

Chrysalis 371

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 371: The approaching tide

In the distance, a rising tide of fangs, claws and flesh approached. When Morrelia squinted, she could make out the individual forms of the monsters as they undulated across the land and between the trees. There didn't seem to be an end to the horde. They spread. Like water pooling over the floor from a spilled cup, until they filled the space in front of her.

It wouldn't be long until they lapped up against the fortifications the villagers had erected and the battle would begin in earnest.

"I'm still not certain we shoulda put ourselves so close to our 'neighbours'," Isaac muttered.

Morrelia rolled her eyes.

"You spent several days with their leader and came home just fine. Do you really think they're going to eat us?"

The former guard shifted uncomfortably.

"I'm jus' sayin' we might want to on our guard once the fightin' is done. Maybe we look appetising at that point."

"If we live to see the end of this battle, there'll be tens of thousands of dead monsters right over there. I don't think they'll need to turn on us for food," Morrelia pointed out before turning her back on the man.

Despite his experience in the field with Anthony, he still had difficulty overcoming his instincts to distrust monsters.

Not that he's entirely wrong about that.

Morrelia couldn't be entirely sure why she wasn't afraid of the colony of strange ants, or their stranger spokes...ant. She just ... wasn't. She was cautious of them, always cautious, but not afraid. Perhaps she was just losing her edge. Or, more likely, grabbing onto whatever piece of debris she could reach after a tsunami had washed the nation of her birth away.

"How much longer until they arrive?" Enid asked, walking up behind them.

Morrelia turned to face the leader of the human village and nodded her head respectfully. Enid may never have been a soldier, but she had Morrelia's respect for her attitude and grit alone.

"Should be less than an hour before the main body of the horde reaches us. Could be a lot less if they decide to pick up the pace as they reach the final stretch."

Enid frowned as she looked over the edge of the dirt wall at the monsters. Morrelia choked back a laugh as she watched the older woman. Enid looked as if she were staring at dog that had spread mud on her carpet rather than a slaving mass of Dungeon monsters the likes of which the surface hadn't seen in thousands of years.

"I suppose we'll have to get our people in position then. Is everyone ready?" Enid sighed.

"Ready as they'll ever be, ma'am," Isaac chipped in, flashing a broad smile.

The man had been on the charm offensive the moment he'd met Enid. If the age difference were any less severe, Morrelia would have suspected him of ulterior motives, as it was she believed he was simply accustomed to greasing the wheels of leadership whenever he could. A vital skill for a guardsman, she was sure.

"I'll go ready the troops," Morrelia grunted before she leapt down from the rampart and jogged toward the shaded area the villagers were resting.

She was decked out in her full fighting gear already and the boiled leather gave her an intimidating air that was only heightened by the plethora of weapons that graced her form. Her bow, dual blades, knives strapped to her forearms and sheathed in her boots. Morrelia was ready for war.

The 'troops' in this case were lying flat on their backs, many of them asleep, resting in the shade spread by nearby trees. Looking at their tired faces, Morrelia mentally kicked herself. She had to continuously remind herself that she wasn't dealing with professional soldiers, trainees or mercenaries, but determined village people. They were farmers, traders and craftspeople. Most of them hadn't held a blade until the current crises.

But they were willing. By the Legion they were willing. When she beat them down, they stood up. When she drilled them to exhaustion, they wanted more. When the monsters charged, they charged right back.

In the face of such determination, how could she hold back? In the past week, every able bodied refugee had been pushed to the edge of their tolerance and then a little further. Constant practice in the village, constant delves into the Dungeon, had brought everyone to the edge. Morrelia herself had barely slept in the past week, snatching a few hours here and there. She was used to it however, broken sleep like this was standard practice when on a delve. The villagers had no such tolerance and once the training had been declared over, they'd collapsed in a heap and barely moved since.

No point regretting it now. You did everything you could, let's see if it was enough to keep them alive.

She drew a deep breath.

"TIME TO GET UP YOU USELESS SACKS OF SHIT! THERE'S BLOOD TO BE SPILLED AND SURE AS HELL IT ISN'T GOING TO SPILL ITSELF!" She bellowed.

Her roar echoed off the earthworks and the distant trees, returning to thunder in the ears of the unfortunate villagers a second time as they responded instantly to her call. Sleep was rubbed out of eyes and limbs were stretched as the men and women she had trained picked themselves up in response to her call.

Little did she know that on the rampart someone was having a very different reaction.

"Puts my old drill instructor to shame," Isaac sighed as he watched Morrelia's distant form, her shout still ringing in his ears.

Enid looked at the man sidewise before she shook her head slightly to clear her ears. Apparently she wasn't deaf enough.

Used to this sort of treatment (and volume), her troops were up and in rows in a respectable amount of time. In almost neat rows and with their gear mostly worn correctly even. Morrelia couldn't help but feel a twitch in the corner of her eye when she spotted shirt not tucked in or scabbards not fastened correctly.

She took a breath. These aren't professionals, just villagers that are trying to survive. Don't judge them by the old standard. In fact, looking at their drawn faces, covered in grit, their hands blistering with fresh callouses, and the determined light in their eyes, she felt incredible pride.

"THE ENEMY IS NO LONGER COMING!" She roared and paused for a moment before she raised a finger to point at the wall behind her. "THEY ARE HERE!"

She watched their faces closely, no fear did she see. No terror. Only determination. Her heart lifted. She wasn't much of one for speeches. If she was a leader, then she was a leader in the mould of her father. Her brother had the charm, the words and grace of their mother, that she had always lacked. In so many ways she was Titus' daughter. Maybe that was why she found it so hard to forgive him, just as she knew that he would never forgive himself.

"REJOICE!" she bellowed. "REJOICE! THE WAITING IS OVER! THERE IS WORK TO BE DONE! THIS BLOOD ISN'T GOING TO SPILL ITSELF! GET YOUR BACKSIDES UP ON THAT WALL!"

And they did. Faces hard and shoulders square, they walked toward the wall and took in the sight of endless horde. Their armour was ragged, sewn leather and smashed together metal plates. Their weapons were chipped in places, the hafts splintered in others, the best the forges could produce on such short notice, but they didn't care. The hands that had once known the plough now gripped a spear just as surely. The men were grizzled, no time for shaving in the last week. The women had hacked their hair short, much as Morrelia had done. No time for vanity when fighting.

They would do themselves proud today. Filled with a resolute spirit, Morrelia turned and joined them, her twin blades rattled as she drew them from their sheathes. They would work hard today.

Up on the wall, Isaac brushed a single tear from his eye.

"One day, I'm gonna marry that woman."

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 372: Contac

"About time they got here," Burke muttered to herself as the horde made its final approach to the outer layer of fortifications the colony had erected.

"Everything ready?" Wills asked for the fourth time in the last five minutes.

"Yes, everything is ready. You really should have rested when you were told to."

"Couldn't," Wills flicked her antennae, "the scouts were still out there."

"That doesn't mean that you had to be."

"We disagree on that point."

"I know," Burke lifted an antenna and brought it down with a gentle thwack on her siblings head. "Now that the battle has arrived, you're useless. Go back with the other late returning scouts and get an hour of rest. This isn't going to be over by then."

Stubborn, Wills shook her head.

"I'll be fine for a while yet," she said, "I've got a full load of acid and I'm not sleeping till these invaders have felt every drop of it."

"Fair enough then. Just make sure you don't push too far forward. Stick to the plan. Deliver the product and then get to safety."

The two scouts fell into a companionable silence as the horde made its final approach. One hundred metres. That's all that separated the enemy from the first defensive line. After a week of solid fighting, it was a relief to have it come to this.

"About time then," Burke announced.

"Seems like it," Wills agreed.

"Pass the order to open fire," Burke told the general resting behind her.

The ant snapped out a quick salute.

"Of course, Elder. Fire when ready!"

All along the outer wall the order was passed in rapid pheromone communication. Not a single sound was uttered yet a thousand monstrous ants leapt into motion simultaneously. Not far away the human defenders could only marvel and the eerie quiet in which the ants operated.

To the ants however, the 'noise' was deafening.

"Scouts prepare to fire! Long range will engage in ten seconds! Ten seconds! Soldiers and generals will fire in thirty seconds! Wait for the command!"

"Here they come! Are you ready to work?!"

"Five seconds! Five seconds! Check your angles! Don't aim for the front line! Second row!"

"Show them what real monsters are made of!"

"Two! One! FIRE!"

In an instant the entire scouting brigade of the Formica Sapiens, their collective business districts already pointed at the foe, unleashed a barrage of acid skyward.

POW!

A faint whistle emitted from each ant's volley as the acid cut through the air with incredible power. All together the shrill sound pierced the air but faded quickly as the acid lost momentum and began to reach its apex. From there, it fell.

Even from this range, Burke could see the rage and pain on the monsters' faces as the acid fell amongst them, eating into their bodies and chewing into their flesh. Any monster who fell was set upon by its fellow horde members in an instant, torn apart and consumed in seconds. Hundreds of monsters were felled in this way but barely made a dent in a sea of enemies that lay before them. The ants were undaunted.

POW! POW! POW!

The scouts continued their steady barrage, firing in sequence as a well drilled unit would.

"I'm about half empty" Burke observed, "what do you think of the range?"

"I think it's close. I haven't been tracking the time," Wills replied.

"Soldiers and generals, FIRE!" the order rippled down the line.

POW! POW! POW! POW!

The rest of soldier caste on the wall joined in the barrage. So much acid filled the sky it began to fall on the horde like burning rain. The ants were careful to spread their fire as much as possible. It wasn't as if it were possible to miss in this scenario, but to inflict maximum damage on the horde the ants didn't need to inflict fatal damage. It was better to wound as many as possible and allow their ravenous allies to deal with the rest.

Despite the acid that poured from the sky and the creatures who threw themselves on their wounded brethren, the horde continued to advance, an unstoppable wave of momentum that couldn't be halted. Despite the damage caused by the acid bombardment, the colony may as well have been spitting in the wind.

"I'm empty," Burke declared, reorienting herself so she could look out over the wall once again. "Ten more seconds till they hit the wall I think."

A pervasive feeling of determined calm possessed the warriors of the colony. Everything was on the line today. Mistakes could not be afforded, not even the slightest mishap. Unless every member fought to their utmost potential, the colony would fall and that could not be allowed.

The ants had planned a defence in depth to maximise their terrain advantage and the unthinking nature of their enemies. The battle would be long and brutal. There would be an opportunity for the desperate rage of the final stand, but not yet.

"Alright then," Wills replied, retreating from the wall where her position was taken by an eager soldier. "I'll head back and rest."

"Good on you," Burke approved, "I'll try and make sure some of them are alive for you when you come back."

Wills waved an amused antennae and made a hasty retreat. If she wasn't going to be fighting then she had no business on the front lines, muddying up the waters.

With her sibling gone, Burke focused her attention back on the horde as it crashed into the first earthen rampart the colony had erected. Monsters of dozens of shapes and sizes crushed against the solid

barrier and were smashed into the ground as those behind them climbed over them. Roars and screams of rage and the dying rattle of monsters filled the air as the soldiers in the front row began to lean forward and chomp at the first enemies to come into range.

Burke took her position, not at the front but one row behind. The council had determined this was as close as any member was allowed to get to the thick of the fighting. Truth be told, only the soldiers and scout portion of the twenty would dare fight here. Burke felt it was necessary that the council shoulder the risks of the colony along with their siblings. They weren't some protected caste whom the colony existed to serve. The very idea was repellent. They existed to serve the colony!

The soldiers at the edge of the wall continued to lunge forward, snapping at monsters below Burke's line of sight. There was no risk the soldiers would fall, they could grip as well as any other ant, obviously, but if they were caught hold of they might be pulled down.

Find authorized novels in Webnovel, faster updates, better experience, Please click www.webnovel.com for visiting.

The horrific din of the horde reached a fever pitch as the monsters pressed against the wall and sought to climb it. The wall wasn't immense, only three metres tall, but most monsters weren't as adept at climbing vertical surfaces as the ants were.

But some of them could and after a few more seconds Burke began to see the first creatures reach the top of the wall. Like lightning, Burke lunged forward and brought her mandibles closed on a spider that had poked its hideous, fanged head over the edge of the wall.

The beast's eight legs (disgusting!) scabbled and scratched at Burke's carapace as the scout leader pulled the creature back over the wall. In seconds it was surrounded by soldiers and scouts. The ants worked together and ripped the monster apart before it could free itself. As the soldiers pulled back to return to their positions, healers rushed forward to grab the Biomass. They'd use it to create stockpiles close to the front to assist with their healing efforts.

First one down, Burke told herself. A heck of a lot to go.

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 373: The boldest soldier!

"Take that!" Leeroy roared as her mandibles tore down yet another foe.

The blood and mana within her body thrummed with excitement as the battle unfolded before her eyes. The ants were fighting, gloriously fighting! All along the wall the horde surged and pushed higher, bringing them within reach of the deadly jaws of the insects above.

"Hahahaha! Die for the colony!" she screamed as she tore into another creature.

Was she telling the enemy to die for the colony, or inviting herself and her siblings to do so? Even she wasn't sure as the joy of battle overtook her senses. She'd put herself on the frontlines, obviously. As close to the action as she could get. She figured the others had assumed that she would do that from the start, so was it really a breach of trust if she followed through with that expectation?

Freed from concerns such as the grand strategy, self-preservation or any sense of the situation around her, Leeroy was able to embrace and indulge her burning desire: to fight! To put her life on the line in the service of her family! What was the point in preserving her life if she could spend it to save even a single one of her siblings? None! Joy soaring in her heart, Leeroy continued to lunge forward to a dangerous degree, teetering over the edge of the wall so she could reach more foes!

The nearby general assigned to this section of wall eyed the manic council member warily. She couldn't help but sigh at the vagaries of fate. That her unit would be tasked with the mission of ensuring the safety of Leeroy, was not something that filled the ant with glee. She would do her duty, naturally, she just felt that, what with the apocalyptic battle the colony was facing, her job didn't need to be made any harder.

"Step up the line" she bellowed.

Moving as one, the reserve soldiers pushed forward to support the ants on the edge of the wall. Some of them grabbed onto the legs of the ants in front, whilst others moved alongside them to help prevent them from being overwhelmed. It had only been a minute since the horde had made its first contact against the wall. Already the enemy was beginning to wash over the top of the wall. It was too soon. The colony needed to drag out the fight whilst minimising their losses.

They would need to hold at this wall as long as they could.

"Hold the wall!" she cried, "for the colony!"

"FOR THE COLONY!"

In complete silence the soldiers roared as one. Thousands of individuals moving in a coordinated unit they battled furiously at the edge of the wall.

Where the hell is our mage support? The general couldn't help but worry as she watched her soldiers battle under the umbrella of her aura. How long were they planning to take? If this goes on much longer then we'll start to lose soldiers.

Just at that moment the roar of flames erupted behind her. Long pillars of fire from the second wall roared into the sky. Like furious dragons they took flight before arching down. Searing heat and the crackling sound of flames assaulted the ants as the spells passed nearby, but it was upon the enemy the full force of the strike fell.

Find authorized novels in [Webnovel](http://www.webnovel.com), faster updates, better experience, Please click www.webnovel.com for visiting.

Ten metres past the edge of the wall, the fire impacted and spread. The fireball swelled and hundreds of monsters were engulfed in the blaze instantly. The fire mages had struck!

The smell of burning Biomass and the shrieks of monsters pierced the air. The monsters had piled themselves high against the earth wall and now that density came back to haunt them. Hundreds were roasted in an instant. The flames roared hot enough to singe Leeroy's antennae as she continued to hang over the edge of the wall.

"That's what you get!" She cackled at the monsters suffering beneath her, indifferent to their pain.

Any pity would have been needless in any case, as the monsters did not suffer for long. The horde still appeared endless and the monsters only pressed forward all the harder. Those who had fallen to the spell were consumed and only seconds later the enemy began to threaten the wall once again.

"A chomp for you! And a chomp for you! You dare face me? Feel the edge of my mandibles of wrath!"

Leeroy was driven to the peak of excitement by the carnage. Her eyes shone with such an intense fighting spirit, her enemies may well have been losing HP when they looked too closely. The clash of monsters! The colony fighting as one to repel the invaders! It was intoxicating.

The words of the Eldest rang in her ears.

No sacrifice without purpose. Preservation of life is the fundamental principle of a flourishing society. Leeroy had been drilled on these points many times, much more than her siblings, yet in the heat of the moment, even this was not enough to contain her boundless spirit of sacrifice!

As the large Soldier ant screamed and roared her defiance at the enemy, the nearby general began to notice a change come over the figure. It was almost as if she were vibrating with pure energy. The general sharpened her attention. It would be soon...

After chomping away one more foe, Leeroy could no longer contain herself. She shuffled back a few steps and paused for a single heartbeat to gather her strength.

"WITNESS ME!" She screamed as she scrambled forward a few steps and hurled herself off the wall.

In that one glorious moment, when her legs left the ground and her body began to sail into the air, Leeroy felt as if she could see her own future. She would fall amidst the enemy and fight with every fibre of her being. Like a burning flame consuming its fuel, she would flare bright and many monsters would fall before her. But eventually, she would be overcome. Torn apart by the enemy, she would pass away at the foot of the wall, selling her life in its defence.

But so great would be her sacrifice, so expensive would be her death, that she would turn the fate of the battle! Right here, she would save her family!

Alas, it wasn't to be. After too short a time, Leeroy felt her legs seized by powerful mandibles and her forward momentum was seized.

"What?!" she cried, "let me go! It's all part of the plan!"

The general sighed.

"It may be part of your plan, Elder, but I was instructed by general Sloan that we were to prevent you leaping off the wall as part of her plan."

Damn you Sloan! Leeroy raged. I'll get my chance yet!

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 374: Pushes and pulls

A delivery system of flesh and bone. That's what the horde truly was. As an instrument of the dark will that controlled it, the massive gathering of enslaved monsters had been used to scour the kingdom of

Liria and possibly neighbouring kingdoms as well. Here and now? That mass of bodies served a different purpose. To deliver Garralosh and her children to the target of her wrath as easily as possible.

Sloan knew that only when they had destroyed enough, thinned enough of the horde away, would the true enemy show its face. Until then, Garralosh and the Kaarmodo would be content to stay back and allow their unwitting soldiers to absorb the punishment.

"The key to this battle, is holding enough strength in reserve that we can deal with the Croca-Beasts when they come," Sloan had declared at the planning meeting.

To that end, the colony had prepared waves of tricks and schemes that they could employ. The horde would pay dearly for every inch of ground they took. The worry was, the primary reserve force of the colony still hadn't woken up.

The Eldest was still sleeping!

Sloan couldn't help but clean her antennae over and over again in an attempt to calm her nerves. Something her sibling couldn't help but notice.

"Calm down," Victor advised.

"I would if I could!" Sloan snapped back.

"The Eldest will awaken in time. How could you doubt it?"

"You do realise what will happen if they don't?"

"I suspect that we'll all be wiped out and the colony will cease to exist," Victor replied, unruffled.

"Y-yes! That's right!"

"And how does you stressing about it change anything? Have a little faith in the Eldest. When have they ever let us down?"

That was a little hard to argue against. The Eldest was a six legged storm, stirring up change wherever they went, but to date they had never let the colony down. Indeed, they had pushed the colony forward at every turn.

Sloan dragged her antennae through the knee joints of her front legs once more before she settled with a sigh. The two generals were positioned in the main nest in a chamber close to the surface. In a room next to them, scouts came and went at a furious pace, passing information to a team of generals who sorted it and manipulated a large three dimensional map carved into the chamber floor.

"Let's see how the battle is progressing," Victor suggested and moved to inspect the map.

Sloan clacked her mandibles in irritation.

"I don't like it that we are stuck here, Victor," Sloan grumbled.

Her sibling sighed, but sympathised.

"I want to be out there on the wall just as much as you. But the two of us are the best generals in the colony. We can best serve the colony from here. Don't go Leeroy on me."

"I wouldn't go that far," Sloan chuckled.

Unlike the two relatively calm generals, the war chamber was a flurry of activity and filled with the muffled scents of a dozen different conversations. Ants crawled carefully over the map, making constant adjustments to the sticks and place markers there.

"Looks as if the first wall has done its job," Victor observed as she poured over the map.

"We can still hold it," Sloan proposed. "If we commit the reserves from the second wall we could hold on for another thirty minutes, at least."

"The risk would be too high," the other general countered, "and unnecessary. The outer wall wasn't built to hold and was never intended to resist assault for an extended period."

Sloan nodded. This was how the two of them did their best planning. One proposed a plan, the other tried to tear it down. After the back and forth was done, they felt comfortable that they had the best strategy they could make.

"Alright then. Time to sound the retreat."

Victor turned to the scouts waiting to carry messages to the front.

"Pass the word for the retreat from the first wall. Prepare the reserves. We want every family member to make it back."

The scouts saluted and raced off to deliver their prepared messages whilst the two generals turned their eyes back to the map. Ants poured over it once more, making the delicate adjustments based on the event they knew were going to play out above.

Furious activity exploded within the nest. Ants ran over the top of each other as they hastened to reach their assigned positions. The potential for devastating loss was huge. The retreat needed to be managed carefully, with precision. An orderly retreat back to the second wall was the aim, not a scattered manoeuvre with the lines being overrun and soldiers being cut down left and right.

To this end, Proppelant had taken her place amongst the fire mages.

When the word came for the retreat, the spell slinging ants leapt into action.

"Get ready for it!" Proppelant bellowed, "draw out every scrap of your fire mana!"

The ant mages had been striving to master the skills of spell casting and mana shaping ever since the Eldest had shared the knowledge of them with the colony, but few had achieved a reasonable level of mastery. In fact, most of the ants were still stuck drawing from their fire mana gland until it was empty and then retreating to the Dungeon to recharge.

It had been an endless source of frustration for Propellant and Coolant but the reality was that the Mage Ants lacked the raw stats to push their skills into the higher tiers. Nonetheless, progress had been made in group spell casting, certain skills had been unearthed that allowed the ants to work in small teams to achieve better effects and the benefits were showing.

In teams of five, the fire mages began to draw out the mana contained in their glands. The ants were positioned in a circular formation, facing inwards and in the middle of each group a bright flame sparked into life. The flame grew brighter over time as more mana was fed into it. At this stage, the lead mage in each group, the one with the highest manipulation skills, began to shape the raw energy into the desired construct.

It was a delicate moment, but each of these ants had trained hard for this. Proppelant watched each of the five teams closely, seeking out any sign that the spells might go awry. As the intensity built, the council members focus grew sharper, until the spells were completed and the pillars of flame roared once more into the sky.

As they did, the generals on the front lines prepared their soldiers as scouts rushed to cover each section of the wall, launching an acid barrage deep into the horde to further muddy the waters.

Grant grit her mandibles as the flames began to arc down.

"Get ready to fall-back!" she roared.

"Push!" came the order and the soldiers all along the wall shoved forward, snapping and biting at the monsters who threatened to tear them down into the mouth of the horde. Using their bodies and the strength of the ants who assisted them, the ants shoved back against the attackers, throwing them back of the wall and creating a breath of distance between the two forces.

"Run back! Now! Go, go, go!" from the pheromone glands of hundreds of ants all along the perimeter the call came, slamming into every set of antennae.

As one the ants turned and abandoned their first layer of defences, dashing back as fast as they could. The scent trails for the retreat paths had been lain days ago and they did not deviate from those safe passages in the slightest.

Grant waited until her section of wall was abandoned completely before she turned to go. Monsters had already pushed back against the wall and began to climb over in increasing numbers. It didn't matter. She turned and dashed away just as the fire spells fell on top of the wall, incinerating the monsters and creating more distance between the attackers and the retreating ants.

The first wall had been taken at great cost to the horde. Grant felt deeply satisfied at the work that had been done. On to the next one.

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 375: The Queen strode forth

The colony succeeded in pulling back to the second of their defensive lines with minimal losses. Each of the walls was shorter in length than the previous, allowing the ants to compress their numbers further each time they fell back.

Wills was pleased with the progress of the battle so far. After her (too short) rest, she'd emerged in time to see the retreat from the first wall and touch base with her people. The scouts had served as message runners and long range attackers for the most part, very few had fallen during the initial stage of the battle, but that could change at any moment. The scout leader felt sorrow as members of her colony

had fallen at the first wall, an emotion she was still coming to terms with. Each death only hardened her resolve to see the enemy fall.

From the second wall she looked down as the horde pushed over the lip of the first in increasing numbers. Unthinking and without restraint, the horde didn't pause to consider what the hundred metres of open ground between the two walls might mean. When the monsters saw their enemies crawling up the face of the next wall, they charged.

A ripple of glee shivered along Will's antennae as the monsters triggered the first traps. Pitfalls, dead drops, spiked wooden stakes. The open ground was littered with the efforts of the worker caste. Some of those chutes dropped more than twenty metres straight down, where teams of workers waited to collect the fresh Biomass and bring it back to the nest to restock the colony supplies.

If the monsters were stupid enough, those chutes would continue to provide Biomass during the day. If the monsters decided to attack the nest through the drops, the ants would collapse the tunnels and move back to similar positions behind the next wall.

"Lucky our enemies are this stupid, eh Wills?"

The scout leader turned to look more fully at her sibling, Grant.

"True," the scout agreed, "but I'd still be happier if there were fewer of them."

"That'll be us, soon enough," the soldier prophesied, "uncountable thousands of us. We'll be able to smash a pathetic pile of monsters like this with ease."

"It won't be monsters like this that'll challenge us," Wills disagreed, "we'll be fighting against creatures from much deeper in the Dungeon. How deep have we explored? A few kilometres? If that? According to the Eldest, the Dungeon is thousands of kilometres deep. Who can say what opponents await the colony down there."

"That's why we need to continually improve and rise to the challenge!" Grant slapped her sibling on the back with one powerful, soldier leg. The impact caused the smaller scout to stumble slightly.

"Perhaps let's focus on the battle at hand?" Wills winced and distracted the larger soldier.

"Good idea," Grant nodded and turned her attention back to the onrushing monsters, still triggering innumerable traps on their way to the second wall.

Already the ants had begun another acid barrage, the scouts who had emptied their reserves had returned to unleash the fresh product they had made whilst the battle had raged at the first wall.

Will's watched the devastation with satisfaction. By the time the mass of creatures reached the final wall around the nest, there would only be the Croca-Beasts left. When the colony finally had a chance to feast on those Crocs, Wills would be first in line for a chomp.

Just as she prepared to unleash her own acid at the enemy, what little she had in the tank at any rate, she felt a change come over the colony. A silent ripple of emotion rolled through the defenders, a stillness that brought quiet with it even as they continued to go through the motions of defending their home.

It wasn't as if the ants were made quiet, or sleepy, or pacified. Quite the opposite. Within each ant defending the wall a spark had been lit that filled their frame with fervour. They were still and quiet because they felt that if they were to move suddenly, they could no longer contain the frantic energy that boiled up inside them!

Wills could feel it within her own carapace. Her blood surged through her body and rushed into her brain, causing her to feel light headed. She felt as if her energy were inexhaustible, as if she could fight all day. In fact, if she didn't fight all day, she might go mad from having nowhere to direct this energy!

What is happening?! She wondered.

She didn't have to think for long. Rising from the top of the nest behind her came a sight that lifted her spirit even as her heart sank. First the long antennae, then powerful, elongated mandibles, followed by the heavily armoured and muscled head of the largest and most beautiful ant Wills had ever seen emerged. Powerful, thickened legs followed and pulled through the rest of her body. The Queen stood atop the peak of her nest and surveyed those who had come to attack her children.

CLACK!

One snap of her mighty jaws sent a wave of emotion through each of her children. Her rage and disgust toward the enemy had been conveyed in that gesture and each member of the colony felt a ferocious impulse seize hold of their thoughts.

Mother was here!

CLACK!

Without consultation the colony answered their Queen. Over a thousand soldiers, scouts and mages on the surface snapped shut their mandibles as one. The noise was sharp and piercing, like the slamming of a thousand doors.

Her royalty clear in every line of her stance, the Queen looked down at her children and felt her heart surge with emotion. Such good children they were. She would defend them to her final breath!

Even as her instincts screamed at her to exult in the presence of her Queen, Wills could only fervently hope that her mother would not come down from the nest.

Stay there, stay safe, go back down, let us take care of you, stay there, stay safe, be safe, stay there!

Find authorized novels in Webnovel, faster updates, better experience, Please click www.webnovel.com for visiting.

She begged the Queen in her mind over and over but she knew it would do no good.

Mother had come for her children.

CLACK!

Once more the Queen snapped her enormous mandibles shut and this time she moved down from the peak of the nest. From behind her a swarm of soldiers, mages and even carvers boiled out of the nest and surged forward to surround their Queen.

CLACK!

The colony answered back once more and this time, they didn't stop, rhythmically snapping their mandibles as the Queen strode from the nest to the front lines.

CLACK! CLACK! CLACK! CLACK!

Each time they brought their mandibles closed the sound grew louder. Wills herself felt as if her jaw might break but neither could she stop herself. She both shivered with fear and exalted with joy. The Queen was here! The Queen was here!

The monsters of the horde rushed forward, uncaring of the deafening noise that thundered over the lip of the wall towards them. They knew only to press forward as their instincts demanded. But when they reached the wall and began to climb, they would find something had changed.

The Queen had stepped forth and the ants would not hold back any longer.

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 376: The Queen effec

When the monsters pushed forward over the lines of traps and climbed over each other to ascend the wall, they found a ravenous wall of ants waiting for them. The soldiers were desperate, frantic for the opportunity to tear their opponents apart. From a distance, the wall appeared to have gained height. Ants stood atop each other, lunging forward to seize an enemy and dragging them back into the solid mass of monstrous insect.

When the Queen herself arrived at the front, the ferocity of her soldiers increased. She pushed through the mass of her children until she reached the edge of the wall and looked out over the horde that threatened her nest. Somewhere out there was the mastermind of this attack, the Queen's blood boiled with anger at the thought. When would they come forward and suffer her wrath?

Until then, she would have to sate her hunger on these minions.

The Queen's legs were no longer tipped with standard claws, but rather a new version that she could close together to form a fearsome spike. She extended her front legs over the edge of the wall and began to spear monsters as if they were fish.

Stab! *Stab!*

The Queen had dutifully examined the skills she could purchase after her evolution and indeed a stab related option had unlocked for her. The knowledge of how and when to most optimally strike had been trickled into her mind and now she put it to good use.

Every time she stabbed down she pierced a monster straight through. She would then lean back on her rear legs and haul the now valuable Biomass back over the wall to pass to her children before turning back to stab once more. It was easy. The monsters were packed so thick that it wasn't as if she could miss.

The Queen felt elated. For so long she had been trapped in the nest, hearing about her children striding forth to do battle with their enemy but she had been unable to help. Now, she was here, she was ready. She would fight alongside her children and shoulder her portion of the burden. It was gruesome and

difficult, but it made her glad. She couldn't help emitting pheromone waves of satisfaction and savage joy that radiated over the wall and struck the antennae of every ant on the wall.

It was a feeling they reciprocated. But there was a deeper emotion that possessed them. The ant colony would fight at their fiercest for two things, the brood, and their Queen. Ingrained in their instincts was the need to defend the future generations, they would sacrifice anything to protect them. The brood, the next few generations of the colony, was safely tucked away in the nest, as secure as the colony could make them, whilst the Queen, who embodied countless generations of colony members, was exposed to tremendous danger!

Newfound intelligence battled with inborn instinct and the intelligence was losing. In the face of the threat to their mother, their sense of self-preservation began to fall away. What replaced it was pure, ferocious and unthinking aggression.

All along the wall, the colony members took dangerous risks to put their mandibles on the enemy and around the Queen the fervour reached feverish levels. Even the non-combat castes had emerged from their secure chambers within the nest to follow their Queen into battle.

Victor watched from the top of the main nest, despair rising in her thorax. The Queen's influence on the mentality of the colony was too strong. Even from here she could feel it, the urge to rush to the forefront of the battle and put her body between the Queen and any danger. Only through an effort of Will was she able to resist the call. She knew that she would be more useful managing the colony's strategy, she knew that. But her instincts didn't seem to care. They screamed at her mercilessly to fight, to bite and claw to defend her Queen!

The feeling was so powerful that Victor began to suspect it was more than just her own instincts. It was possible the effect was enhanced by an option the Queen chose in her evolution? Some organ or gland that whipped up the fervour of the ants within a certain range? Imagine if Leeroy were still out there...

What could they do!? They couldn't control the Queen, they wouldn't even want to try, and so long as the Queen was fighting, this rage would possess every ant who went anywhere near her. Victor and Sloan had workshopped a range of strategies to manage the Queen's influence on the battle but they hadn't expected her pull to be this strong. It was threatening to throw away the planning and effort that had gone into preparing for this battle.

It was only the second wall! There were so many more traps and tricks prepared before the colony needed to make their final stand!

As Victor chewed over her options, the Queen had pushed such concerns to the side. She knew her place and was willing to sacrifice herself for the survival of her children, indeed she would welcome such a fate.

In order to preserve her energy and the mana that was draining out of her core, she limited herself to simple stabs. She had more cards to play but it wouldn't do to reveal them this early in the battle. It didn't take long for the monsters to press up against the wall and begin to spill over the top. Their screams of rage filled the air and they reached out desperately with their claws, only to be met with the Queen's mandibles.

CHOMP

Find authorized novels in Webnovel, faster updates, better experience, Please click www.webnovel.com for visiting.

Longer than any other ants and savagely barbed, her mandibles crashed together with a shattering snap that ended three monsters in a single bite. With a toss of her head she flung the Biomass back to the waiting workers behind and stabbed forward again. The monsters within reach tried to scratch and bite her forelegs but newly armoured and reinforced, the carapace there was far too tough for them. They could only watch as two more victims were lifted high into the air, back over the wall and out of sight.

So engrossed was the Queen in the battle that she paid no attention to the clouds forming with unnatural speed overhead. Light flashed, electricity crackled and lightning began to fall.

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 377: Her time will come

Electrical energy crackled over head as the ants continued to battle mindlessly on the wall. With a crack like the sound of a whip, the first strike fell directly on the Queen. Conserving her energy, the Queen was holding her section of the wall with ease when she was struck. The bolt landed on her abdomen and electricity pierced her carapace and roiled through her insides.

The smell of burnt flesh rose as the Queen's enormous frame began to smoke. The ants close by were driven to the edge of madness by the attack on their mother, but were helpless to retaliate against the clouds overhead! The Queen herself remained calm. Her antennae glowed softly with light as she channelled healing magic from her Healing Mana gland to repair her wounds.

She hadn't suffered much damage from the strike, not even close to critical damage. During her evolution she'd toughened herself a considerable amount, a decision that paid dividends now. The healing mana washed through her body, restoring damaged muscle and repairing her organs in moments.

But the lightning continued to fall.

Boom! *Boom! *Boom!*

The skies overhead crackled with an immense amount of energy and each bolt struck unerringly down on the giant figure that towered over the rest. It was clear the Kaarmodo had identified the Queen as a threat and was trying to weaken her, if not destroy her!

The Queen endured. Bolt after bolt fell from the sky, driving the ants into a frenzy. Their mother was under assault! How could they stand it?! The Queen focused on healing herself and ensuring that none of her children were caught in the discharge. Even whilst enduring the pain and concentrating on her healing mana, she was still able to keep her section of wall clear with repeated snaps of her giant mandibles.

"Mother!" screamed Victor, who had rushed to the front when she noticed the gathering clouds.

"Mother! You must retreat!"

The Queen shook her antennae in denial.

"I can still fight," she insisted as she crunched more monsters with her jaws. "My children are fighting, and so shall I!"

"You're starting to smoke! You can't tell me you aren't taking damage!" Victor cried, trying to make her scent detected over the roiling pheromones being released all around.

"I can take it. Better me than the children," the Queen stubbornly insisted.

Victor tried to maintain control of her instincts which demanded that she fight to defend her mother. Fighting was not the solution here. The Queen needed to move back, it was far too soon for her to commit to the battle!

If only the Eldest were here! Mother listened to the Eldest, trusted them. How much longer until that damn evolution was finished?!

"The colony is going crazy! If you stay here taking this damage, they might just charge over the wall. You need to get back, even just for a time!"

BOOM!

With a blinding flash, a tremendous bolt of lightning lanced down from the roiling clouds above and connected to the Queen. The mother of the colony threw her head back, frozen in pain as the energy burned through her body, sizzling her internal organs and causing her HP to plunge.

"MOTHER!" screamed Victor, overcome with anxiety.

Agony rippled through the Queen and she poured more effort to directing her healing mana to close her wounds. Pain was not enough to deter her from her course. Neither pain, nor danger or threat to her life would turn her from this path. In fact, she was glad. Every bolt of lightning that fell on her was mana and effort that was expended on her and not on her children. She would be the bulwark for her family, the strong tower behind which they could find shelter.

She pushed her feet under her and lifted her head to snap out once more with her deadly mandibles. She tried to push the voices away and focus. She had much work to do, but one broke through.

"Look at your back!" Victor cried. The general had crawled onto the wall directly in front of the Queen, her back to the enemy in an effort to capture her mothers' attention.

The Queen hastily swatted the much smaller ant down from the wall and back to safety with one leg before she reared her body up to observe her own back.

It was covered in ants.

Were she the type to curse, perhaps the Queen would have indulged herself in this moment, but she didn't. She turned, and she ran.

The clouds crackled overhead and the Queen wasted no time rushing back from the second wall toward the nest. As she retreated, the storm overhead began to disperse, the Kaarmodo was apparently unwilling to commit to holding it in place if she were not on the front herself.

With the presence of the Queen fading from the frontline, the battle returned to a more controlled type of frenzy. Generals were able to organise and arrange their soldiers, scouts shook off their rage and returned to their work as runners. Over the next few minutes, the colony was able to restore order to their efforts.

As she rushed back to the nest, the Queen appeared outwardly calm, but was boiling with frustration on the inside. She wanted to fight and defend her family but it appeared as if her children would not allow it. When she was threatened by the lightning, they had selflessly climbed onto her back to try and protect her.

It was a gesture that filled her heart, but broke it at the same time. She did not want her children to die for her, she wanted to fight and die for them!

The non-combat caste members, who had exited the nest with her, escorted her back to it, anxiously crawling in every direction to ensure she was safe. When she reached the peak of the nest, the Queen looked back to the second wall, several hundred metres away, where her family was fighting and dying for its survival. For a short, glorious moment, she had been able to share in that struggle with them, and she would again before the end.

With a small sigh, the Queen plunged once more down into the darkness. She would recharge her core, heal her injuries and prepare to emerge once again. The battle was not done, and neither was she.

For her part, Victor was relieved. The Queen would not stay put for long, but for the time being the battle was back in control. The Queen and the Eldest were the trump cards of the colony, they couldn't not be played too early. If the Queen had remained at the front and prompted Garralosh to come out, before the Eldest had finished evolving...

It could have been a disaster!

Come to think of it, the wall was no place for her to be either. As the two sides once again threw themselves at each other, Victor ran from the front, over the remaining walls and into the nest. Inside the planning chamber, Sloan awaited her.

"Sounds like things have stabilised for the time being," Sloan told her, "great work."

Victor shook her antennae in denial.

"It's only a matter of time until the Queen comes up again. The next time she comes up, I don't think she'll go back, no matter what."

"But that's good information to have," Sloan insisted. "We know that the next time she fights, we'll have to play all our tricks."

A shiver of fear ran over Victor as she considered what might have happened in those moments.

"She could've died up there, Sloan."

Her sibling came closer and patted her on the head with one antennae.

"We won't let that happen. No matter what."

Find authorized novels in Webnovel, faster updates, better experience, Please click www.webnovel.com for visiting.

"No matter what."

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 378: The Patient Ones

Antionette and Victoriant sat in the secure chamber in which the Eldest was evolving. Soldiers and scouts lined the walls, Brood Tenders, with their soothing growth auras were in attendance and the two guardians watched all with a sharp eye from their positions on either side of their master.

"How long until the Eldest wakes up do you think?" Antionette asked for the fifth time.

"I have no idea," Victoriant gave the same reply.

The two juvenile Queens fidgeted for a moment, giving their antennae a restless sweep through their knee joints, before they settled once more. The Eldest had undergone many changes over the last hour, a dramatic increase in size being the most obvious, but still they showed no sign of awakening. This deep in the nest, the battle could neither be felt nor heard, but it weighed heavily on their minds.

"I didn't think it would be this frustrating," Victoriant sighed.

"I'm beginning to understand why the Queen is getting so restless," her sibling agreed.

"At least mother can actually perform her function. She can lay eggs and create a future for the colony. What about us? We aren't allowed to fight, can't try to gain experience and can't lay eggs. I just feel so useless."

"Cheer up, Victoriant. We knew we would need to be patient when we chose this path. If you look on the bright side, the two of us are closer to our next evolution than the other members of the council."

"That's only true because other members of the colony risk themselves and fight in order to bring monsters to us so that we gain the experience."

Speaking of which, after a short tussle near one of the walls, a soldier came toward the two of them carrying a heavily damaged shadow beast which was promptly deposited at their feet.

"Thank you very much," Antionette called as the soldier returned to her post.

"I'm level fifteen," Victoriant told her sibling.

"Me too," Antionette confirmed.

"Then, who got the experience last time?"

"I believe it was me."

"Alright then."

Victoriant leaned down and finished off the heavily wounded monster with a quick snap of her mandibles. In truth, the two juvenile queens were weak fighters. Their large size was less due to a powerful physique and more to create space for the numerous organs necessary to facilitate the egg

laying process. Unlike the Queen, their evolution wasn't designed to battle in order to get the colony off the ground. The Eldest had designed their path with pure egg laying in mind.

One more evolution and they would be able to start producing a small number of eggs per day, and one more after that until they would fully mature as Queens, able to produce hundreds of eggs each day, so long as they were provided the Biomass to do so.

The two siblings absentmindedly consumed the Biomass in front of them. In truth, the pair of them had already maxed out their mutations. They only ate to stockpile Biomass for their impending evolution. Indeed, the colony had been willingly funnelling resources into the pair, hoping to increase the growth rate of the colony as soon as possible. The two of them already boasted maxed out cores and had both been presented with special cores some time ago. Five more levels and they would be ready to evolve on the spot.

The two Queens to be were interrupted in their contemplation by Tungstant storming into the chamber from above and rushing down the wall.

"How is the Eldest?" the harried looking carver ant asked.

Find authorized novels in Webnovel, faster updates, better experience, Please click www.webnovel.com for visiting.

Victoriant flicked a curious antennae at her sibling before she responded.

"No change since the last time you came in, as you can see."

The smaller ant slumped in frustration before she wandered over to where the Eldest rested. The two guardians shifted at her approach, not hostile, but ensuring the little carver was aware they knew she was there.

Fortunately, Tungstant was familiar with this task and gave the guardians their due as she approached. Victoriant and Antionette watched as the carver performed the now familiar dance of measuring the height and length of the Eldest by stepping out the distances with careful, measured steps. This job done, Tungstant began to wave her antennae over the Eldest' carapace, using her sense of smell and the fine touch of micro hairs to examine any changes she could detect in the Eldest.

Job done, the little ant turned back despondently, only to be pounced on by her two siblings.

"How goes the battle?!" The two juvenile queens demanded.

Tungstant jumped back at the surprise attack before she sighed.

"Preparations are being made to retreat from the second wall, the call should be made any moment now."

"Only the second wall? There's still six to go! How long will this battle go on?" Victoriant exclaimed.

"It takes a long time to kill tens of thousands of monsters," Tungstant replied, irritated. "We've made our calculations to the best of our abilities. This was the maximum amount of defences we could prepare in time and it should be enough to eliminate the horde whilst preserving as many lives as possible."

Victoriant deflated a little, frustrated at the prospect of having to sit, under guard in a chamber so far from the battle. With no capacity to influence the battle they could only sit and wait as others battled to protect their future.

Tungstant softened her voice.

"I know it's painful, I'm in much the same situation as you are. It isn't as if I can dig or build anything to influence the battle at this point. I'm just running messages and checking on the Eldest. Who still doesn't show any sign of waking up!"

"It doesn't seem as if they've grown since the last time you were here," Antionette offered. "Perhaps the evolution is close to completed?"

Tungstant shook her antennae.

"I'm afraid that may not be true. The change in size is probably the first and easiest part of the evolution. I can't sense much from the outside, but I believe there are significant changes taking place within the body of the Eldest. It may yet be some time until the change is completed."

"But..." Victoriant protested, "what about the battle?!"

"We'll just have to hold on," the carver shrugged her antennae, "according to my predictions, we won't be able to end this battle without the Eldest taking part, we'll just have to last until they can join the fight."

The ants fell silent as they contemplated the next few hours and the future of their colony. The struggle up above would be brutal, vicious and filled with danger, but each of these siblings would rather they be allowed up there than trapped down here, waiting.

[Chrysalis](#)

Chapter 379: A different perspective

The master was irritated.

Assan'diri could feel the rising ire of his master through the bond. Like a Blackened Death Asp monster, it hissed, sibilant, at a constant measure that put all of the Setsulah on edge.

"Diri!" muttered a nearby voice.

He turned to see Chen'thra, his wife, approach from his left.

"Master is losing his patience," she hissed, "his black mood hangs over us like a storm."

"I feel it, my heart, of course I feel it. Ever since the loss of our kin, the master has been losing faith in this mission."

They shared a moment of quiet sorrow. They had not had the time to perform the proper rituals to commemorate their lost Bond Kin, something that doubled their grief. Killed by the devilish monster that had plagued and taunted them for so long, their kin would not rest properly until the rites had been observed.

The rage of the master had been as hot as the desert sands when they had fallen. The Setsulah had shared in the blazing intensity of it. That one of their sacred number would be lost to such a monster had rankled. The creature had toyed with them. Dancing on the edge of their range, unleashing spells that they had never seen before, vanishing like mist.

They had consoled themselves that the final reckoning would be theirs. Garralosh was determined to exterminate all the humans from the pathetic frontier kingdoms and she would destroy these pesky monsters whilst she was at it.

At first they had worried that the humans and monsters would flee, but rejoiced when repeated scrying showed that no such movements were taking place. The Setsulah had not wished for their master to spend years chasing rabble and refuse through the wilds, and thankfully he hadn't needed to. They had expected the humans and monsters would crumble the moment they arrived, crushed under the weight of the thousands of monsters that rushed at them.

They could not have been more wrong!

"Have you ever seen a collection of monsters like this?" Chen'thra asked, bewildered.

"I have not, my heart," Assan'diri confirmed, just as confused.

The walls, the traps, the ambushes, the stratagems. One after the other, after the other.

"Did you hear what happened in the last hour?"

"The third wall was taken, was it not?"

"It was, and when the chatka charged toward the fourth, the ants flooded them!"

"They what?!"

Find authorized novels in [Webnovel](http://Webnovel.com), faster updates, better experience, Please click www.webnovel.com for visiting.

"They flooded them! The sand blasted creatures built a covered reservoir and they knocked out the walls. The chatka were washed into holes and taken beneath the ground! I've never heard of such a thing!"

The two shuddered and Assan'diri reached out, his hand unconsciously seeking that of his wife. To those who had lived their entire lives in the deserts and mountains of the true kingdom, death by water sent shivers down their spines.

The two stood deep in the belly of the horde, surrounded by chatka, slave monsters, on all sides. More worrying than those, were the hundreds of gigantic crocodile like monsters that shared this space in the centre. The master had committed to this sacred purpose and the Bond Kin would serve as dutifully as ever, but he wished he had been able to leave his wife at home.

"Come, my heart, let us return to the compound."

To his relief, his wife nodded her assent and the two turned their back on the battle and strode toward the source of the simmering anger that thrummed across the Bond.

Assan'diri tried to ignore the Garralosh spawn as they passed. The monsters stared at the two robed figures with scarcely concealed hunger. Only the iron will of their parent was able to keep the primitive brutes in line. Even the knowledge that the master would scour their flesh from their bones should they lay one scaled claw on the Setsulah wasn't enough to sink into their simple minds.

He tried not to be too disrespectful of the creatures in his thoughts. His master had dedicated a great deal of time to this project and it wouldn't do if the Kin were to harbor ill thoughts towards something the master had devoted such attention to.

[Do not mind it Assan'diri. I have no great opinion of these creatures myself.]

Assan'diri and his wife both stumbled at the sudden touch of the great mind of their master through the bond.

[Master. I prostrate myself. I did not mean any offence.]

He made good on his words by immediately dropping to his knees and bowing low in the dirt. Chen'thra joined him without hesitation.

[Peace,] the master sighed, [I have intruded on your thoughts without announcing myself, you need not apologise. There is no disloyalty in your thoughts.]

The two Setsulah straightened themselves, their thoughts seized by the weariness they sensed in their master.

[I sense our task may be coming to an end. The skein shifts rapidly here. This ebb and flow of possibility are shifting beneath our feet, yet I sense a conclusion will come. Success or failure will be decided soon.]

The two servants shared a significant glance.

[Do you anticipate the Setsulah will be deployed? We are willing to serve.]

[No.]

There was finality in that response.

[I will not tolerate further loss of the Bond Kin. Our charge has made this her mission and it will be on her to see it through. I alone will be enough to satisfy the demands of the order that Garralosh be supported.]

Assan'diri clamped his fangs shut and grimaced within his hood. If it weren't for that cursed monster hunting them, the master would not need to tax themselves in this way.

[Have I fallen so low that my own Bond Kin will fuss over me in this way, Assan'diri?]

The servant hissed in agitation and once more threw himself on the dirt to bow low in the direction of his master. Even without being able to see the blessed form of his Bond holder, he was able to bow directly toward him.

[I mean no offense, Master! Please discipline me as you see fit.]

[Enough. If not for the Bond Kin fussing over us, we, Kaarmodo, would do naught but debate and hibernate until our species faced extinction. Gather the Kin. We must channel the ambient mana once more into our charge. If Garralosh is to have the best chance of success, then we must ensure her core isn't depleted.]

[As you wish, master.]

The touch of the master over the Bond faded and the two servants rushed to fulfil their master's instructions. It seemed as if their long quest would finally reach a conclusion. The Setsulah longed for the hot winds and sheer peaks of their mountain home. Whether Garralosh were successful and broke through or failed and languished in this cage of her own making, Assan'diri no longer cared. So long as the master was able to discharge his duty, they could return home with pride.

Chrysalis

Chapter 380: Fight for your life

"Am I gonna make it, Ms Enid?" the boy begged tearfully.

Enid glanced down at the horrific gut wound the soldier had suffered, her face set in a calming smile.

"You're going to be fine, soldier," she soothed him, wiping the sweat from his face with a grimy cloth. "The healers will get to you as soon as they can."

Fear boiled in the young warrior's eyes as he clutched at her. He wasn't going to make it. Black blood leaked from the wound in his gut. Monster claw, she guessed. She felt helpless, but continued to comfort the doomed lad as his lifeblood drained away.

She'd seen many things in her life, travelling the caravans hadn't always been safe. On occasion, when her husband had caved to her pestering, she'd even been able to join him on a few delves. The danger had been real and many times she'd feared for her life.

But nothing could have prepared her for this. Even now, she could hear them. The roar, the screams and the clash of steel rang out across the clearing from the wall. Nestled against the side of the ants' defences, the human wall had held strong, but the cost had been steep. The medical tent had seen a steady stream of wounded from the moment the battle had begun, and without any healing magic practitioners, there was nothing they could do for those with serious wounds but bandage and clean them. With that done, the injured could do nothing except languish on pallets alongside a growing assembly of their fellow warriors.

Enid had also been on the wall during the fighting. Not for long, of course. She knew she'd only be underfoot when the fighting got hot, however she couldn't resist the need to see the fight, to share the risk, at least for a time, that her fellow villagers would undertake.

The sight would haunt her for the rest of her life.

As gruesome as it had been at the human wall, the monsters that were their neighbours fought a far more brutal battle. The sight of the monster versus monster combat had been horrifying to behold. Creatures torn to pieces and consumed on the spot, the wounded stomped underfoot or dragged away. The attacking horde howled and shrieked until one's ears rang with pain, but the ants battled in an eerie silence.

Only by their body language was it possible to get a sense of their emotions and that was almost impossible at the best of times. Only when the Queen had emerged had Enid been able to clearly sense their fear. Once that gigantic monster had made herself known and rushed to the front, the ants had become frenzied. Not with rage, or hate. Enid felt sure of it. They had felt afraid. When the lightning had fallen on their Queen, the thousands of monsters had become frantic.

Enid had been afraid at that point. Afraid of what would have happened if the Queen had fallen to the lightning and been torn apart by her attackers. What would have happened to the ants who remained? What would they have done, in their grief and rage? She shuddered to think of it.

"Mary," Enid called softly to a nearby nurse, "could you get me another cloth, please? This young man needs to have his wounds cleaned."

The young girl looked down at the suffering young man for a moment before she glanced back at Enid's face and nodded quietly. The boy gripped her hand tighter.

Find authorized novels in Webnovel, faster updates, better experience, Please click www.webnovel.com for visiting.

"Do you know if my brother is okay?" he gasped.

"I haven't seen him in here," she reassured him, "I'm sure he's still fighting."

He relaxed back onto his pallet.

"I saw him fighting next to the beast," he forced out, a rictus grin on his face. "He always looked up to her."

Enid couldn't help but snort at the use of Morrelia's nickname. She didn't know when they'd started referring to her as 'the beast' but she sure as heck didn't want to be about when the young berserker found out. To Enid's knowledge, Morrelia had been on the wall battling like a maniac the entire time. With her reckless, two handed style it would be a miracle if she hadn't suffered major wounds by this time.

If only they had healers! Enid would happily cut her left arm off for a decent apothecary even!

Ultimately, Enid had begun to feel despair. What if, despite everything they'd done, it still wasn't enough. Just like the young boy, who couldn't be more than fifteen, she felt her hopes slowly dying. She would never let it show on her face or in her demeanour, but she was afraid. Not for herself, but for her people. They deserved so much better than this.

At that moment, she felt a stir run through the medical tent. A wave of energy that crackled in the air. Tension, excitement and fear, all rolled in one.

"Ms Enid!" Mary rushed back, a cloth forgotten in her hand.

"What is it child?" Enid asked, concerned.

"They've come! They've come to save us!"

"Who!?"

It didn't take long for the question to answer itself. From her position seated on the ground, Enid could see people shuffling to one side, trying to make space for something to make it through. She gasped when the first one came into sight.

Antennae twitched and mandibles clacked as a dozen monstrous ants pushed their way into the medical tent. Without a word or a sign, they split up and move about the tent, each headed to a different wounded. One came right next to Enid and brought its antennae down on the dying lad. When healing mana began to flow down the antennae and into the boy, Enid could hold her tears no longer. As life came back into his face, so too did hope blossom in again inside her.

She did not know where this strange colony had come from, but in that moment she had to admit that Beyn was possibly onto something. How could they not be heaven sent?