

Termite 'Grace': #769

by Antonia Malchik

The following account, left by a member of the First Empire, is included in this historical archive due to its personal nature, which distinguishes it slightly from the vast body of data logs from the same period. 'Grace,' as some have dubbed Termite 769 (clearly juvenile at point of writing) here relates the Empire's pursuit of and progress to the Chair Seat in a comprehensive though immature voice. Blessed First Leader had, long before, proclaimed that the Empire's success, and its consequent position of First of Chair and Its Dominions, was foreordained. 'Grace' was eliminated sometime in year b.s. (Before Seat) 12, for bottlenecking Productivity and holding back Progress. Nevertheless, 769's account is the most complete narration of the early history of the Empire, and is now dedicated to its continuation and glory. Long Live the First.

I am sitting on the upper left leg, near the seat of Chair, chewing away at the leg and my reflections. I have nearly filled my daily quota of one and a half millimeters of wood, so can afford to slow down and collect the thoughts I wish to record. While gnawing at my quota, I was thinking about something I overheard the Elders discussing this morning on my way to work. Elder 450 mentioned that tensions have again increased among factions of the rear legs. These conflicts, as I understand it, lie in the unresolved question of who will get the larger amount of netting in the middle of the Seat when they reached it. Considering how the two legs have always felt about each other, I didn't find this information surprising. But readers—if there will ever be any readers, and why should I want or need readers?—will be unaware of these issues, and the destiny of the First Empire, as foretold by First Leader. I think I should start at the beginning.

The History of Civilization

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In the beginning, there were four brothers. First, Second, Third, and Fourth left their crumbling, ancient home and its dying population to seek their fortunes elsewhere. They found the Chair, and, parting ways, began constructing their empires. First, being the eldest, stayed on the foot of the front left leg. The other three set out to the three legs of the chair that were left. Arriving at their domains, they built up their empires quickly. First's was the most powerful. It reached the first rung of the Chair before the other three. The others prospered accordingly, and none were failures.

Unfortunately, Second and Fourth eventually ran into some conflicts. These stemmed from a time when the two had first set up their empires and had chosen wives. It turned out that the two both desired the same termite, as she was purported to be quite fertile. They quarreled, and, as a result, the empires of the back legs never got along too well. First was often called to negotiate treaties between the two empires to keep them from killing each other off, an act that would have demolished the balance of power and natural order of things. Boundaries were set for the two, so each did not tread upon the ground of the other. But, as I do not know much about the history of the other legs, I will stick to the history of ours, the left front leg, started by First.

According to some of the elders, who were not yet alive at the time, First was a hard but fair leader. He pushed his subjects to chew aggressively until they had reached the first rung. At this time, he was already an old termite and died watching the last dust of the first rung fall to hell, also known as the Ground.

His son, Termite 12, took over the empire and led it as well as his father had. He led us halfway to the second rung and then died. He was evidently allergic to oak. The leader at present is Termite 523. He carries on the traditions and beliefs of First, and is helping lift us to our ultimate goal: the top of the upper left side of the Chair.

We are now nearly to the seat. This is a crucial point in our race for the top. The empires of the other legs, especially Third's, are not far behind us. There will probably be a fight to reach

the upper legs, and our placing in the seat is important if we are to reach them first. To get our choice of seat position, we must reach the seat before the other empires do. I have no doubt that we will be victorious in our attainment of the top of the upper leg.

Some of us, when we move upwards, will be left behind. Mostly the eggs will be, and the old termites. There is much controversy over this. Some believe that we have to give these eggs a chance to live along with the other termites. But we do not have the time or the resources to take care of the young ones when we are working, especially at such a crucial moment as this one. Every termite needs to be at full chewing power if we are to succeed. So some of the eggs must die for the welfare of the empire, as many of us die in our striving for the top of the upper leg.

I know that we will be successful, though I myself will be gone by the time we reach our goal. But there is a question that I find myself asking many times as I chew my quota each day and strive for higher things. What will they do when they reach the top of the upper left leg? I wonder where they will go, and how they will live. Some believe that we are not the only ones here, that there are other chairs out there, with other termite-type beings and someday we will find them. Most are skeptical, but I hope that once the Chair is gone, they will look outwards and find somewhere higher to go, and something still better to attain than the Seat of the Chair.

***The following Archivist's note is strictly confidential.
Elder Authorization only.***

Although no authoritative record of 'Grace's' death exists, it was later written that 769's tendency to muse on the long-term fate of the First Empire slowed her chewing rate and distracted others in the worker comb. The tone of 769's reflections are naïve and shortsighted, although her more vocal questioning of the Empire's Progress only became evident some time after this account was confiscated. 769 showed a disturbing propensity for self-awareness,

*a trait whose existence must be closely guarded by the First Elders,
for the good of all. Blessed be the First.*

