

CHRYSALIS

Chapter 5 To the victor goes the spoils



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I have hunted, battled and achieved victory.

This is a somewhat complicated feeling. The pain and suffering I endured to achieve this goal, is something I can't recall from my previous life, neither do I remember this satisfaction, this triumph.

Mostly I remember feeling numb.

[You have defeated Level 2 Spineta Lacertos]

[You have gained XP]

[You achieved Level 2, One skill point awarded]

Gandalf?! So talkative all of a sudden! Level two has been achieved eh?
Fantastic!

So this Lizard is a Spineta Lacertos? What on earth does that mean? This name sounds vaguely Latin? Come to think of it my species was listed as Formica? If I recall back to my ant keeping hobby, Formica is the Latin name for wood ants? Are all the creatures here named in Latin?

That ... seems odd.

I have to put that question aside for a moment since a few others have been answered at this time. For one, I now know that I can gain experience to improve my level when I defeat other creatures in this place, secondly I know that I gain a new skill point when I level up and thirdly I learned that this is also true for the other creatures here. Since this Spineta thing was at level two I can assume there are two possibilities, either it was born level two, or it managed to level up once.

I have to ponder this in greater depth later! I have two other things to worry about now, firstly, I cannot leave my prey here in the open in case other creatures will be attracted by the scent, and second ... I'm starving! I have to eat!

Without waiting any longer I rush into my pitfall and approach the Lizard. Burns and melted flesh as a result of my acid can be seen alongside crushed limbs and puncture wounds from my bites.

It really looks very pitiful.

I'm sorry Lizard, I'm really sorry, you didn't deserve this fate.

However, since the deed has already been done, I will now partake in my first meal.

Did you know that an ant has a mouth on the bottom side of its face? Most people think that the mandibles are the mouth or that the mouth is positioned behind them but this isn't so, the mandibles are more like hands attached to the head whilst the mouth is below them.

I take a bite.

Hmmm, this flavour, how could I describe it?

Disgusting.

This is seriously disgusting.

Despite being so hungry I feel my carapace is constricting this is not a pleasant meal.

[You have consumed a new source of Biomass: Spineta Lacertos, you are awarded one Biomass]

[Basic profile of the Spineta Lacertos unlocked]

The voice of Gandalf! I am graced by your weathered tones once again o great one!

So many developments so quickly, it's enough to make me dizzy, I'll have to think whilst eating. Apparently I will gain one Biomass every time I am able to hunt a new species of creature, also I was able to unlock a profile? A basic profile? How do I access that?

I'll have to experiment later.

As quickly as I can I finish the Lizard, I feel quite full! I can tell my gaster, my back part, is swollen to much larger than it was before. Just as I finish I get another surprise:

[You have gained one Biomass]

Another one! Truly my harvest has been rich from this hunt!

Only one thing to do now that I have finally achieved success and reaped such a bounty, retreat to my nest and consider my next move.

Keeping my antennae waving, sensing the air, I once again climb up the wall, making my way to the roof and sneak my way back over the water pool towards the tunnel that houses my nest. A range of monsters are still communing around the water but they are too focused on watching each other to look up and detect me.

In this way I return to my place of safety.

Tucked away in a somewhat secure place I can now take some time to assess my situation and plot my next move.

Ok, first thing is to check my status.

[Status].

Name: Anthony

Level : 2

Might: 15

Toughness: 12

Cunning: 25

Will: 18

HP: 30

MP: 0

Skills: Digging level 3; Acid Shot Level 2; Grip Level 3; Bite Level 3; Stealth Level 3;

Mutations: Eyes +1

Species: Hatchling Ant Worker (Formica)

Skill points: 1

Biomass: 2

Ha ha! Behold my incredible growth! Despite my difficult start I have managed to survive, secure my first meal, level up and improve my skills. I am very proud of this result.

Against all the odds I will survive, this is the burning ambition of my soul!

Now I have to make a very careful decision, two Biomass points to spend. I'll have to carefully consider the options and ...

Eyes! Evolve my eyes to +2 for the love of Gandalf!

[Do you wish to improve your eyes to +2? This will cost two Biomass]

Do iiiiiiit!

Immediately the mad, ravenous itching sensation consumes my eyes. I can only endure it by flopping onto my back and rolling back and forth whilst scratching at the earth walls with my claws. I hate this damn feeling so muuuuuch!

Finally the itching fades and I can immediately tell that my eyesight has improved once again. Really, the poor ant eyesight is extremely frustrating to deal with, being used to human eyes, having to cope with such blurry vision that can barely see any creature if it sits still is terrifying.

Taking a look around I can tell that my vision is still not as good as an average human but it is now far superior to what I started with. Objects are still blurry but by waving my leg in front of my face I can detect that my ability to see movement has improved quite a bit.

At this rate I think it will take to +4 eyesight before I can see as well as I did in my previous life. Perhaps even +5. Since the next upgrade will probably take three Biomass since this one needed two it will probably be a long time before I'm able to purchase level four, let alone level five.

I may have to cope with my current level of eyesight for some time.

However I'm pleased with this purchase, my ability to scout as well as fight has been improved with this upgrade, and I've gotten closer to being able to operate as an independent ant, not requiring the communal assistance of a colony to survive.

Now I have to spend my skill point. I've had a skill in mind for some time now, ever since I first saw it. Since my priority is still gathering information, scouting

and survival rather than a direct increase in battle strength, this skill will be extremely important to me.

Tunnel sense.

By improving my sense of direction I'll be able to range further from the nest in order to gain information. There is a risk here however, by not increasing my ability to fight and hunt for food I am going to risk more disadvantageous combat. However I will continue to pursue my policy of scouting and research first.

It must be remembered that my capacity to fight is still complete garbage, hot trash, bottom of the barrel filth! Putting one skill point into a combat skill is not going to turn this situation around in an instant!

Survival is the first, second and third priority! For survival, there must be knowledge, for without knowledge, I cannot hope to find prey I can defeat or avoid those I cannot.

I still don't know anything about this place! I'm in some kind of connected network of tunnels that is populated by bizarre monsters, has glowy lines

snaking through the walls and for some incredible reason, there is a game like system with skills, level ups and a Biomass mutation system.

Isn't this world... a little weird?

I haven't seen a single person yet, nor any evidence of one. Is it possible this entire place is inhabited by monsters? Is there even a habitable surface? Or is this world wholly populated by subterranean lifeforms?

Still too many questions! All these unknowns make me too nervous, I have to have a clearer understanding of my situation. Tunnel Sense will broaden my range, allowing me to range further and still make it back to the only place of relative safety, my nest.

[Do you want to learn the skill Tunnel Sense? This will cost one skill point].

Yes!

A warm tickling sensation, like water running through my hair in a shower, except deeper, inside my head, comes over me. Perhaps I didn't notice this before since I upgraded my eyes at the same time as I purchased a skill. Its far more pleasant than the eye mutation. Just thinking about that itching sends a shiver down my spine.

Soon the feeling fades, Tunnel Sense has been learned. I can't really feel anything different straight away, hopefully it will show its effect as I explore.

Now, for the first time with a full stomach, I'll get some rest, recover, then push into brave new frontiers! While in stealth, of course.