

Chrysalis 341

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Chapter 341: Ant + Simian

After discussing a few other things with the members of the council in the forward HQ, I headed out, collecting my two pets, and made my way to where the delegation from the village was purported to be waiting.

I wasn't entirely clear on how the humans had attempted to communicate with the members of the colony, or why they would attempt such a dangerous thing. The colony was a lot more lenient towards the villagers than they had been before, but they were still very distrustful of anything other than our own kind. I suppose desperate times call for desperate measures, perhaps I should have seen this coming.

A kilometre away from the forward HQ I found a small collection of tents situated around a campfire, sentries at watch around the perimeter. When I take the whole camp in, it looks as if the village has only sent twenty, or thereabouts, people on this forward adventure. A mixture of men and women, and hopefully Morrelia somewhere in the camp. The rest of the villagers would be... interesting to deal with. If by interesting I mean, awkward as hell.

O my gawd. Is Beyn here?! The last thing I need is to try and fight a damned war with that lunatic one armed priest chasing me around!

With Tiny lumbering along behind me we don't exactly make for the stealthiest group of monsters, so they knew we were coming long before we walked into the camp. I was a little disconcerted to see that Morrelia has not made an appearance. Instead, I recognise the man I saw leading the weapons training in the village before we left, and he's also the guy we saw in the port city when we liberated it!

Now I recognise him! Didn't he also try to flex on Morrelia? Perhaps that's why he was picked to lead this group, he's clearly suicidal.

As I approached the group, the tough looking guard stopped leaning on his spear and stood tall before entering into what I can only describe as an interpretive dance.

Just. Just what is happening?

As he drew wide, all embracing circles in the air with his hands, his face a mask of pure concentration, my eyes slid to the villagers standing lined beside him. They were staring at me with a fierce energy in their faces and a fervent light in their eyes. These people look so intense! That guy literally has sweat dripping his nose he's so focused!

As the leader continues his slow, graceful gestures I'd begun weaving the mind mana transformation construct and then extended the mind bridge out towards the man. It took a little longer to weave the spell than it normally would, I was distracted by the bizarre yet fascinating movements being performed in front of me.

[What the hell are you doing?] I asked.

The man stumbled, cursed under his breath and looked about wildly, trying to locate the source of the voice.

[It's me, over here] I waved my antennae at him, [nobody told you I could make mind bridges? Did you speak to Enid or anyone before you came out here?]

The man looked at my slowly waving antennae, then reached one hand up to touch his head. His eyes seemed to not believe what it was they were looking at.

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[Yes. Mind bridge. I, the ant, am talking to you. Please speak back with your mind.]

[Well this is some plops right here] the man thought at me.

... plops?

[I'm not going to disagree with that] I told him.

[.. You heard that?]

[Sure did.]

[... so you're the ant monster... leader?]

[I suppose you can think of me like that. How exactly were you expecting to communicate with the colony without getting me to come over and talk to you? I'm the only one capable of mind magic at this point in time] I asked him.

He scratched his cheek with one hand and looked a bit embarrassed as he replied.

[Well, Morrelia had me practice the greetin' dance o' cooperation and ..]

[I'm sorry, what?] I broke in incredulously.

[The uh ... greetin' dance of cooperation?]

[...]

[There's no such thing, is there?]

[Uhh...]

The man growled before he cursed out loud. The villagers next to him looked alarmed at what was coming out of his mouth and stared at me nervously, suddenly anxious at my response.

Chill out people, I have no idea what he said. I'm guessing it wasn't directed at me, in any case.

[I have to say, I'm impressed] I told him.

He looked at me, confused.

[How so?]

[Morrelia fed you that garbage and taught you that dance with a straight face the whole time? Can't have been easy.]

He nodded ruefully. [She's somethin' alright.]

I don't think he and I were quite on the same page with our attitudes re:Morrelia, but at least I appreciated the joke she'd sent my way.

[Okay, so you're here. I assume Morrelia has continued to delve with other villagers?]

[She sure has] he agreed, [We were wantin' to send her out for this, seein' as how you an' her have worked together before an' she seems comfortable with it, but she said that someone else should go an' help build relationships with the colony.]

And I'm willing to bet she recommended this guy, practically insisted that he go, in fact. Which managed to neatly put him somewhere that she wouldn't have to deal with him when she came back to town. Cunning, very cunning. Not a move I would have expected from Morrelia the berserker, but here we are.

[Ok, so you approached the colony and they managed to work out that you were offering assistance, and now I'm here to work with you. What's your name by the way?]

[Isaac Bird] he told me.

Isaac had a look on his face as he gave his name that I had come to interpret as the 'I can't believe I'm having polite conversation with, and offering my name to monster of the Dungeon. What a world' kind of look.

[Hey Isaac, I'm Anthony]

He hesitated.

[Anthony?]

[Yes. Yes it has 'ant' in it. We all get it.]

[Right.]

[So, let's sit down and work out how this is going to go then, shall we?]

[Right you are, Anthony.]

So we got to talking.

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Chapter 342: Hatching a plo

[So how many people did you bring?] I led off with.

Isaac drew himself up.

[I've got eighteen o' the villagers finest, as well as some of me old guards back from Midum. They'll give a good account of themselves, no doubt about it.]

I nodded.

[That's great Isaac, just fantastic. So your thought is to form a spear wall with less than twenty people against a horde of a hundred thousand monsters?]

[Well uh, not exactly, you see, uh ... how many?]

[Did they tell you anything before they sent you out here?!]

[Ms Morrelia did try to explain the details of the threat but I was a little ... distracted ... at the time.]

This guy... I can only hope that he wasn't staring at anything he shouldn't have been, I don't think he'd have any eyes left if he had.

[Alright, look. We've got a powerful Kaarmodo wizard with a cadre of its slave people assisting a Crocodile that looks so thick it shouldn't be supported by the surface of the freakin' planet. I'm talking about a reptile so massive it should have its own moon! Surrounding those creatures is a horde of monsters almost 100,000 strong. So let's think about some hit and run sort of jazz, ok?]

[Y-Yeah] Isaac stuttered, [sounds good.]

He paused.

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[We are deep in the plops, aren't we?]

[All the way up to our necks, Isaac. Not going to be easy to dig out of this.]

[S'all right] Isaac chuckled, [I've been shovellin' most of my life. You couldn't have a better man along for the job.]

[Good stuff.]

We sat down under the watchful eyes of the villagers and began to plan our strategy. With such a small number of fighters, we couldn't hope to engage the horde directly in any form, not even using the methods the colony had adopted thus far. That goes double now that the Kaarmodo had begun to take a direct hand in the conflict. Everything had become much more fraught with peril and the risks we could take had to be minimised.

In those sorts of conditions, it was unrealistic to expect that this small detachment would be able to inflict meaningful damage on the enemy, so we should instead turn our goals to more reasonable objectives.

[What would those objectives be?] Isaac asked me.

[Levels] I told him firmly.

[Levels?] he asked, puzzled.

[Absolutely. Don't worry about killing the entire horde, just worry about killing. There's literally thousands of monsters out there. That means thousands of XP sacks waiting to be harvested. As long as we are gaining XP and levelling our skills, then we are winning.]

Isaac stroked his chin as he thought through the idea.

[Inflict some damage, and power ourselves up for the final conflict.]

[Exactly] I agreed.

I wasn't about to tell him that gaining XP was extremely critical for me, in order to ensure that I could evolve, that was secret colony only information, but this also happened to be the best strategy for he and his people to adopt. If it worked out well for both of us, then what's the harm?

I spent an hour talking to Isaac and having him pass my words on to the rest of his group. I told them about the scrying magic at play, the way the last ambush had panned out and the best methods we could use to attack the enemy without endangering ourselves.

Satisfied that we'd ticked all the boxes we could, the humans loaded up their gear and we moved out. As we marched, I noticed that it was quite easy to work out which of the humans in the group had come from the 'old school' villagers, as I thought of those who had been there in the early days, and those who had come in the latest wave, the people Morrelia and I had liberated as we moved through Liria.

The OG villagers were super respectful, almost reverent, in their attitudes as I walked along with them, whilst the newcomers were much more distrusting, their eyes flicking toward me and my pets often and their body language betrayed their nervousness.

Not that I was surprised or unhappy with that. If anything, their response was the more natural one. I feared that in time these new villagers would adopt the same attitudes as the old ones, perhaps more exposure to Beyn and his preaching would make this inevitable. That guy must have some seriously high levels in his preaching skills, like rank four at least. When he opened his mouth, every person nearby went slack jawed and vacant eyed until he was finished. It was crazy to see.

It took our group long hours of quick marching to get close to the front line. The horde was closing the distance to the nest and village with every moment that passed and I could feel it in the diminished time it took to reach the front lines. The humans set up camp in a concealed location in a copse of trees but I took it a step further and dug out a tunnel for Crinis, Tiny and myself to rest in.

When the morning came the humans spread out and began to move more cautiously, scouting the road from a distance for signs of the enemy. It was close to midday by the time we found them, the thick carpet of monsters that blanketed a ridiculous amount of ground. We crept about through some low hills, flicking our heads over the top to monitor the progress of the monsters that continued to follow the road.

It was interesting, I knew for a fact that the colony had covered that road in traps, pitfalls with spikes and even more shallow traps designed to break limbs and inconvenience more than lethal damage, anything to slow the approaching enemy down.

But it didn't seem that they cared at all. The horde continued to push down the predictable path, generally following the road around the forest and to the south and the front ranks of monsters simply fell into the traps impaling themselves on the spikes only to be pushed further into the pit as the monsters behind them piled on top. With the pit trap filled with their own bodies the monsters continued to walk forward and crunched their own members under their feet.

It was bizarre to watch, and I couldn't make out the details at this sort of distance, but it seemed as if the traps may cause more casualties than anything else we'd done, which felt cheap in some way.

As we drew closer and began to engage our sneak Skills, we took care to ensure we had eyes on the horde at all times. Due to the scrying magic of the Kaarmodo, it's possible that it knew exactly where we were, but so long as we kept our eyes open for monsters heading our way, we thought we could manage it.

Low to the ground, we crept forward. I even made Tiny lie down and crawl, something he wasn't particularly happy about. The closer we got, the clearer I was able to make out the finer details, and I began to notice something happening on the edges of the horde...

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Chapter 343: The never ending ambush

There were small disturbances around the edges of the seething mass of monsters, particularly toward the front and forest sides, the latter of which I couldn't really make out. When we got in range, I was able to see small groups of ants engaging in a seemingly endless series of running engagements with the horde.

Small groups of five or six ants were launching themselves from hiding places, either tunnels or out of the tree line and making lightning quick attacks against the monsters closest to them. Some launched acid barrages before they retreated with sharp movements, others plunged toward the mass of enemies and engaged them in short, violent skirmishes before they broke and fled. At any one moment there were upwards of thirty groups attacking the horde independent of each other, and those were the ones I could see!

It seems as if Victor was having similar thoughts to me in the next phase. By breaking into smaller groups that managed themselves, the risk to the overall force was reduced and we became too difficult for the horde to tackle. If the monsters were to chase the pesky ants, they'd simply run away, disappear into tunnels or vanish into the forest. If the monsters pursued too far, then they would regain their senses and break away from the control that bound them, which for our purposes was just as good as killing them.

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Some groups would be caught, snapped up by monsters who moved quicker than they expected, or blasted by magic from the wizard lizard and its attendants, but even so there would only be five ants lost at a time. Obviously five ants is five too many in my opinion, but I can understand the tactic, it's basically what I want to enact with the humans.

After conversing with Isaac, the humans arranged themselves into small teams, half of which stayed in reserve and the other half moved forward to engage the fringes of the horde. I took my pets with me and moved up to attack also.

I needed levels and there's only one way I was going to get them. Time to fight.

[Stay alert crew. We don't know what might happen and we're out in the open now.]

[I will, Master. So long as I live, no harm will come to you!] Crinis declared.

[Punch!] Tiny roared.

Fair enough then.

It felt a little odd to be approaching the horde so brazen and open like this. We were dependent on the horde itself being as ungainly as it had proven to be in the past. My senses were sharpened to their maximum, trying to grasp any indication that some funny business would be going on. But I detected nothing.

As we drew closer, I used every resource available to me to try and detect the Kaarmodo at work, or more likely, it's slave attendants. Crinis also utilised her mana sense, though it had a much shorter range. As we approached, we sensed nothing, so I made the decision to engage.

With Crinis on my back, Tiny and I drew closer to the horde until the masses of monsters were within twenty meters of us. Seeing us approach the centipedes clacked their claws angrily and the hounds growled a warning which we promptly ignored.

Not giving our opponents a moment to gather themselves, we charged straight into them, ploughing through the front rank with explosive force!

Tiny smashed the enemies around him with powerful sweeps of his fists, the kinetic force enough to shatter the body of any monster he hit. From my back, Crinis extended tentacles to the creatures beyond my reach and began to saw them apart in a gory and terrifying display of her alien physique.

For my part, I simply chomped, alternating between the two skills I needed to level, piercing and slicing each monster as it came within range of our jaws.

Then, we fled!

[Get your hairy ape butt out of there Tiny!]

Grumpy and discontented with the short burst of action, Tiny flung the surrounding monsters away from himself and joined us in our exuberant flight from danger.

The fight had lasted only seconds, we'd impacted hard, inflicted as much damage as we could and fled before the horde could surround us. Using our superior speed we hurtled back into the hills over a kilometre away from the road itself.

The monsters pursued us for hundred metres or so before they fell back toward the main body of the horde, following the directives given to them by the mind that had suppressed them.

In order to prevent the colony from ambushing them as they had previously, it appeared that the monsters would no longer pursue away from the support of their fellow horde monsters. Which meant the colony now had to expose themselves to inflict damage.

We were trapped in a way. We needed to inflict damage, it was absolutely necessary that we reduced the numbers of the horde before they reached the colony. There was no way we could hope to fend off these tens of thousands of monsters in one pitched battle, they'd simply roll over us.

Once the horde had settled at the angle we'd attacked (and the monsters had consumed the Biomass of their fallen brethren), we waited a while to see if anything changed. After a half hour, I was confident that no steps had been taken to prevent us from engaging again, so we did.

This is going to take a lot of time.

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Chapter 344: Planning is hard

Our mission is divine. Passed down through the centuries from our forebears who were fortunate enough to hear the words of the great one. To complete the circle, to finish the work that was begun but never completed. Only then can the path be opened and the way to a greater existence be made manifest.

What is this world, with its endless trials and monsters, but purgatory? This is not where we are meant to be. This is not a place where anyone belongs. Only at one point in history was it possible for our lord to reach out to us, to enlighten us to the truth. Our society was told many secrets which we recorded in the Book of Red Truth.

Since that initial communication, we have not heard from our master, but messages have been passed through intermediaries and we know that progress has been made.

Nineteen is not enough. Twenty are required. There are those with potential out there, we have seen them, found them. If we can raise one up, lift it to the pinnacle that is required, then the circle will close and the way will be opened.

We are everywhere, in all nations and amongst all peoples. It is only a matter of time.

From the writings on the Red Truth, Author Unknown.

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Victor was struggling.

When she had first evolved into a General, she'd thought it would be simple. Despite all the lessons that the Eldest had drilled into her and her siblings, about tactics, about preserving lives, her instincts had been clear. Ants would fight as they had always fought: overwhelming through superior numbers and avoiding anything that didn't work on.

Even with her increased intelligence, it didn't seem as if that generic plan had any holes in it. When the Eldest had insisted that every ant, every soldier and worker, be given the utmost opportunity to survive, she'd listened but not understood what that would mean.

You couldn't throw ants at a fight until it went away if each of those ants needed to be preserved to the best of your ability. You couldn't adopt attrition tactics, when you were charged with preserving the lives of your soldiers at all costs.

And the thing that was most grating, the thing that gave Victor the most stress, was that she was starting to care. She'd seen it already in the others, in Wills most of all. Every ant in the colony would happily die for the sake of the family, but now they were reaching a point where they were not willing to sacrifice each other. This level of care and emotion felt alien and strange to Victor, but she feared it was only a matter of time before it spread throughout the colony.

Increased cognitive function had brought many blessings to the species but it also meant a shift in behaviours and attitudes. Victor just wished that they'd had time to learn these lessons without a crisis hanging over their heads.

"How's the word from the front?" she turned to one of her aides and asked.

The large soldier ant shook her body slightly, intimidated at being in the presence of one of her seniors.

"Yes, General! There has been a message from the scouts delivered in the last five minutes! The Kaarmodo acolytes appeared at the front line and began a spell offensive against our skirmish forces. We've had multiple accounts of the acolytes appearing from thin air, the scouts suspect some advanced kind of magic is at play."

Victor winced. They'd been worried about that.

"Casualties?" she asked, not wanting to hear the answer.

"Four groups were destroyed before the general retreat was effected."

Victor sighed. That meant twenty ants had been killed, most likely in an instant. When each soldier had such potential it was an incredible waste for them to die, that was the real shame of it. Their numbers would be replenished shortly, in fact, only twenty casualties meant that their numbers would increase when the next wave of soldiers arrived, but Victor could no longer think of it as the dead being replaced. They couldn't be replaced.

The Eldest had started something strange in the colony and Victor could hope that they knew what they were doing.

"I need to speak to Wills, do you know where she is?" Victor asked her aide.

"I haven't heard General. Last report I received had the scout leader making her way toward the front."

Victor cursed. Wills had shown an increasing tendency to try and take matters into her own hands. It meant that the scouts' operations tended to work smoothly but it also meant that Victor could never get hold of her sibling when she needed to.

"I'll go find her. You hold here and inform me of any developments when I get back."

"Yes, Ma'am!" the soldier saluted with one antenna.

Victor crawled out of her chamber, with its increasingly detailed map of the terrain and the horde on it. The enemy would reach this forward base within the next twenty four hours, the ants would have abandoned it by then. According to projections the horde would then take two days to make the final push to the nest.

Victor could only hope that preparations had been finished at the nest by that time. The digging teams from the front had already been sent back toward the nest, laying their traps and digging ambush tunnels. It wouldn't be long before that work was complete and they could return to the main colony to assist in construction there.

As Victor crawled through the tunnels the soldiers and workers didn't give way for her, that wasn't the ant way. They simply crawled over the top of each other and called out with their pheromone glands.

"Keep working hard General!"

"No slacking now, General!"

"Almost time for us to start getting serious, isn't it General?"

Victor chuckled to herself. At least some things about the colony hadn't changed, they'd only become more prevalent. These ants would happily work themselves to death if they were allowed. Actually, that reminded her.

"Don't forget your mandatory breaks!" she shouted so everyone in the tunnel could hear.

A chorus of groans and curses rang out, tickling her antennae and making her laugh out loud this time. They were still ants, no matter what else had changed.

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Chapter 345: People helping people

Enid sighed as she stretched out her aching spine. She'd been on her feet for almost two days and she just wasn't as young as she used to be. If this catastrophe had occurred twenty years ago, she'd have been in much better shape for one, and Derrion would have still been with her.

Her heart panged as she thought of her departed husband. The memory of him still ached and she tried to avoid thinking of him too often. You could only prick your finger on a thorn so many times before you learn to stop poking.

She'd thought that with the disaster that had befallen her nation, and the hectic days that had followed, she wouldn't think of him much as she'd be occupied. And she had been occupied, to an absurd degree. Enid wasn't certain that even at the height of her trading enterprise that she'd ever worked this much. Despite the lack of rest, the endless list of problems that people insisted on dropping on her table, she found herself thinking of Derrion more and more.

He would have been the perfect person to lead these people.

His slow, warm smile, his quiet strength and the short cut hair that he never bothered to take of that hung in his eyes. Even as he aged he'd never lost his affable nature, able to talk to the powerful and the poor in exactly the same way with nobody taking offense.

A legend with the sword, able to unlock a rare class after years of training and delving, he'd achieved a level of skill that Liria had perhaps not seen since its founding. In this situation, his strength, his confidence and his compassion would have seen these people through, Enid had no doubt about that.

But they didn't have Derrion Ruther, the legendary sword demon, they had Enid Ruther, the merchant, and she was doing the best she could.

Straightening up, Enid spotted a figure in dark leathers at the end of the street and quickly called out.

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"Morrelia! Are you back!"

In answer to her call a hand was raised and soon the too serious face of the mercenary came into view.

"Enid, how are you holding up?" Morrelia greeted the older woman gruffly.

Enid tried and failed to keep a scowl off her face. Old she may be but she hated when the younger folk treated her as if she were made of porcelain. She'd been running trade caravans north to the Iron Kingdom before they'd even been born!

"I'm fine" she snapped, then sighed. "Sorry Morrelia, I'm a bit tired, but I'm fine."

The mercenary just grunted and leaned against the wall next to her.

"You're holding up better than I am then, I'm absolutely exhausted. I swear you're made of something different, mana infused bones or something. How are you still going?"

"Someone's gotta" Enid said simply, "it may as well be me. Maybe what they say is true and people get wiser as they get older. In that case I'd be the wisest person about town."

Morrelia chuckled.

"I could drink to that" she groaned as she straightened up, "if we had any time. Have you seen Beyn? He was supposed to organise the next group heading to the Dungeon and it's time to be going."

"You only just got back!" Enid protested, "aren't you the one pushing yourself too hard?"

If there was one person pushing themselves harder than Enid was, it was Morrelia. Whilst Enid had been working non-stop, all she had to do was organise people, make decisions and calm tensions. The young mercenary had been fighting with the risk of death hanging over her head as she led the inexperienced villagers into the teeth of the Dungeon. During a wave no less!

Morrelia could see the look on Enid's face and shrugged.

"It's not as bad as all that. The monsters are low level and to be honest, these villagers are as determined and disciplined as any Legion recruit I've seen."

The older woman nodded slowly. It was true. The people who had washed up in the village from destruction of Liria had proven to be resilient and driven to an almost absurd degree.

She sighed.

"Let's go and find Beyn, I think I know where he'll be."

The two of them set off through the village, frequently having stop as Enid shared an encouraging word with the people she came across. The smiths were still working hard, pounding the metal that had been dug up by workers three kilometres from the village and smelted at a facility they'd completed not a week ago.

The two of them found Beyn where Enid had suspected he would be. He'd recently asked Enid and other senior members to allocate a parcel of land close to the center of their planned town to him, supposedly for the church.

The only question Enid had in her mind was, what exactly he was planning on worshipping?

She had a fair idea she knew the answer but she hadn't felt brave enough to ask yet.

The one armed priest had a small crowd around him, Enid recognised them as the next group to head to the Dungeon. They each had their heads bowed in reverent prayer as Beyn spoke to them.

"... the spirit of the Great One watch over you and encourage you to embrace the creed of his kind. Selflessness, cooperation and unrelenting, unwavering faith. With these virtues as our cornerstone we shall fear no danger, overcome all obstacles and conquer all foes! What say you, brothers and sisters?"

"Aye!" they answered his call passionately.

"When we are beneath the ground, and the foe presses on us from all sides, remember our creed! Remember that your brother and sisters are with you! Do not falter, be not afraid! We will rise as a collective or fall as independent creatures. Will you be able to cast aside your ego and unite?"

"Aye!" came the response.

Enid was confused. What was going on here?

The two women watched as Beyn completed his service before he walked over to join them.

"Did I hear correctly, priest?" Morrelia asked quietly, "did you say that you would be joining us in the Dungeon?"

His face a mask of peace and serenity, Beyn nodded.

"Indeed, I have decided that I should join with my brothers and sisters and experience the peril of the Dungeon alongside them."

"What is happening here, Beyn?" Enid demanded, "you know that you have no business being in the Dungeon!"

The priest simply smiled. His expression was calm, but flickering light burned in his eyes.

"I've said it all along Enid Ruther. I've been clear from the beginning, in fact. What is happening here?" he waved a hand at the buildings and hardworking people around inhabiting them, "the world is changing, right here and now. We need all embrace the new order, I shall support our people until it is so."

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Chapter 346: Tussling with mage slaves

Each of my three brains screeched with pain as I condensed more mana into the gravity bomb. The spell was already dense to the point it had turned dark and now it rotated ominously as it drew more and more mana into itself.

I grit my mandibles tight and tried to focus. Much like exercising a muscle until it burned, straining my minds to this point hurt. Having one headache is bad enough, having three separate headaches at the same time is so much worse!

I wouldn't have to hold on for long though...

After a few more seconds of pushing mana into the spell, just before my control began to slip, I leapt up from my hiding place and let it rip.

HOOOOOOOOOOOWL!

The mournful cry of the gravity bomb rang out as the sphere of condensed gravity mana blasted forth and began to exert its terrible pull on the air around it. The monsters of the horde had grown accustomed to this sound lately and they scrambled to move away from the inevitable death that would soon find them.

Except it wasn't inevitable any more.

No sooner had I unleashed the spell into the pre-dawn air than I leapt to one side and began to scramble left and right. Good thing I did to, as a fireball impacted the hill not two metres behind by commercial zone, causing me to curse.

Those buggers are getting quicker!

Thanks to my wide field of vision, even as I dodged and hurled myself about I could see my nemeses for the last few days approaching from within the horde. The slave attendants of the Kaarmodo wore long, pale robes with hoods that concealed their faces and I hadn't had an opportunity to get a glimpse of their features, despite them chasing me around over the last twelve hours.

Two of the mages continued to attempt to crash my stocks with searing hot fire magic whilst the others raised their hands and began to perform the magic I was here to see. We'd been doing this little dance repeatedly throughout the night and this bit right here was something I desperately wanted to understand.

The gravity bomb continued to hurtle through the air. The mages had only seconds before it would impact and expand, unleashing its full, terrible might. This one was a condensed gravity bomb after all. Despite their desperate flight to escape, quite a few monsters on the edge of the horde were still likely to get caught in the blast.

Come on then you lizard lovers, let's see if you can handle this one!

I desperately tried to keep my eyes on the mages as I continued to dodge frantically, my mana sense active and my aching minds sharpened to their limits.

The mages did two things at once. First, they raised a magical barrier between themselves and the bomb, but I was prepared for this.

POW! POW! POW!

Jets of acid arced out of my business district, liquid justice sent to deliver my wrath to the enemy. The moment I fired out the acid, the two fire flinging mages turned their attention to the acid and managed to catch two of my shots with fireballs but one made it through.

As the bomb crashed into the barrier, the magical shield bent to absorb the pressure, as if it were a giant elastic sheet being pressed into by giants finger. The acid impacted not long after and began to eat through the shield, tearing apart the threads and allowing the bomb to push forward until the barrier shattered like glass.

I felt no triumph however, I knew what was up as I'd seen this interaction before. As the spell had been caught by the barrier for precious seconds, no less than four of the mage attendants had been hard at work. With my mana sense active I'd been able to see it as they'd reached out with External Mana manipulation and began to drain away the mana contained within my spell.

They tore into the mana with desperate energy, trying to kick over my sand castle with fierce hammer blows, the combined efforts of the four mages rapidly unspooling my gravity bomb. But this time something was different. This was a condensed gravity bomb, with as much juice as I could pack in with my current abilities, the mana contained within was far more potent than the spell they had defeated last time!

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that this was the most potent gravity bomb I was capable of creating at this time.

When the spell broke through the barrier, it still had plenty of oomph left, far more than the mages were anticipating. I could only imagine the look of shock on their faces as the spell flew forward, ready to impact in their midst, since their faces were still covered and all.

BOOM!

The bomb crashed into the ground and expanded rapidly into the swirling vortex of doom that I had come to know and love. Due to the efforts of the mages that spell had lost half of its potency. This appeared to be a coordinated technique that they used to break down spells. I must master this application of external mana manipulation! With my multiple brains on the job, I could be defending and attacking with magic at the same time!

Sadly for the slave mages, half of a condensed gravity bomb is still a heck of a thing to deal with.

Using surprisingly agile footwork, the six mages tried to slip away. The speed and grace they were able to move their bodies felt strange, perhaps it was magical in some way? They didn't appear to shift their feet as they glided away at high speed.

All but one, that is.

A little too close to the blast, a little too slow to begin moving, the poor sap found himself caught in the inexorable pull of the gravity bomb. The trapped creature shrieked, the high pitched hissing sound pierced my ears even from a distance of near one hundred metres.

The other mages turned back at the sound and reached out to save their comrade but it was too late. In another second the mage was gone, sucked into the swirling heart of the gravity bomb and crushed by the potent forces inside.

[You have slain Level 46 Setsulah Bonded Mage Attendant]

[You have gained experience]

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[You have reached level 38]

Yass! Finally!

The Setsulah servant wasn't the only creature get caught in the blast, plenty of monsters also suffered the wrath of my gravity magic.

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 347: Angry Wizard Lizard

As I watched the gravity bomb spend itself and fade into nothing I turned and sprinted away from the horde. I'd been playing this game with the mage attendants for hours now but this was the first time I actually managed to destroy one.

A little nervous at the potential wrath of the Kaarmodo, I decided to get the heck out of there.

[Get your people back, Isaac!] I shouted at my human associate.

I felt him acknowledge my words and continued to sprint into the hills to the south east of the horde where I'd left Tiny and Crinis.

Isaac and I had spent the last day engaged in the hit and run strategy the colony had begun to employ and we'd had good success with it. The humans had used their bows to pick off monsters from range and if any monsters detached from the main force they'd kited back and engaged them with spears, keeping themselves in the clear.

For my part, I'd used acid and my mandibles to inflict bits and pieces of damage, but the pace we were thinning the horde was worrying to me, not to mention the poor experience I was getting from chomping away at these monsters.

So I'd decided not to hold back and go loud. Which meant charging up gravity bombs and hurling them into the horde. Naturally this meant I started destroying monsters at a rather accelerated pace, in fact, so quickly that there had been a fairly swift response from the other side. The attendants had shown up and began to appear whenever I jumped up and spat a gravity bomb at them. Using their shield technique they'd been able to absorb the spell and break it apart before it could land and cause more damage, whilst also trying to fry me at range with their elemental magic.

So a game of cat and mouse had begun, where I tried various methods to surprise them and get my gravity bombs to punch through their defences and they tried to anticipate my movements and be in the right place at the right time. I hadn't been too mad about it, since it meant the bulk of the

attendants were busy trying to chase me down and didn't have time to fend of the ongoing skirmishing of the colony. I may have been unable to kill as many monsters as I wanted but the soldier caste had been hard at work fighting and many monsters had bitten the dust, I felt sure.

Finally, in order to break the stalemate on my end, I'd been forced to unleash my ace in the hole, the most potent gravity bomb I could make, and it'd finally netted me a mage attendant. If we could remove those mages from the equation entirely it'd make this whole process a lot simpler, but they've been cagey, always moving together in groups.

[How did it go, master?] Crinis asked.

[Plan went off without a hitch. Only one of them got caught by the bomb though.]

[The least they deserve is death by crushing for daring to attack you, master. If I ever get a tentacle on them I'd...]

Crinis didn't finish the thought, so consumed with rage was she. She'd even extended a few tentacles and was violently twisting them in the air as she rent imaginary slave mages into pieces.

[One down, plenty to go. No need to tie yourself into a knot about it. They're trying to kill us, we're trying to kill them. Standard day here on Pangera from my experience.]

It was true. Sapient or non-sapient, everything I'd come across seemed to be interested in killing me or something else. Except Formo of the Sophos. He was a good dude. If I manage to survive this business with Garralosh then I'll have to spend some time tracking down the Sophos colony and say hi. Formo didn't seem too interested in my death and they would make incredible allies. The information they could provide the core shapers alone would be priceless!

[You've kicked the plop pile right hard,] that was Isaac, trotting toward us. [The horde is stirring something fierce! I think it's goin' ta be best to lay low for a time.]

[Any sign of movement from the Kaarmodo?] I asked him.

He frowned.

[Not that I saw,] he said, [but I didn't want to get too close. An angry, centuries old lizard mage 'ain't exactly somethin' I want to get close to.]

[You make a good point,] I muttered.

I hastily checked my core, getting a touch low. Firing off all these gravity bombs had certainly put a strain on the core as my gravitational mana gland continued to pull energy from it in order to top up.

[Might be time for a tactical retreat, let things simmer down and take a moment to rest and refuel. How are your people holding up, Isaac?]

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The former town guard grimaced.

[They're wrecked,] he admitted, [a kip and a hot meal would go over well.]

[Right then. You get to a safe distance and set up a camp somewhere south. We'll head back to the forward nest and rest up. Don't act on your own, we'll find you.]

Isaac nodded and turned to speak to his group.

[Fight?] Tiny asked hopefully.

[No. Rest,] I told him.

The giant ape pondered that for a moment before nodding begrudgingly. If he wasn't going to fight then a nap was the next best thing.

Trying to remain behind the cover of the hills, my pets and I circled around to the front of the horde, making sure to keep a safe distance. I wanted to let the rest of the colony know what had happened as quickly as possible, certainly before I retreated to charge up, just in case something happened.

As it happened, I bumped into a larger group of ants led by the most energetic soldier of them all.

"Hi-hi senior!" Vibrant cheered, hopping from one set of legs to the other, "how are you doing on your side?"

"Not too bad," I admitted, not wanting to prompt Vibrant into a longer conversation, "but I did have something I wanted to mention."

"Oh? Did something big happen? It's been the same old, same old over here. We're just running in and out over and over again so much I'm getting dizzy. I'm tired but hey! It beats not doing anything, I wish I could get more Biomass though, I'm hungry? Are you hungry? Why is there a cloud over your head?"

"What?" I gaped.

She was right. A hundred metres over my head a cloud was forming rapidly. Way too rapidly.

"Run for it! The big lizard is making a move!" I bellowed.

After a moment of hesitation the ants scattered in every direction, sprinting away to safety in response to my words.

That's when the lightning came down.

Boom!

A lance of destruction speared the ground next to me, sending a shower of hot dirt into the air that thudded into my carapace.

Holy moly!

Boom!

I leapt to the left but not fast enough! My eyes could see the blinding light explode in the sky above and my vision failed for a second. When it came back, I could see a large ape with smoke rising from his fur standing over me.

[Tiny!] I shouted.

[Run!] he growled.

Good call! My legs scrabbled in the dirt as I accelerated and began to sprint away from the horde.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The rain of lightning continued to fall.

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 348: Ride the lightning

The storm seemed to follow me as I ran, a rain of lightning pouring out of the sky and lancing into the earth around me.

Boom! Boom!

Tiny and I, with Crinis on my back, continued to scrabble and run, lurching from side to side as we tried to dodge the lightning strikes. How are you supposed to dodge lightning strikes! It's lightning! This just isn't playing fair! I'll conveniently ignore the fact I've had Tiny roasting monsters with lightning for months now, since it doesn't have any bearing on our current situation.

I think we made the Wizard Lizard a little bit mad.

Boom!

Yeeouch! That one was close! The thunder roaring in my ears is almost enough to cause mental damage on its own. My ears aren't great but they sure as heck can hear that.

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Whoa!

Boom!

Another bolt struck the ground where I'd been just a moment before. Even whilst running for my life I was shocked (heh) at how well I was dodging these things. Is this my incredible insect reflexes coming to life? Am I finally one with my six legged people?!

Wait a second.

Boom!

Another lightning bolt dodged! I'm an idiot, it's my antennae. Moments before the lightning strikes, my antennae light up with the power of the bolt descending. It's a strange but subtle sensation, which is perhaps why I didn't notice it at first, an illusory phantom of real sensation. It isn't as if I 'see' the lightning, it isn't my eyes that detect a moment into the future, it's my antennae. What I get is a feeling, a sensation of sensations to come.

Hah! This is incredible! I can even dodge lightning!

Boom! Boom! Boom!

GAH!

Spoke too soon!

In an instant my body lit up like a Christmas tree as a bolt from the sky connected with my carapace. The insane electrical energy roasted my body from the inside out as it passed through me and into the ground. I immediately activated my regeneration gland and scrambled to put my feet back underneath me as the cool, healing fluid spread throughout my body.

That seriously hurt!

Oh my god!

[Crinis! Are you ok?!]

[I-I'm alright, Master,] Crinis mumbled from my back, [I can ... hold on.]

She didn't sound good. I could barely make her out in my vision, smoke rising from her tentacles. We need to get the heck out of here!

The moment I'd been hit, Tiny had roared and leapt to stand over me. He paid for his dedication with another bolt of lightning ripping through his body. Fortunately he seemed at least somewhat resistant to the electrical damage. As a Dire Lightning Storm Kong should be.

I pushed myself back onto my feet.

[Let's move it Tiny!]

"Come on Senior! Dash!" Vibrant shouted.

She ran back alongside me, close enough that she was able to offer me the speed boost from her aura but far enough she wasn't too threatened by the precision lightning strikes. I was grateful for her bravery, every little bit of speed would help!

Boom!

The lightning continued to fall like hammers from the sky as the Lizard Wizard continued to display its unrelenting wrath at me for daring to destroy its servant. You're trying to kill my whole family, pal! Try to think from my point of view!

Boom!

Never mind then!

My HP had been cut in half by that first strike, only to be gradually rebounding now as the regenerative gland did its work. I clacked my mandibles in irritation as we ran. I really needed to work on my magic defence, opponents like this one had me at a severe disadvantage!

Or did they?!

As I focused on running and sensing the lightning with my antennae, I tasked my sub-minds with a new job. They reached out immediately into the surrounding air, using my mana sense skill and began to try and manipulate the mana in an area around me.

Boom!

There it is! By focusing using my mana sense I was able to detect the mind numbing amount of mana that the storm cloud above my head contained. It appeared to the skill as if a burning ball of fire existed directly overhead! That is an astonishing amount of mana. Is this power of a centuries old giant Lizard?

And right there I can see the mana concentrating toward a single point! Then my antennae begin to tingle and I leapt to the left. Another lightning strike crashed into the ground and once again a hail of dirt clods splattered into me.

We continued to run as fast as we could as the lightning targeted me with unerring precision. How the heck is that lizard able to target me from such long range?! Is it through the scrying magic?! It isn't as if every lightning bolt targets me, but the vast majority do.

With my sub-minds I tried to reach up to the cloud above my head. If I could use the external mana manipulation skill to break apart the spell we'll be able to get the heck out of this hell storm! Sadly, try as I might, I can't extend my mana manipulation to that extent. My sub-minds strained as hard as they could but the furthest away from my body I can manipulate the mana is just shy of the clouds above my head.

Dammit!

I really need to rank up that skill! This is how I'm going to defend myself from magical attacks!

With the help of Vibrant and using the mana sense to predict lightning strikes we ran on for a kilometre before the storm finally abated. It was quite a sight to see the crackling, dark cloud that had been pelting us with deadly lightning simply fade away over the course of a second.

I can only assume that we moved beyond the range of the Lizard. I'd never seen magic on that sort of scale, at that sort of distance before. What rank do the related skills need to get to before you can start to cast that sort of spell?!

I guess after a couple of hundred years I would be able to get a few skills to rank nine or ten at least. They must get incredibly powerful at that level.

[Ha ha! We made it out senior!] Vibrant did a little dance of joy to celebrate.

[Could you talk to the council about pulling back the skirmishers for a time? I'm worried that things are going to get more dangerous from this point on if the Kaarmodo starts to take a more direct hand against all of the colony and not just me.]

[Roger!] Vibrant saluted with one antennae and raced off, accompanied by her gang of fifty ants. I swear her group just keeps getting larger...

Desperate for rest and a bit of healing, my pets and I made our way toward the small Dungeon chamber that the workers had provided for us. Once there we chewed up the creatures who had spawned in order to heal and satisfy our hunger before slipping into sleep or torpor.

After today's excitement we needed a good snooze before tomorrow. That would be the day we abandoned the forward HQ entirely and moved back to the main nest. I hope things have been going well back there...

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 349: Cradle of the end times

The role of the Brood Tender seemed straight forward enough. It was mostly in the name, after all. The Brood consisted of the unhatched eggs, the larvae and the pupae that were the future generations of the colony and ensuring that they were cared for in as optimal a way as possible was the Brood Tenders primary responsibility.

"How goes the Brood today, Florence?"

"Theresant? Nice to see you! You've been at the academy for days! The darlings are busy little grubs, as usual!"

The two council members approached each other with gladness ringing from their antennae. The two ants had a peaceful and motherly disposition which was why they had volunteered to take up this role, despite the immense pressure involved.

"Are we going to reach our target for today?" Florence asked her sister, "two hundred hatchings, two hundred graduations?"

"I believe so," came the reply, "my people in the academy have assure me the current crop of hatchlings will be ready to graduate on time."

"Wonderful!"

"I agree!"

The two ants fell into a companionable silence as they moved to a brood chamber near the surface. The larvae needed warmth to accelerate their growth, so they were moved to chambers closer to the surface during the day as the sun shone and then deeper underground at night, where the heat remained trapped. With the wave at play however, the Brood Tenders were unwilling to risk their charges in the Dungeon proper, so they'd asked if some fire mage ants could assist in warming the chambers for the Brood.

The two siblings arrived and were greeted by their fellow tenders already hard at work in the chamber. The overlapping nourishing auras washed over them and gave them both a little shiver of joy. The aura gland was an expensive part of the evolution from worker caste to Brood Tenders, which seemed like a waste because the gland itself didn't have a powerful effect. It essentially calmed and nourished infants of aura owner's species, helping grow faster and stronger.

When the aura effect was overlapped with others however, the effect became more noticeable. When it had first been noticed that those hatched from chambers with more Tenders in them were slightly more developed, even having a few extra stat points, the colony had decided to produce a large batch of Brood Tenders to further investigate this caste.

It was no exaggeration to say that currently, apart from the soldiers, the colony was pouring the most resources into the Brood Tenders. In order to combat the crisis facing the family, soldiers were needed desperately, but so were the specialised ants required to raise them.

Theresant and Florence cleaned the larvae, tickled them and played with them before they moved onto the next chamber, doing the rounds so that they could keep an eye on the progress of every member of the brood. As they passed through the tunnels, other ants made space for them respectfully as they called out words of encouragement.

"Tenders, work hard today!"

"How fares the brood today, Tenders? Can I assist in any way?"

"Make sure those hatchlings are putting forth all of their effort, Tenders! We don't want lazy ants in the colony!"

"Small chance of that," laughed Florence.

The Brood Tenders were given space wherever they went, nothing was allowed to impede their work. The brood was the future of the colony, it was ingrained into ant nature to prioritise the rearing of the young above almost everything else and that hadn't changed when the species of the colony had shifted.

They'd only grown more thoughtful and calculating about how they went about it.

Florence and Theresant gathered in the main brood chamber, where the pupae, those young in their final stage of development before they emerged from their cocoons, were being nurtured by large clusters of their caste.

"Greetings sisters" Theresant called to them as she entered the chamber.

"Greetings, senior" they replied.

"Has there been any further developments regarding skill development or progression?"

One of the Tenders stepped forward.

"No, senior. Only a few of us have managed to raise the Nurturing skill to the third rank, but no new skills have been unlocked."

"Make sure that the test groups are kept separate. On different sides of the colony if possible. We need to ensure we can isolate the cause in the event that new options become available."

"Of course, senior," the Tenders acknowledged.

The colony was accelerating their efforts to grapple with the system. Test groups for every caste of worker, soldier and artisans were hard at work trying to unlock new skills, test skill fusion options and explore the benefits of ranking up skills were. This would enable the paths of future generations of ants to be smoother and more efficient as they didn't have to waste time or effort in crafting the perfect build for their role.

It had been Florence who first unlocked the nurturing skill by raising a young single handedly from egg to hatchling. Such a thing had been more likely back when there were fewer Tenders about, but it was still a complete fluke that no other worker had touched that particular larvae other than Florence right up until it spun its cocoon and then hatched. The skill granted knowledge and instincts when raising the

young, turning the Tenders into almost supernaturally gifted carers. Which in turn caused the larvae to develop more rapidly and emerge from their cocoons stronger and smarter than they otherwise would.

Now every Tender was assigned an egg on their first day in the caste. They felt sure that there were further skills to be unlocked to deal with rearing that would allow them to provide even better care for their charges.

Theressant had been the one to unlock the teaching skill. She'd been one of the council members assigned to training new hatchlings and helping to develop the process that turned a hatchling into a thriving member of the colony. The system of teaching young hatchlings had developed rapidly in the colony, a far sight from the early days when the eldest had handed responsibility over to the twenty.

Now the Academy was a formal, tested education program that aimed to maximise efficiency and effectiveness. It was discovered, thanks to Theressant's efforts, that the Tenders had a key role to play here as well. She had been the first instructor to take a class all the way through the program solo, thus unlocking the Teaching Skill. It was believed that the unlock was tied to a certain number of individuals gaining a certain number of skill levels under an individual's tutelage but they hadn't managed to pinpoint the numbers yet.

After teaching had been unlocked the associated Instructor Clarity skill had been discovered, allowing instructors to better structure their lessons to ensure the message was received during a training session. This skill had been a lifesaver and greatly expedited the time it took for a new hatchling to grasp the eldest's decree to preserve life.

So the Tenders had become a key part of the Academy as well, as they were in a better position than most to spend their skill points on these non-combat, non-craft related skills.

"Who would have thought," Theressant asked Florence, "that our caste would so quickly rise to such a key role in the colony?"

Her sibling dipped her antennae in acknowledgement.

"I have to say, I didn't expect us to be quite so in demand, or effective."

"I have to praise the supreme wisdom of the eldest," Theressant admitted, "only they could have foreseen how critical the Brood Tenders would be to the colony."

"Oh, I quite agree," said Florence, "the academy, the Tenders, the way the colony continues to grow and develop is all according to the grand design of the eldest. Such foresight, it takes my breath away."

The two members of the council nodded solemnly to one another as they each committed to never forget the incredible being who seemed to hold the very future between their mandibles. How lucky were they, to be the creation of such a creature?

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 350: Dignity of the Eldes

My core still hurts and it's starting to worry me. After gaining some levels and exercising the pain has diminished to the point where I don't notice it so much on a conscious level. It just stings. Sitting in the small Dungeon chamber and feeling the mana flow in, I'm starting to worry about pushing to absorb the

full rare core. Will I actually be able to take it? I know I'm technically pushing my core beyond what the system mandates is the 'maximum safe limit', but that's probably just a guideline right?

It'll be fine! I'm sure of it. What's the worst that could happen? My core detonates and tears me apart from the inside?

...

Well, that would suck, actually, that would be pretty damn bad. I'll keep my claws crossed.

Since I'm here in the Dungeon, soaking up some mana and getting a rest, I may as well tick off all of the boxes that I can. I get the feeling I'm not going to get much of a chance to rest over the next two days, things are going to get intense the closer we get to the nest.

First cab off the rank is, my mutations! The final mutation is locked and loaded! This is a momentous moment for me. Due to impetuousness, impatience, and a general inability to focus, I've never reached maximum mutations before evolving. I'm excited! This means I won't have to struggle as hard to cover the Biomass gap after I've evolved!

Actually, once I've evolved I'll reach the fourth tier, which means that Biomass from tier one gets halved again. So I'll be down to one eighth Biomass from tier one creatures? Yikes! That's practically nothing! Hunting for Biomass at the top of the Dungeon is going to be completely pointless...

Alright! Pheromone gland time!

Ah, the faithful pheromone gland. Where would I be without you? Enabler of communication! Bringer of wisdom and light! Truly the greatest thing I gave to the Formica Sapiens (in my opinion) is the ability to properly speak with each other. With it, the beginning of the great ant civilisation, the unstoppable empire of the ant, has begun!

Gweheheheheh!

Wait, don't get so ahead of yourself, Anthony! You have to survive the horrific death army of zombie monsters marching towards the family as you sit here soaking your stock portfolio in mana!

Ok, let's do this.

I hastily engaged the menu and began pondering my options for mutating my pheromone gland.

Language is great, obviously, and persuasive was a bit of a tack-on to be honest. I'd hoped it would make it a little easier to get the colony on side with some of my more wild ideas, such as not getting themselves killed. The issue I have with this mutation is that it's hard to determine if it's being effective. Where the ants persuaded because of my unique persuasive pheromones? Or was it my unique charm?

...

Probably the pheromones, let's be real.

If I have no strong feelings one way or the other, I'll embrace the beige alert and Fuse!

[Do you wish to combine your Persuasive Pheromone Language Gland to form Loquacious Pheromone Gland? This will cost 65 Biomass.]

Let's go!

HAGGAK!

So quick! The itch erupted instantly inside my rear zone as my pheromone gland underwent the mutation process. This never gets better, it only gets worse!

At least I don't have to deal with multiple glands mutating at once this time. It doesn't seem to matter much, I'm still on the floor twitching like an idiot! Don't look at me like that Tiny!

Preserve my dignity!

GAH!

Fortunately the itch doesn't last too long and I was able to collect myself from the ground. Nobody appeared to be looking too closely. Good.

Alright, I think it's time to go through the status. I haven't checked it for a while, what with the constant fighting.

Name: Anthony

Level: 38 (Special core)

Might: 41

Toughness: 29

Cunning: 44

Will: 35

HP: 58/58

MP: 230/230

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Skills: Expert Excavation (III) Level 5; Deadly Acid Shot (III) Level 5; Advanced Grip (II) Level 5; Shattering Bite (IV) Level 15; Advanced Stealth (II) Level 7; Splintering Chomp (IV) Level 2; Tunnel Map (II) Level 6; Mana Transformation (III) Level 12; Condensed Mana (III) Level 5; Finer External Mana Manipulation (III) Level 5; Empowered Mana Sensing (II) Level 6; Core Surgery (III) Level 6; Expert Exo-Skeleton Defence (III) level 11; Distant Pet Communication (II) Level 4; Rapid Dash (II) Level 9; Expert Water Magic Affinity (III) Level 2; Expert Stamina (III) Level 3; Pet Growth Speed (I) Level 1; Mana Scrooge (II) Level 9; Expert Cerebral Endurance (III) Level 14; Profound Meditation (III) Level 7; Advanced Precise Shooting (II) Level 7; Severing Bite (III) Level 15; Enhanced Mind Magic Affinity (II) level 6;

Mutations: Perimeter Eyes +15, Future Sight Infrared Antennae +15, Mana Binding Acid +15, Rapid Absorption Legs +15, Empowered Mandibles +15, True Diamond Carapace +15, Regrowth Regeneration Gland +15, Loquacious Pheromone Gland +15, Bottomless Gravity Magic Gland +15, Adaptable Coordination Cortex +15, Supportive Inner Carapace Plating +15;

Species: Dispersed Mind Ant (Formica Sapiens)

Skill points: 19

Biomass: 7

Holy mackerel that's a lot of skill ups! I didn't even remember that Splintering chomp had reached rank 4! Nice! Only one bite skill to go before the fusion shall begin! I really managed to gain a lot of levels in the mana related skills as well... always a good thing in my mind.

I've reached level 38 as well. Finally! I'm actually a bit concerned by this. I need two more levels in two days if I'm going to evolve before they reach the nest. Not even two days. And if the Lizard Wizard is going to keep hurling lightning storms at me whenever I get close, that is going to be a serious problem!

I might need to consult with the council on this one...