

CHRYSALIS

Chapter 4 The first prey



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I'm so So hungry!

Perched here on the roof of the cavern, my claws dug into the cold rock there is only one thought in my mind.

Food!

All the delicious things I was able to eat in my previous life are spinning through my mind, chocolate, cake, steaks, bread, yes even bread! I haven't eaten anything for two days now, the hunger is making my mind play tricks on me. The last time I saw a Croca-beast I swore it looked like a cow and nearly leaped at it from the ceiling!

The centipedes are looking and more like a tangle of noodles. I have to solve this situation before I get myself killed chomping on something I shouldn't.

Two days. I have been planning for two. Whole. Days.

I have studied every aspect of this end of the cavern in excruciating detail. I've spent so long hanging upside down over the water basin that I nearly feel asleep and dropped into the water. That would be a swim I wouldn't enjoy...

A welcome side effect of spending all my time this way has been my sneak has levelled up to four! Thanks to spending my downtime digging away at my hiding place my digging has also reached level three.

Mua HAHHAHAHAHAHAHA!

I prepare, I grow, I hunger!

Sigh.

I know, these skills are pretty much useless, ok? I know. I'll take anything I get at this stage. Hopefully, soon I'll be able to conquer my first prey.

My antennae twitch suddenly. The target is close, I can smell them. Concentrating hard I try to focus my eyes, I'm currently positioned away from pool in a very dark area of the cavern, the snaking light veins along the walls are far apart here, allowing deep shadows to exist.

My chosen prey has been using the wall on this side of the cavern as a resting place, crawling down to the floor and over to the pool once each day to drink.

An isolated creature, with a predictable movement path that I think I can defeat. So rare! This creature is so damn rare!

Wait, I see it!

Cautiously, the armoured lizard moves down the wall. It nests amongst the rocks towards the top of the wall, I haven't been able to see clearly enough to

identify exactly where so I couldn't tell when it started moving but I have it now, this is the time to execute my plan.

Moving hurriedly, or as quickly as I can whilst still being stealthy I scramble towards the darkness above the creature. My stomach is rumbling, demanding all the speed I can muster.

Don't worry stomach! I won't let you down.

Luckily the armoured lizard moves fairly slowly, especially on the vertical surface, I get into position to strike.

The armour lizard directly below me now, facing away from my position. The large spines protruding from its back look so solid, as if made of stone. Man, I bet it would sting to get stabbed with one of those.

I can't start thinking negative now, my stomach is counting on me!

Slowly, oh so slowly, I move above the target, my eyes are the eyes of the hunter, the eagle, the tiger! I have to wait for my moment to strike, the timing will be everything.

Now!

Like a flash I flip my body around, take aim and fire my acid spray directly at the target. The liquid falls through the air at tremendous speed, splashing against the rock and covering the Armour Lizards' feet, a flawless strike.

Ha! My secret target practice over the last few days has paid off!

The creature cries out in pain as the acid begins to burn its legs, it tries to turn and find the attacker but I'm already moving, racing down the wall behind it, all thought of stealth gone.

Now my plan enters the second phase, the Lizard sees me approach and tries to turn and bring its fangs to bear, tilting the fearsome spines forward to cover as much of its body as it can. This is the wrong battle ground for you Lizard! You want to battle me here on the wall? With my incredible grip skill at level three, this wall is no challenge, also, I am nimble and light but you are heavy

and slow, with your feet burning with acid how well can you possibly manoeuvre here?

Still you want to face me? Courting death!

Even if I say that, I'm still terrified in this moment. My first battle, the first hunt! I cannot fail here or my life may be over, I have to focus. The Lizard is bracing itself for the close range battle but just before I close in I suddenly turn and blast the Lizard with acid once more.

Ha ha! Didn't expect that did you!?

Gripping the wall hard I furiously scabble my six legs to reorient myself for the fight as the Lizard growls and hisses as acid continues to burn at its feet and now face. It won't be finished from just this however, my acid is still weak, not strong enough to defeat this creature on its own.

As I close in we begin an awkward dance here on the wall, the Lizard trying to thrust forward with its fangs or spines before retreating and me snapping with my mandibles, trying to latch onto a leg or the face.

The sounds of our fight vibrate through the air, bouncing off the rock walls and pillars of stone, shaking the air against my antennae. I've seen more than one fight over the last few days settled by new challengers entering as the original combatants grew weary. I can't allow this to drag out.

As we joust back and forth I can see the Lizard before me is beginning to breathe heavily, the energy required to support its body here on the wall while fighting is taking a toll, its nearly time.

Growing desperate, the Lizard suddenly lunges forward, its spikes rushing directly towards my still pitiful eyes! I have to dodge! A flash of inspiration strikes and I snap my feet further apart, lowering my body closer to the wall. To grip at this sort of angle takes all the strength my tiny claws can muster but it works, the spikes pass just over my head.

Chance!

Before the Lizard can retreat I dart forward, mandibles wide open and snap, crunching them closed on the head of my foe. It releases a pained growl as my jaws continue to squeeze tightly but I harden my heart to its pain.

I'm sorry Lizard, you must become my food!

Now for the final phase. I gather my strength, prepare my heart and then ... leap!

With its head gripped in my mandibles the Lizard begins to fall away from the wall as I sail over its head, scaly feet tipped with claws scrabble and scrape at the stone but burned with acid and worn out from fighting they simply cannot muster the strength to hold the Lizard along with my added weight.

So, we fall.

Crash!

The impact stuns me momentarily and I release the grasp I have on my enemy, however this is also part of my plan. Lying on my back I'm very vulnerable, I must quickly get back on my feet! My six legs begin waving frantically in the air and I resort to rolling back and forth before I am finally able to get my feet under me.

Focusing my eyes I can see my pitiful prey who has fallen into a much more difficult predicament than I did! The long spines and hard shell of the Lizard have plunged directly into the pitfall trap I painstakingly dug after the last visit this Lizard made to the water pool.

Mua hahahahahahaaaa!

Do you see that you stupid Lizard? This is the ingenuity of the human mind combined with my level three digging abilities! I purposefully made the soil loose and soft at the bottom of the trap so the long spines would sink into the earth, trapping the Lizard with its feet in the air unable to escape and indeed, before my blurry eyes my prey is trapped, its feet clawing at the air, trying and failing to roll over.

This is the strategy I obsessed over for two days. Using all my abilities together, shooting acid, fighting on walls, my mandibles, my human intellect and even my digging skill, to be able to triumph over the enemy.

Even so, to cause the Lizard to fall onto its back I was forced into a dangerous manoeuvre. Thankfully the Lizard had such regular habits and travelled on the same path each time, otherwise my trap would have failed.

With the prey incapacitated I start to lose my tension. Using the last of my acid I fire off two more shots, right into the soft belly of the Lizard.

[Acid shot skill has increased to level 2]

So quickly, Gandalf?! Perhaps my skills increase much more rapidly when used in a combat situation as opposed to more casual use, after my stealth skill has taken so much time to level up even when hiding from multiple creatures for hours on end.

Something to ponder after I fill my protesting stomach!

I hoped that using the acid to finish off the Lizard would spare me having to try and bite the creature to death but nature is not that kind, after enduring the cries of the pitiful thing for ten minutes I harden my resolve and use my mandibles to ... uh ... finish the job.

[Bite skill has increased to level 3]

Having to take a life is a bit depressing but getting a skill level feels so rewarding!