

# CHRYSALIS

## Chapter 16 Currents and undertows



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The waves are a mystery to us. Ever since the very first, during the cataclysm that came to be known as 'The Rending', when huge surges of monsters were spawned in the Dungeon below and tore their way onto the surface in great numbers, we have failed to find the reason why 'waves' of monsters suddenly flood the dungeon.

Some of my predecessors have postulated that the Dungeon uses the waves as a device to repopulate itself when monster numbers are too low and regular spawns are not sufficient to maintain a healthy population, whatever that may be. There is evidence to suggest that lower monster numbers increases the likelihood of a wave.

Yet there are records of waves occurring even when the dungeon is pact to bursting, though it is far more rare for this to happen, to be sure.

From the private notes of Alberton, Loremaster of the Legionem Abbyssi,  
Liria.

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"You look fine".

"I don't feel fine".

"Do you ever feel fine?".

"Shove off".

"It's just a meeting".

"You can't be serious. A formal call to arms before the entire court is a  
'meeting'?!"

Titus shrugged, "this is the way your dearest aunt wanted it done".

Alberton grimaced and tugged at his lace collar once again, "you know I don't like having to face my aunt".

"We really made a brave Legionary out of you, didn't we Alberton?"

"Shove off".

"That's shove off, commander".

The two men stared at each other for a moment before chuckling awkwardly. Neither of them enjoyed this kind of formal appearance. Titus felt compressed in his court garb, the lace, the buttons, all of it stretched and pinched at his massive shoulders.

A large insignia was sewn into his coat above his heart, the symbol of the Legion stitched in blue thread on a deep, black background. Under one thick arm he carried his dress helm, polished to a mirror shine until the metal sparkled in the light.

For his part, Alberton was draped in his most elegant robes, his beard had been washed, washed again and then combed before being oiled. The Legions court auxiliaries, charge with overseeing the organisations' interactions with the nobility, had almost had to tie the Loremaster down as he howled and protested the grooming.

If he was forced to it, Titus would have to admit that watching Alberton get presentable was the only enjoyable part of appearing at court.

At present they were stewing in an antechamber outside the throne room, waiting to be announced. After some time an overdressed, wheezing courtier entered to fetch them.

They were brought before the carved and gilded entrance doors, where, after a pause they were announced.

"Commander Titus of the Deep Legion, Loremaster Alberton of the Deep Legion!" boomed the chamberlain.

After calling their names the official struck the floor three times with his staff, a massive stone shaft with an elaborately carved lion head at the head.

The sharp sounds echoed off the vaulted ceiling as the two Legionary officials stepped forward into the massive hall. To their left and right the courtiers, officials and local power brokers turned to eye their approach, stepping back to clear the center of the floor, allowing them to approach the dais on which the throne stood.

Titus had to admit, the light streaming through the large, arched windows and playing across the elaborately carved pillars that supported the ceiling were impressive each time he saw them. Liria had been prosperous for a long time and the throne room reflected that wealth and power very well.

Atop the throne sat a matronly woman, advanced in her years but with the sharp gleam of intelligence still bright in her eye. Queen Verita had ruled with grace and wisdom for more than thirty years, much beloved by her people. The Legion had benefited greatly from her trust in that time.

As they approached the throne Titus was irritated to see amongst the officials gathered near the dais some people he didn't particularly want to meet. As if detecting his souring mood, Corrin, the Mercenary Union president in Liria, winked cheekily at him as he approached.

Titus could only sigh and glance back at Alberton, who appeared to be completely rigid, his eyes locked to the throne on which Verita sat.

He would be completely useless, as usual.

When the two men had reached the edge of the dais they immediately saluted and remained still.

"You may be at ease Legionaries" Verita greeted them warmly.

"My thanks, Queen Verita" Titus replied formally.

The Queen turned her attention now to Alberton, who by this point was almost in panic as the eyes of the court focused on him.

"Nephew, it is so wonderful to see you again. For too long you have avoided our presence, burying yourself in study. I am very pleased you were able to attend this formal meeting".

Titus inwardly sighed. As he suspected, the Queen had only called this formal meeting in order drag Alberton out to visit. The idiotic Loremaster was supposed to scrub himself up and come to court every now and again to keep his doting Aunt happy. If he'd been skipping out on coming here then forcing him to attend in full formal garb was possibly the Queen subtly punishing her shy nephew.

"My honor, your uh, Aunt" Alberton mumbled.

Seeming satisfied by her wayward relatives discomfort, Verita indicated to the gathered dignitary adjacent to the dais. "We have gathered representatives here of many of our great cities prominent groups to discuss the activity within the Dungeon and the course of action to take from this point forth" Veritas said, "to begin, commander Titus of the Legion".

At the Queens' announcement all chatter in the room ceased and Titus cleared his throat to speak.

"Mana levels within the Dungeon are climbing quickly, according to our projections we can expect a wave to break in the first strata in as little as three days, perhaps four. In addition to this, Legionaries on guard witnessed a monster ant close to the surface. Due to the special nature of this creature, the Legion intends to advance deeper into the Dungeon and exterminate the colony. In order to facilitate this level of activity, the Legion is formally requesting military aid from the throne to assist in securing the city from the wave, freeing Legion resources to delve for the creatures nest."

At the conclusion of his speech, spoken rapidly with military precision, there was a slight pause before several officials began chuckling openly whilst others frowned in disapproval.

Corrin, dressed in her official Union leather armor, blue cape expensively cut to flow from her shoulders, stepped forward.

"Your majesty, if I may?", she bowed towards the throne.



"You may speak, Corrin" Verita nodded.

The mercenary leader stood and straitened her cape and turned to address the throne room. "For over a hundred years the city of Liria has prospered under the enlightened rule of Queen Verita and her forebears. The citizens of this city enjoy a peace and prosperity that has seldom been seen, even in the millennia following the great cataclysm".

Titus' eyes narrowed as Corrin continued to speak. He could easily see where this was going to go.

"In all that time", she continued, "the responsibility of managing and policing activity within the Dungeon has been placed into the hands of the Deep Legion. Despite their continual, overbearing and disruptive activities, Dungeon delving has been an economic cornerstone of Liria and through the bravery of the Mercenary Unions' membership has this resource been exploited".

Corrin turned now and gestured towards Titus, "yet now we see the Legion come begging to our great queen for assistance in defending the city, proving their inability to meet their obligations, whilst jumping at shadows and ants".

The Queen raised an eyebrow. "Your point being, Corrin?"

The Mercenary Union president turned and bowed once more to the Queen, her silky brown hair falling around her ears.

"The Mercenary Union once again petitions the throne to allow the Mercenary Union direct authority over Dungeon access, allowing us to properly administer this resource and police our own members. We are supported in our petition by the Associated Merchants Guild", she gestured to one side.

One of the few non-humans in the room stepped forward. The merchant was a Brathian, his silver skin containing an aquatic, translucent quality that revealed their peoples origins.

"Our projections estimate that a restraining of regulations around Dungeon exploitation would double profits within two years your majesty" the tall humanoid said.

Brathian voices had an almost singing quality to them, resonating in the air slightly after they had finished speaking.

The Queen nodded thoughtfully, then spoke, "You are denied once again Corrin. If you would dismiss the threat represented by an ant then I highly recommend you brush up on your history. The land our beloved city is founded on once belonged to another Kingdom, this Queen will not repeat the mistakes of those rulers and underestimate the Dungeon. It is not a resource, nor a mine, for all the wealth and resources it brings us. It is a threat, and should always be treated as such."

The Queen then gestured towards Titus, "If you read that history you will find it was the Deep Legion who liberated this land. For this reason the rulers of Liria have placed their trust in them."

Corren gracefully bowed towards the throne, "Your loyal subject is more concerned with the future prosperity of the citizens than history. The Dungeon is to be respected certainly, but not feared".

The Queen acknowledged her words with a wave of her hand and then stood, the attention of the room was immediately upon her. "The crown will place the royal guard at the disposal of the Legion for the duration of the wave. Let it be known once again that Liria places its trust in the Legion to oversee the

Dungeon. Commander, how confident are you that you can exterminate this nest of monsters?"

Titus saluted, hand over his heart. "We are the Legionem Abyssi, the Deep Legion, your majesty" Titus said, turning to face Corrin, "for over three thousand years, in all of the lands of Pangera, one fact has always been true. Under the ground, nobody can match our strength".