

CHRYSLIS

Chapter 17 The deep roads



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That centipede was not a pretty sight... ripped right in half, with its internal organs spilling out...

Urk....

However I couldn't pass up the precious opportunity that the hideous remains of the creature represented. Sweet, sweet biomass!

Using all of my guile, I retrieved the corpse, one half at a time and returned to the security of my nest for the Feast.

Holy moly this is awful eating.

This is almost so disgusting I would rather starve. Almost. This is a very key word, almost. Would you like to starve to death Anthony, or eat this pile of smashed centipede? I would rather eat, but only just!

[You have gained one Biomass]

Huh.

It seems each creature usually contains one biomass.

Something interesting that I pay more attention to this time is the leftovers. I can't eat every part of these monsters, the fangs, the carapace, teeth and anything else that is too hard for me to ingest, so what happens to these pieces?

After I wait more than an hour a faint blue glow begins to surround these pieces and before my very eyes they sink into the ground.

What the....

Creepy!

These left over materials are being absorbed straight back into the soil? Does that mean this cavern network is absorbing monster pieces from all over? What for?!

The more I learn the more questions I have...

Well, now for the important business. I currently have three Biomass and one skill point to spend. Firstly the biomass.

[Do you wish to improve eyes? This will cost 3 Biomass]

Ugh. Here we go...

Yyyyes.

ggggggggggUUUUOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

The itch!! ITS WORSE THAT BEFOREEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!!

How?? HOW CAN IT WORSE!?!

As if an entire swarm of bees has decided my eyeballs were the greatest offense to their species, my eyes light up with spectacularly intense itching. After much scrabbling, rolling and beating my head against the wall the feeling finally fades away.

Phew.

Now to the next task, assigning my skill point!

[Would you like to spend your skill point?]

Yes indeed!

The usual menu appears and another mystery is quickly solved. Now that my stealth has reached level five I was informed that an upgrade had become available and now, looking my list of skills to purchase, along with dash and the skills I'd seen before is a new option.

[Stealth -> Advanced Stealth. cost 1 sp: The upgraded Stealth skill, further improves the skill holders' passive ability to avoid notice whilst also greatly increasing this ability when remaining still]

Oh ho!

So when my skills reach level five I can upgrade them to an improved version at the cost of another skill point? Interesting! Of course I will have to select this skill, not being seen is the same thing as being alive! The new passive seems very handy as well...

So now my status is like this:

Name: Anthony

Level: 3

Might: 15

Toughness: 12

Cunning: 25

Will: 18

HP: 30

MP: 0

Skills: Digging Level 4; Acid Shot Level 3; Grip Level 3; Bite Level 3;
Advanced Stealth Level 1; Tunnel Sense Level 3;

Mutations: Eyes +3, Antennae +2, Acid +1

Species: Hatchling Ant Worker (Formica)

Skill points: 0

Biomass: 0

Finally level 3! I've come so far, I could almost cry.

This is my pride, my determination. I will conquer these caves! They will bow to my incredible strength!

...

At some point in the future.

For now I need to lay low and continue to scout. In a one on one fight with almost anything I'm going to flat out lose. However now that I have advanced stealth I feel more confident exploring the shaft, heading deeper into this place.

I wasn't able to detect a pheromone trail in the cavern, and although I haven't been able to scout it properly, I can't deny that I'm very curious to see what lies down below.

If I didn't have my new upgrades to my eyes and stealth I probably wouldn't chance this.

Time to witness what lies in the depths!

Giving my antennae a quick clean (got to keep them shiny) I make my way out of the nest and back towards toward the shaft. Okay, this is a little tricky. Moving directly downwards still makes me a little nervous. It isn't something that humans can have a chance to do after all! Walking directly down a wall is one thing but walking down a black hole where I can't see the bottom is another entirely.

Steady now, steady!

Moving slowly I start to make my way down the shaft.

Now that I think of it, it's actually quite bright here in this tunnel. The pulsing veins of blue soft blue light run the length of the walls here, illuminating the rock in their glow. Although not as bright as regular daylight or a light from my own world, it is a well-lit environment compared to what I've experienced so far in this place.

As I continue to descend, the walls pulse every minute or so, the light waxing and waning in intensity, giving the shaft a very organic feel. Also, it's hard to

detect but, very slightly I think the light is becoming brighter the further down I go.

After cautiously climbing down fifty metres I see something that surprises me greatly.

What the heck is this?!

Growing out of the wall, directly atop a light vein is a small tuft of something similar to blue grass, except in the center of the small mound of plant matter is a stalk atop which is a tiny blue crystal flower.

There is plant life here in these caves?! How? There isn't any sunlight at all? Perhaps these veins in the walls are able to provide some kind of sustenance? The blue flower is extremely small but by shoving my ant face right up to it I can see it is exquisite in its detail.

Just beautiful.

Leaving my discovery behind I continue to move down the tunnel only to discover the small patches of grass with their accompanying flower are appearing more and more often, I also manage to detect another welcome surprise.

Pheromones!

My antennae start wagging like crazy as I detect the scent of the chemical trail left by my colony. My clan, my tribe, my people/insects!

I have chosen the correct path, clearly the scout from my colony originated down here somewhere and pursued the thieves who raided our nest higher into the caves.

What a brave scout! How diligent, how bold! Giving his all for the colony, just as I shall when I get home!

Excited by my find I continue on my way downwards.

Another forty metres down and the shaft comes to an abrupt end, instead, a narrow tunnel branches to the left. This tunnel is not at all straight, jagged corners and bends come one after the other, slowing my progress to a crawl.

I refuse to barrel blindly around corners in this place, there could be more spiders of all sorts of horrible things hiding. Especially since I'm worried that the monsters about the place will be stronger down here.

I crawl around another corner and the tunnel abruptly opens wide in front of me. What. The. Hell... is this?!