassador Regix.

"Regix, so interesting to see you here. Incredible how quickly the kingdom of Andron has been able to adjust to the changing landscape here in Liria. One could be forgiven for thinking that you had known about all of this in advance" she said.

The ambassador smiled tightly and turned to Corrin, deferring to the Union leader.

Enjoying the display of her authority Corrin beamed at her former Queen.

"Don't be upset Verita. It turns out people other than me can notice how incompetent your reign has been. Our friends from across the border wanted to assist the people of Liria to have good governance, for once".

Verita could only roll her eyes at the pretence.

"Corrin, since you were born the only thing you cared about was money and power, let's not pretend anything other than these motivated your treason".

The mercenary leader's smile only grew wider. "It's important to pretend in front of the street rats though" she gestured towards the townsfolk nervously clutching their weapons behind their Queen, "I can't very well say to the public that I'll be rewarded with mountains of gold by Andron for destroying your rule and handing over the governance of our nation to a neighbouring country now, can I?"

Indignant rage flared within Verita at those words. Her family had founded this Kingdom, her own kin had fought and died in the campaign to liberate these lands from the monsters. Since then they had tirelessly worked to raise this nation out of the dirt for hundreds of years!

In a moment of clarity the Queen realised exactly why Andron would be prepared to go so far. They were afraid. Liria had risen so far and so quickly that their neighbour to the north feared they would be overshadowed and eventually absorbed. After all, it was Liria that was able to expand their territory by pushing south, Andron had nowhere to go. Rather than die a slow death, why not strike first? If they were successful the bright future of the Liria kingdom would belong to them instead.

Verita had to admit it made sense. Had she been Queen of Andron she might have been tempted to secure the future of her people in this way too.

But she wasn't, she was Queen Verita Leocor of the Leocor's. Liria was her kingdom and she'd be damned before she gave it over to these scum.

Throwing any pretence aside she drew herself to her full height and imperiously proclaimed, "Corrin, you will need to surrender yourself to me for judgement. Regix, order your men to stand down at once and you may escape my castle with your life".

Regix only shook his head and chuckled to himself but Corrin was more unrestrained, throwing back her head and laughing out loud.

"You haven't changed Verita, you'd think it was you sitting on this throne right now! I've no idea how you got back inside the city but the only that did is save me the trouble of hunting you down in the countryside and putting you down like a dog. You're outmatched here, give it up and I'll kill you quickly".

Judging by the sadistic look in the others' eyes Queen Verita sincerely doubted a quick death featured at all in her plans.

At this moment something pushed its way through the Guards behind her to appear at the front. As one the soldiers arrayed before her tensed and even Corrin's eyes widened in surprise. Without even turning Verita knew exactly who it was that was standing beside her now.

Concentrating fiercely she wove anew the mind bridge to allow communication between her and the monster. As soon as the weave was done the cold and emotionless voice she had still not grown accustomed to echoed in her mind.

[Who are these worms?] the voice demanded.

The Queen's mouth tightened. As Royalty she wasn't accustomed to being spoken to with the constant disrespect and rudeness she received from this monster but she could only overlook it, how could she expect manners from a monster?

[The leaders of the coup against me and a century of soldiers from a neighbouring kingdom]

She could almost feel the weary disinterest rolling off the creature in waves, confusing her. What was it so bored about?!

Corrin stood from her place on the throne, a grin twisting her face. "You've even allied with a monster in order to regain your throne Verita? What would your precious Legion say if they were to find out of this? Or the church of the path for the matter? If word of this were to get out you'd be finished!"

"Somehow I don't think you'll talking much when I separate your head from your shoulders" Verita bit back.



She turned toward the monster.

[If we can win here the rebellion will fall apart and our pact will be finished monster. Those people all have to die and you will have your reward, are you able to do it?]

Verita had to admit she was nervous as she asked. As far as monsters go this ant wasn't that large of powerful, but for some reason it managed to overcome impossible odds over and over again. The baffling magic that it was able to use continually surprised her, even filled her with trepidation. The blast that destroyed the gates was seared into her memory. No City wall, no matter how enchanted, would be able to withstand that shocking power!

That memory only firmed her resolve...

[So if I can kill or disable all of these people I can take my reward and leave then?] the monster asked.

Verita wasn't sure but she felt she detected something strange in the creatures tone.

She shook off her thoughts.

[Of course] she replied, [Is it possible]

[Tell your people to stay out of my way. I'll finish this quickly]

The monstrous ant leisurely walked forward as the hundred soldiers braced their weapons against it.

"One little ant Verita? This is the best you could find? Exactly how is this piece of garbage going to turn the tides here? You must be insane!" Corrin exulted.

The ant monster indeed looked weak as it slowly walked towards the enemy soldiers arranged neatly in their formation. Nobody in their right mind would think a single ant monster would be able to overcome these odds. Ants were not known for their individual strength, they were so feared because of their terrifying numbers!

But this ant was different, Verita knew. She wasn't sure why or how but this one was different.

The monster continued its unhurried march towards the enemy. The closer it got the tighter the soldiers grip on their weapons became.

When a short gap of only a few metres remained something changed. With the monster at the center a crackling purple energy sphere flickered into existence and expanded rapidly outwards.

### [Chrysalis](#)

#### **Chapter 159: The Queens circumstances part 2**

Seeing that baleful magic flickering into existence, Queen Verita's heart froze in her chest. In all her days she hadn't seen anything as horrific as this magic. The sound. The destruction. Everything it touched was simply .... Gone, smashed to nothing as if consumed by a monstrous beast.

Even though it was her foes who were about to experience this horror the Queen had pity on them, feared for them even. Who knows what gods would await them on the other side of that dreadful maw?

The little ant opened its mouth and the vortex of death howled into existence. The air inside the throne room pulled at everyone as it was sucked towards the purple ball that raced through the air to impact against the shield of an enemy soldier in an instant.

Despite the horrific shriek of the wind the soldiers didn't panic but calmly began to deploy their defensive skills. They didn't believe this little monster would be capable of casting a spell strong enough to threaten them. How many monsters had they killed on training expeditions to the Dungeon? How many towering, powerful beasts had they faced down? To retreat in the face of this little thing would be an insult to their pride.

It would be their death instead.

As soon as it touched that shield the dark purple, almost black ball expanded outwards in an instant and the soldiers near the impact point vanished entirely. Those close to the edges had a split second in which their faces twisted with fear and shock before they too were pulled into the ball. Horror overtook every soldier in the room as the wind rose in pitch once again to a deafening howl. Soldiers tried to flee, tried to pull their comrades away from that sphere of death but they could not resist it and nothing would save it.

Even the ant who cast the spell backed away slightly before becoming still and watching its creation consume the enemy. The Queen could only stare at the grisly spectacle before her. Seeing this magic employed against a gate was one thing, seeing it make proud, trained soldiers vanish in an instant was another. Fear gripped her. What level of mage would be required to defend against something like this?

It felt like a lifetime but it was only a few seconds before the sphere vanished. A tight, dense ball of ... something .... The Queen refused to think on it ... dropped to the ground with a wet THUNK and rolled several times before coming to a stop.

Even the floor had not been spared, the lower half of the spell had carved a groove out of it, the stone slabs were simply... gone. Carved away so precisely it could have been the work of god.

Before the shocked and demoralised soldiers could recover the monster was already acting again. The spherical, purple domain flickered and expanded outwards as the monster charged forward into the remaining soldiers.

Queen Verita had seen this spell before, the powerful domain type spell that had brought the enemy to their knees. What was this purple mana? What type of magic is this? She'd never heard of anything like it, capable of flinging people up into the air or crushing them flat into the ground.

It's hard to imagine that a monster, and one apparently quite young, could comprehend magic in the way this creature had. To cast the various types of spells in the same way that a human mage would take years to learn, it was terrifying.

Exactly how strong would this single ant become? Queen Verita narrowed her eyes. She didn't think she wanted to find out...

No longer complacent the soldiers wanted no part of this spell! Their morale was shattered and fear was plastered over their faces as they fled. The proud soldiers of Regix broke ranks and fled before one ant!

If the Queen hadn't seen it herself she would have felt she had lost her mind. Even though she witnessed the events she almost couldn't believe them.

The monster was relentless chasing them down no matter how they fled. Verita knew, as soon as the spell took effect they would no longer be able to run, only slaughter would await them. Though there was no visible change the moment the spell began to function everyone watching could see it. The bodies of the soldiers sagged to the ground as if pressed down by a mountain. Those who were still able to keep their feet did so only by exerting extreme effort, their faces going red with the strain. The soldiers eyes were wild and filled with terror. What could possibly have prepared them for this?

There was no way they could resist what was to come.

The Queen snapped back to alertness and turned to her stunned Guards.

"Aim your strikes at the enemy but do not close the distance! Be sure to stay the hell out of that spell!" she ordered.

Loyal and disciplined her Royal Guard leapt into action, their weapons raining strike after strike down on the trapped foes and those who continued to run, desperate to avoid becoming sealed in that zone.

The townspeople watched the spectacle unfold with rapt amazement, their eyes afire with deep emotions. They could not participate as none had mastered the advanced weapon skill required to strike from a distance. But they could watch and silently praise.

As she watched her force become battered by wave after wave a sword light Corrin's expression grew ugly. She could not believe her eyes. How could one piss weak ant, legendary for being the weakest individual monster in the Dungeon, be devastating the highly trained soldiers she had brought with such efforts. How long had it taken her to weave this plot together? The months of preparation, the incredible effort needed to talk Regix into getting of their fat arses. It was disappearing before her eyes!

She turned to the Regix ambassador. "What the hell is happening Andron?" she raged at him, "your soldiers are worthless! Didn't you promise me the best?!"

The ambassador was pale faced and shaking. He was a diplomat, not a warrior! He had never seen such bloodshed and violence. Watching his soldiers being torn apart had rocked his mind, he could barely think, let alone speak. As she watched the trembling Regixian struggle to speak Corrin nearly screamed in frustration.

It had been so perfect! She had been so close! Wealth! A stupid amount of wealth! She could feel it all slipping from her grasp in this moment and the feeling drove her berserk. If it wasn't for that stupid monster! She had played the Queen like a damn fiddle but this idiotic monster had ruined everything!

Suddenly her heart froze in her chest. Dread swept over her like a cold blanket and sweat erupted from her forehead. Turning slowly she looked down at the monster to find it looking directly back at her. The smooth dark glittering carapace, the cold lidless eyes and the dripping jaws that glowed fiercely with purple light. No emotion or feeling emanated from that creature. In Corrin's eyes it was nothing less than an emotionless machine of death.

Corrin's mind turned slowly as if her thoughts drifted through molasses. When had those mandibles begun to glow?

The mandibles flared with light and she flinched backwards, but it was no use.

How to describe it?

The floor simply wasn't the floor anymore. Her feet slid along the ground as if it were suddenly a wall and she fell directly towards the monster. A scream rose and stuck in her throat as fear paralysed her mind. The only thing she could see was those mandibles as everything faded away. They grew larger and larger in her eyes as they opened wide.

Then they closed, and she knew no more.

### Chrysalis

#### **Chapter 160: The Queens' Circumstances part 3**

Queen Verita surveyed the field of carnage that polluted her throne room in disgust. That it had come to this. Foreign soldiers slaughtered before the throne, the most officious and historical location in her young Kingdom, by a Dungeon monster. Her ancestors would shake their heads in despair if they knew of this farce.

Brusquely she ordered her Guards to clean the room and do something about the dead and escort the townsfolk out of the room. Then she ordered two soldiers forward to seize the ambassador and bring him before her. The Regixian was still frozen with terror on the dais, shaking in fear as his eyes stared vacantly at the broken bodies of the men and women he had brought here to fight.

When Corrin had been pulled through the air to her death he had been so terrified his legs had lost all their strength, causing him to collapse onto his knees. As the two Queen's Guard hauled him up by his armpits they sneered in contempt as they noticed the damp patch on the front of the ambassadors trousers.

The Queen thought for a moment before signalling another of her Guard to attend her.

The soldier approached and saluted smartly. "Take the head of Corrin and put it on a spike at the castle gate. That should take the wind out of any mercenary scum who want to try and continue their rebellion".

The soldiers saluted again. "At once your majesty".

The Guard picked his way through the remains toward the fallen Mercenary Union president to complete his grisly task. Soon he walked briskly out of the hall carrying a red stained cloth wrapped around a roundish object.

When the mercenaries battling desperately to push through the gate and into the castle recognised the head being held up high on the tip of a spear they were filled with equal parts rage and despair. They knew they would never grasp the profits they had been promised to secure their support for this uprising now. Many mercs decided on the spot to flee the country as fast as their legs could carry them. If they were quick enough they may be able to avoid arrest. After all, they could ply their trade anywhere the Dungeon was, which was everywhere!

The news that the Queen had taken back control of the castle spread through the city like wildfire. The citizens cheered and poured into the streets to celebrate. Many were glad to have their benevolent ruler

secure again on her throne but many others were simply glad the fighting had come to an end and peace could once again return to their lives. After weeks of fighting, death and destruction they wanted to get on with rebuilding and forget any of this had ever happened.

Inside the castle ambassador Andron was dragged before Queen Verita by her Guards. When he was unresponsive a soldier stepped forward and slapped the man viciously until he was able to come back to himself.

"It's a shame we had to speak under these circumstances, ambassador" Verita drawled.

Andron spluttered, trying to draw himself up and regain some of his dignity. His efforts proved fruitless whilst he was being held upright by two callous soldiers who gripped him so tight he was sure to bruise the next day.

"You can't treat me like this Verita!" he spat, "do you think Regix will stand for this?"

His gumption rendered Verita speechless for a moment. "You know" she bit back, "I find myself not caring a whit what Regix will stand for or not. As far as I'm concerned your pox filled nation of rats can jump in the Dungeon so they can live amongst their own kind!"

Andron gaped at her. "You dare?!"

Verita looked at one her Guards and gave him a subtle nod. The soldier immediately stepped forward to deliver another powerful slap to the ambassador, drawing blood.

After letting him recover for moment the Queen resumed speaking. "I do. You're going to scurry back to your nest, rat. When you get there I want you to tell them that I'm coming. I'm going to march into Regix and burn it to the ground for what you've done here".

The quivering ambassador retreated before Verita's fury. Unable to muster a response he could only hang his head as the Guards dragged him out of the castle. They would throw him on a horse and send him on his way back to his own land within the hour.

For a moment the Queen was left to her own thoughts. Finally, she let herself feel relief. She had thought it was all gone. The night they had fled the castle, slipping through a hidden gate in the darkness, she had wept. All the work of her ancestors, the toil and sweat of the citizens to carve out a new country from what had been monster infested deathzone, gone to waste. All because of her.

Now it was back in her hands. All of it. The traitors had been rooted out. She would take a sword to the merchants who had backed this coup, wash away the stink of rebellion with the blood of traitors. Once again Liria would experience a meteoric rise, no longer suffering from the leeches which had drawn away its strength. The light of justice was shining on her kingdom today!

Wait...

For a kingdom basking in the light, why was it so dark in here?

Puzzled, Verita caste her eyes around the room only to find that the glow lamps on the walls had been extinguished! On one side of the room a single lamp remained lit and frozen above it like a gigantic spider was the monster, holding still as if a child caught with a hand in the biscuit tin.

The Queen could only stare at this strange creature who had made her resurrection possible. Probing mentally she found the mind bridge she had been maintaining.

[Monster. What have you done to my lamps?]

.....

Suddenly the final light winked out.

[Just taking a little of my payment in advance]

Verita was stunned. How could a monster be this shameless!?

The monster's pitiless voice echoed in her mind once again. [It seems you have what you want, Queen], Verita always felt the way the monster said "Queen" sounded doubtful for some reason, [I have fulfilled my end of our agreement].

It was clear what the monster wanted, now that it had done what it had promised to do, it wanted to be paid.

Verita carefully studied the still creature latched onto her wall. Despite not turning to face her she knew the insect was watching her just as she was watching him.

[I never learned your name, monster] despite tactfully asking several times the creature had simply refused to share it, declaring that "monster" was fine.

[You never did] the monster agreed, clearly refusing her yet again.

Veritas mouth tightened and she covertly signalled to her Guards in the throne room.

Still the monster was watching her. Its voice rang in her mind.

[Do you know of the phrase "Tit for tat?"]

[I don't] she frowned.

[It means that should one be treated well, they will return that goodwill, but should one be treated poorly, similarly it will be returned in kind]

The Queen drew herself up. From the corner of her eye she could see her soldiers slowly shifting their positions. [Are you threatening me monster?]

[Yes].

Silence lay between them for a moment. The monster spoke first.

[Think carefully on what it is that you choose to do next].

That cold voice sent a shiver down her spine. It seemed the monster had been able to guess her intentions. This creature was so powerful already, and it would only go stronger, smarter, more deadly in the future. How could she let it roam free?

Not to mention, should word of her alliance with Dungeon monsters be leaked, her reign would be destabilised. Most people hated and despised monsters, viewing them as the enemy of civilisation, if

they knew she had willingly borrowed the power of a monster, trust in her authority would be shredded. The Guard would not speak, the townsfolk could be persuaded and the people in the city would not be believed. People saw all sorts of things in the heat of battle. The key to silencing the issue was in not letting this monster go!

In her heart the Queen could not believe that the monster could do anything to her here, in the seat of her power. In her own throne room there were many hidden cards she could deploy, not to mention the powerful Guards around her. It was over.

The Queen sneered, throwing all pretence aside.

[You can only blame yourself for trusting too easily, creature!]

She signalled to her Guard who immediately drew their weapons, over twenty blades drawn in unison!

BOOM!

In that instant the wall directly under the monster burst inwards as if smashed with a battering ram! Bricks and mortar flew across the room and the Queen sought refuge behind a hastily raised shield by a nearby Guard.

With heavy footsteps a new entity entered the throne room, obscured at first by the stone dust that hung in the air. The soldiers tensed at this unexpected development, weapons and shields drawn as they braced for anything.

As the dust slowly settled the giant form of a powerfully muscular ape was revealed. Huge hands knuckled the ground as it moved, staring balefully at the humans it loomed over them. After it had pushed through the new hole it had made in the wall the creature drew up to its full height, towering high as the ant began to climb down from its perch.

The Queen watched stunned, the situation was changing too rapidly for her to think. Her soldiers weren't sure anymore if they should engage and were waiting for her orders!

Before she could signal them the ape raised one hand and flung something towards them. The object arced through the air before landing heavily with a thud and rolling to a stop. Only when the shape groaned and shifted slightly did the Queen realise what it was.

"Captain Pendlen!" she cried.

This was the Guard captain that had been captured with her! As the giant ape raised another hand the Queen and her Guard flinched back as if it were going to throw something else at them but instead it simply dragged a bulging sack off the ground and flung it over its shoulder.

From across the room the Queen could see the sack appeared to be filled with small round objects, their outlines bulging against the fabric. Cores!

Her treasury!

She stared at the monster climbing down next to its ape pet in disbelief. How was this possible?! Is this some sort of heist!?

[You disappoint me Queen] the monsters' voice chilled her mind again, [from beginning to end this matter has been.... too predictable].

Rage burst inside the Queen's chest and she raised a hand to point at the two monsters as she screamed "Kill them!"

Her Guard charged immediately but quick as they were the ape was faster. Raising its free hand high it smashed it down onto the stone floor at its feet with a deafening crash! The room was once again showered with stone and dust.

When it cleared the soldiers were stunned to see the two monsters were gone, as if they had never been there. They tentatively approached, shields raised high and eyes scanning constantly, only to find the shattered floor opened into a tunnel that led straight down. The walls of the tunnel were threaded with veins of blue light and echoing from within the screams and roaring of thousands of monsters could be heard.