

Runesmith 127

[Chapter 127 Scorching tides.](#)

“Uh... it was better when we had Wayland along.”

A rather sweaty half-elven girl in full leather gear was seen treading through a wide-open area filled with pools of lava.

“You need to come here more often and build up your heat resistance skill and stop relying on magical contraptions!”

A man with a large frame and tanned skin was walking in front of her. He was quite handsome, his upper arms weren't covered by any armor but from his forearms and below, thick dark gauntlets could be seen.

“Shut up Armand, it would have been better if you fell into that hole instead of Wayland!”

“You think I wouldn't want that blue-haired noble girl around with me instead? Damn, it would be a waste if anything happened to her... and that bastard is lucky enough to be with her for so long...”

Lobelia furrowed her eyebrows before giving a kick to Arman's shin guard. The large man didn't even flinch as he was used to getting poked and prodded by his younger sister.

The two had been tasked to go back to Albrook city. They had to run while mostly evading the monsters while the two knights they were given were more of a burden than help. After a full day of going through the dungeon and not sleeping they were able to arrive at the adventurer's guild to give the report.

Armand remembered it well as the old guild master looked like he had laid an egg. He was really pale after hearing that his precious Runesmith and the nobles were trapped in some unknown underground cave with no way of climbing back up.

He could recall him blowing a fuse and shouting at everyone before scrambling back into his office. Armand looked back this fondly as this was the first time he saw the old fart in so much distress. It made the whole fiasco of him losing his old post actually somewhat worthwhile.

After losing his position he was scolded by his family members, he also had to quit going to the red light district for the time being. The money had to go to his equipment and the orphanage as the prices had increased. Luckily for him, the monster parts that they brought in were enough to cover the costs and the other family members also pitched in.

Even though he wasn't totally broke, it didn't change the fact that he still didn't like the person that caused this. Wayland the Runesmith, he didn't think that he could get along with a stiff like that. Whenever he thought about his face that he rarely showed, he wanted to put his fist through it.

His two step sisters weren't helping either, always taking that guy's side over his for some reason. It was clear to him that he might have been able to handle things differently that time. He was still a work in progress but it would be hard to change his bostrious ways. This is how he was, cocky and full of vigor.

“Is that the only thing that you can think about...”

Lobelia frowned even more after hearing Armand disclose his desires of being trapped in a room with the blue haired noble. The noble lady was quite beautiful and had porcelain like skin to match it. She didn't want to admit it, but she was defeated in a couple of places but still thought that her face was much better than what the ice mage had.

Continuing their report a climbing specialist had to be rushed over to Albrook from another dungeon town. It took a couple of days to assemble the rescue team and they headed back at the moment they arrived.

Guild master Aurdhan and the mayor were rushing them all the way to the dungeon entrance. At one point they even thought that the old man would join them on the expedition.

They rushed back down past the 10th level that luckily had its boss killed beforehand. Now they were on the way towards the large lava lake that they passed by previously. The side passage had collapsed after the volcanic worms burst through the mountain.

This was a dungeon though and they worked in mysterious ways. It wouldn't be odd for the cliff passage to have mended itself back to health. The holes that adventurers produced with their high-powered attacks tended to vanish after a week of time. It was as if the dungeon was some kind of huge organism that had a slow healing factor.

They were traveling with three new adventurers. They were of a particular beastman race, they had short white beards, short tails, and long black horns. The most characteristic part about them were their rectangular eyes.

These adventurers were part of a mountain goat beastman tribe that was famous for their climbing skills. Even without any ropes, they had certain skills that allowed them to cling to the walls for exorbitant amounts of time.

The plan was for these three to climb down into the hole where the three people fell down. Each one would then attach a person to a harness that would allow them to carry them up without the need of holding on to them. They would become human-sized backpacks for these people while they climbed back up.

Even with these specialists, it was dangerous. No one knew if those volcanic worms would not appear suddenly once more. They also didn't know how far down that hole was, nor how well they could use their climbing skills on the dungeon walls.

"Okay we are at the lake, It's not that far now."

Lobelia said while waiting at the two knights that were as always lumbering behind the group of adventurers. The plan was for them to wait till the lava lake subsided, on the other side the noble encampment was still in place. They would meet up with Lord Percival and the others and then head over to the cliff with a smaller team of knights.

Everything was being kept on the down-low for now. It was clear that neither the adventurer's guild nor the nobles wished to disclose the fact that they let a magically gifted viscount's daughter be trapped in a new dungeon.

It wasn't the first time that an accident like this happened but this didn't mean that there would not be repercussions later. Depending on how much pull the viscount had, he could make it uncomfortable for the guild and the nobles.

"Wait... what's that..."

"Huh? Where?"

Armand squinted with his eyes while looking in the direction that Lobelia was pointing at. The lava had subsided a few minutes ago so they were waiting for it to cover up again. They would not risk attempting to cross it while it was uncovered as they would lose precious time.

Surprisingly something appeared right in the middle of this lake.

"Wait... that red armor..."

His jaw almost dropped as Armand saw someone that he was very familiar with. Lobelia as well, with her enhanced archer vision she could see a somewhat beat up-armored man emerge from the middle of this lake.

The shiny crimson armor that was his calling card was all banged up. The gauntlets were missing and it looked like the chest plate had been hit by a sledgehammer a couple of times. For some reason, the helmet looked in good shape.

"Is that Wayland... wait that blue... is that the noble girl?"

Wayland was the first one to appear, Lobelia could see him looking around before turning. It seemed that he was leaning down to help someone up and soon lady Lucille was right next to him. Then Agni appeared seemingly out of nowhere followed by a knight that she saw a couple of times before.

"What's going on? How are they all the way there... didn't they fall into that hole..."

Before the two could process the information they could see the group of three looking around. After realizing why they were actually at Lobelia could see the knight picking up the noble lady. They all took off sprinting towards where the group of adventurers was.

"Oh right..."

Lobelia realized what the problem was, the lake had been drained of lava for a few minutes. The timing that it would close up again had a certain pattern to it but this only became clear after you watched it for an hour and got ready to cross.

With no way of telling how much time they had, the group of three humans and one Ruby Wolf started running to safety.

"Will they make it?"

Lobelia cried out in shock as they were quite a ways away from where the two were now. It didn't seem that Wayland had the usual green light covering his armor which didn't make him much faster than the knight that was carrying the lady in his arms.

Armand along with Lobelia moved over to where the lake started but didn't enter. The three goat beastmen that were there for the climbing mission followed after them without being sure what was going on.

The group of adventurers had no way of helping as they could just wait and hope for the best. Running up to meet them halfway made no sense as none of them seemed injured.

"Oh no... look!"

About a quarter way through Lobelia spotted that the lava lake started expanding. Wayland was seen looking to the sides and shouting something to the knight next to him. The two started running slightly faster while the Ruby Wolf didn't trail that far behind.

The two running men in their confusion lost their chance to take off the heavy armor they were wearing. If they stopped now they would be losing more time than they would be gaining. It was a spring against time, the lava started closing in from the side and soon the path behind them was closed.

The lava lake sometimes became filled from the other side first, which also produced a somewhat larger wave going towards the end where Armand and Lobelia were standing.

"I don't think they are going to make it..."

This wave of burning death was approaching them. From what Armand and Lobelia were seeing, it didn't seem like the running speed was enough. It also didn't seem like Wayland's fancy armor was functioning correctly as he was a lot slower than usual.

"Stand back..."

Armand shouted while jumping into the part of the lake that was not yet covered.

"Hey, what are you doing, do you want to die with them?"

"Just shut up and watch..."

Armand took up a wide fighting stance with his legs spread apart and knees bent. It somewhat looked like a traditional karate stance but what he was up to, Lobelia had no idea.

His tanned body started turning red in a similar fashion as when he activated his body enhancement skill. There was a small difference though, this crimson color started moving towards his right fist.

Soon his whole forearm was glowing in red while his muscles contracted. He kept his eyes closed while concentrating, the veins on his hand looked like they were about to burst. Before he completed this technique he opened up his eyes and shouted.

"If you don't want to die then dodge it to the side!"

Armand's booming voice traveled towards the two sprinting men that could not help but notice him in the distance. It was just in time to see him throwing his large fist forward. Following this, they saw something strange.

They could hear something similar to a thunderclap. Suddenly giant tiger head emerged before them and traveled their way. It caused the ground under it to crack and pushed everything to the side while increasing in speed.

....

Roland could see Armand's strange Pugilist skill approaching. It carried a wave of strange non-magical energy that was on par with a high level tier 2 attack spell. He quickly moved to one side while Robert did the same.

Even when this attack passed by them, he could feel the wind pressure making his whole damaged armor rattle. He was almost pushed to the side by the residual wind pressure while Agni was luckily spared from it as he used his master as a shield.

Without looking back he continued to sprint as he realized what was the purpose of this attack. Robert on the other hand did a quick glance back, just in time to see the tiger head colliding with the mass of lava and pushing it back.

A giant explosion rocked the lava lake as the attack connected with the heavy mass of molten rock. This technique was strong enough to blast a large hole in the lake and also gave Robert and Roland precious time to escape.

While getting some of their clothes singed by the splashing molten lava. With one last long jump, they managed to get to the other side. Roland had to grab Agni by the collar and throw him towards the exit while almost getting his feet burned. Luckily he still had his fire-resistant boots on, so his feet didn't melt on the spot.

He ended up rolling on the ground while trying to remove the boots that had lava stuck to them. With a little help from Lucille and a simple water spell, they were able to douse the fire.

"Wayland... how did you end up in the middle of that lava lake? Weren't you stuck in that cavern?"

Lobelia popped her head out from behind Armand. Her older brother looked a bit gassed after using that strange skill but that didn't keep his sister from shoving him to the side to get the scoop.

"Ahh... It's a long story... we are tired... I need to rest..."

Roland was not really in the mood to talk about what transpired in the caverns below. The armor that he was wearing or at least what was left from it told part of the story.

After getting through the boss chamber they were rewarded by another array of dim-lit tunnels. There were many monsters there that started out from level 80 and down.

It was just as he had theorized before, he had opened up the back entrance to a hidden section of the dungeon. The sword-tailed boss was clearly a bonus section that would reward people with some good gear.

While they continued to travel they encountered weaker and weaker monsters. Traps and fake passages that made them go around in circles were something they got used to after a couple more days down there.

Then they finally arrived into a larger section. There were stairs going up and another runic lock that he was able to open. Considering it opened up a hole in the molten lake while it was empty from the lava, they could consider themselves lucky. Otherwise, they would have flooded the chamber below, then either died or got stuck.

This part of the dungeon was clearly designed to be entered after the lake cleared itself out. Without that knowledge, it would be very deadly to exit. Knowing this a party could easily get something to detect if the coast above was clear before going back out.

Now he knew, so if he ever decided to go to that pocket with the precious metals he would be sure to create a device that was able to detect the lava. It would probably take a while before he got back there. He was not capable of defeating that monster by himself.

The spot where he nabbed the Etherium ore might have actually been able to replenish itself with time. This meant that if he managed to create a transport route for himself, he would be rich. He could sell the metals and crystals or use them for fuel.

Even though he had his wind generators they lacked portability. He had not been able to develop a working battery, yet with that pocket of crystalized mana fluid, he would be able to power items outside his workshop.

After resting for a moment he finally got his sorry behind in gear. After standing up the first thing that he saw was a smirking Armand. He was puffing out his chest like he was some kind of hero. Roland already knew what the man wanted from him but the cocky attitude only made Roland incapable of thanking him.

“Why so quiet? Don’t you have something to say to your benefactor? Hm?”

He was actually willing to tell him that he did a good job but after the conceited tone, he changed his mind and a sigh escaped from his mouth.

“I don’t think we’ll ever get along, now move out of my way.”

“What’s with that attitude!? I saved your life!”

“Yeah.. yeah... wish you saved some brain cells while you were at it...”

After spending a week down in the dark, Roland was quite done with this dungeon. He just wanted to get out of here and take a cold bath. Giving a thank you to Armand was the least of his concern.

“Why you little...”

“Stop shouting you big idiot, can’t you see that they are injured!”

Lobelia finally spoke up. She could clearly see that Roland’s stance was shaky and that Robert had passed out after carrying Lucille in his hands for the whole run.

“We need to get Sister Kassia here!”

Armand begrudgingly stopped yelling after looking at the beat-up group before him. It seemed like they needed to either get them to the knight encampment or escort them out of the dungeon...

[Chapter 128 Time to return.](#)

“Lucille, you are alive!”

“Ahh...”

“Please calm down Charlene, I’m fine.”

A smiling blue-haired noble lady was being hugged by a young blond girl that went by the name Charlene. The two friends were now back together, the first thing this young earth mage did was toss herself at the ice mage’s dirt-covered body.

The other people around them were a bit surprised by the unlady way of acting. Most of the time Charlene was composed and acted as a proper noble lady of her status. Now, on the other hand, she was even sobbing slightly.

‘Did those two have such a relationship with each other?’

Roland had to take a step back after watching the two girls hug it out. He had come across this Charlene person before. From his point of view, the girl was more in line with all the haughty nobles that he knew.

Whenever she spotted him talking about runes with Lucille she gave him that look. One that told him that he shouldn’t associate with one of her friends. Most nobles did feel like the commoners were below them in any way shape or form.

This wasn’t anything out of the ordinary as he was just not considered part of their group. People tended to create their own small or big cliques, if someone wasn’t part of them then they didn’t belong. This was the same for these nobles. Only when accepted as part of their prestigious group they would start treating someone as a proper human being.

They were now all gathered outside the lake area. The mountain goat beastmen were tasked to go grab the Knights. With Roland, Robert, and Lucille being exhausted from the trip they were in no condition to make it over the lake again.

The knights had used the planned encampment and continued with their test even when Lucille was trapped. It seemed that accidents like this were somewhat included in the whole expedition.

Losing one of the mages was not apparently a big enough reason to not get a passing grade. Now Roland was curious if they would not get any demerits as the three people that fell down were able to return on their own accord. This depended on the instructor who was watching over this whole fiasco. He might even want to sweep it under the rug as he was not able to react in time to save a viscount’s daughter either.

“Knight Robert, please give me an explanation, how were you able to return here.”

The loud voice of Lord Percival moved Roland’s attention away from the two young girls hugging each other. Robert and him had already drunk some healing and stamina potions, all given to them by Lobelia.

Roland felt a bit ticked off by the tone of voice this noble was using. It was clear that he didn't think much of Robert as he did not use this harsh way of speaking when talking to either of the noble ladies.

Robert's facial expression that had gone milder after their experiences down in the dungeon reverted to its old stiff shape. His eyebrows went at an angle and he stood up straight while doing the usual knightly salute.

The perfect knight that was starting to show some human traits was back to his old self or at least that's how it seemed. Roland's only worry was him disclosing their run-in with the dangerous boss monster.

He had given them the option of backing out but not like a noble would see it like that. Roland could be held accountable for endangering nobles. This could bring various troubles his way, which he would like to avoid at all cost.

"Yes commander, I will make my report now!"

'Huh?'

While standing up straight Robert's eyes moved to the side and Roland could see him glancing at him for just a second. This took him a bit by surprise but after Robert started to speak out he realized why he was looking his way.

"After being trapped in the cave we discovered a passage that let us to a series of corridors, with Wayland's help we..."

'Wayland? Not the adventurer?'

It felt like Robert was finally treating him like a proper person, before the fall he mostly referred to him as 'Adventurer'. Roland continued to listen to this explanation and to his surprise, any information about the room filled with metals and the boss chamber was kept out of it. Robert even downplayed the number of monsters they needed to face after leaving the boss chamber.

The report that he gave informed Percival that they just found a series of underground corridors filled with bug-type monsters. Then at the end, they found an opening that led them to the middle of the lake.

"An exit from the tunnels?"

"Yes my Lord, but after the lava flooded, I fear that the entrance has been sealed.."

This was another lie, after they went outside the pathway closed itself automatically. Robert made it sound like the mechanism was a one-way exit.

"Good... at ease..."

Percival nodded with his head, he was not an adventurer so he was not that interested if there were any treasures below the dungeon. He was more concerned about passing this mission and not having a precious noble lady that also possessed a rare class to die on his watch.

Roland wasn't sure what to say, he wanted to thank his half-brother for keeping it a secret. Before he could do that a certain nun from the sun church appeared before him. Her hands were already glowing with the holy light.

"Mr. Wayland please don't move, I'll heal your wounds."

A miracle of healing appeared before him, Sister Kassia's hands glowed in golden light. When this light touched his skin he could feel a tingling feeling wash over him. He had drunk a healing potion beforehand but healing spells were slightly different.

They worked instantly, a tier 3 priest could even recover lost limbs if their magic was high enough. There were even some rumors that tier 4 healing classes were able to resurrect people with a loss to their experience and some memory loss.

If those rumors were true or not was hard to confirm. Tier 4 healers were all candidates for the pope position. It was a somewhat special class at tier 5 that could be used only by one person per church. This left all the main churches with one pope and only when they died would another pope be chosen.

Roland wasn't aware of how this all worked but the rumors said that the gods from these churches were involved in it. Thus getting a tier 4 healer in motion would require a lot of capital and power, probably only high aristocrats of the duke caliber and above could move someone like that into action.

While the nobles were busy with Robert and Lucille, Roland was able to catch up with his adventurer group.

"You've seen better days... at least you can just repair that armor of yours..."

Lobelia was the first one to speak up while Silvio moved in from the side and gave Roland a pat on the back.

"Good job, glad that you were able to make it out alive."

"You're tough for human, next time no slip."

Korgak chimed in with a one liner, then for some reason after seeing Silvio patting Roland's back he decided to come over and give one of his own. The half-orc was much larger than the tracker so his pat was a full time smack to his backplate. The already damaged armor rattled slightly while Roland had to take a step forward.

"Mr. Korgak please be more gentle, Mr. Wayland has been through a lot, he must drink a lot of water and rest!"

Sister Kassia shook her head at the large half-orc that somewhat dropped his head down. He was not sure what happened during the stay at the camp but he seemed to be afraid of her.

"Now then Mr. Wayland, let me recite a passage of our holy gospel while you recover!"

Roland's mostly neutral-looking face that was still covered by the helmet showed a frown. It seemed that this was the problem as the moment the gospel was mentioned the other party members started inching away from the nun.

“I think I’ll pass...”

Roland side-stepped Sister Kassia while she was reciting some strange passages from their version of the bible. Lobelia and Armand also cleared out from around them while the cleric continued her speech, it seemed that she really let them hear it during the camp stay when he was done.

After going through some awkward pleasantries with his party members, Roland headed over to Silvio. The party leader was glancing at the nobles that were in the process of looking over their own comrades.

Lucille was the center of attention but even Robert was greeted by the other knights. After spending some time with the two he started thinking slightly differently about nobles. He was still convinced that the exception does not make the rule and that most nobles were still less than pleasant to be around.

Silvio nodded at Roland while looking over his damaged armor but not commenting on it.

“Will we be returning now?”

Roland didn’t beat around the bush with his question. He was tired and his armor was rendered useless. After going through a couple of runic mending skills it barely was able to produce defensive spells. All of the mana stones had been broken during the scuffle with the boss and he just wanted to go home.

“That depends on them... we are still contractually obligated to stay with them. The one that makes the decision is that High Knight...”

Silvio motioned with his chin towards the older armored knight. This was the academy instructor that they came with and he would decide if this was over. The time they spent down here was over two weeks and they would probably need a day or two to get back.

“Sir Bertold, this won’t do. We must return this instant, there isn’t even that much time left for the test, Lucille has been through enough to think she proved that she can handle herself here!”

Roland perked up as the blond-haired noble lady started shouting. After she was done hugging Lucille she strutted over to the High Knight instructor by the name of Bertold.

The old knight in question looked slightly troubled by this request. He was probably weighing the pros and cons of this decision. Finally, after a moment of silence, he spoke out.

“Lady Charlene... I would normally be inclined to let you off but rules are rules...”

At first, the blond lady started to smile but her facial expression changed to a pout. Both she and also Percival were now talking with the High Knight.

“But Sir Bertold!”

“Now now young lady, let me finish.”

“This exercise was supposed to take a minimum of three weeks and we are a few days short, may I propose a small compromise...”

The voices of the group of nobles started to become more silent as they discussed something with each other. From what Roland could tell it was a positive proposition as the blond lady's pout turned to a big bright smile.

"They decided on something, I guess we are packing up..."

Silvio commented while covering a smirk with his hand. Due to his enhanced hearing, he could clearly hear what the nobles were discussing even though they were standing far away. Soon everyone else was clued in by the Knight commander, Lord Percival.

"Listen up everyone, we will return to our encampment..."

The first sentence didn't sound right but soon Roland knew why Silvio was smiling.

"Only half of our force will come with me while the rest remains with Lady Charlene and Lucille. We will only be returning to take the magic tents and the remaining provisions..."

From the order, it looked like they would be taking a smaller force to clear out the camp from what was left there. After hearing that Lucille was alive and well, half of them moved here while some people remained at the old encampment.

"We will then meet up with the adventurer party before the boss chamber and then head up to the city where we will stay for the remainder of the week..."

"Oh?"

"Aren't you glad Wayland, just relax, you'll be home soon enough. Isn't it great to have that Percival fellow on our side, he gave that old knight an offer that he couldn't refuse."

"An offer?"

Roland asked while not really sure of what Silvio was talking about. He did not hear any part of the conversation but not like he was listening to the nobles from the start. Silvio on the other hand was quite sneaky about it.

"Use your imagination, what could an old knight like that be looking for at this point in his life?"

Silvio gave him another pat on the back while moving out to do a sweep of the area. He left Roland with more questions without explaining much but he got the gist of it.

The tier 3 knight was already past his prime. This could mean that he was looking for a place to retire. Percival belonged to a count's estate, he might even be the heir of the whole estate. With a few good words here and there he could propose a position at the count's side, maybe even let the tier 3 knight become some kind of commander there.

'If it's like that then maybe...'

The nobles were to return outside of this dungeon but they would stay in the city for longer. It would look like the Knights stayed for three weeks down in the dungeon which would allow them to pass their test while also looking less suspicious when they returned. It seemed nice to have connections with high

nobles but why Percival used this card remained unknown to him. It didn't seem as if he would have failed, either way, was he really just being cordial towards the tired Lucile?

If Roland had to be truly honest, he thought this was the wrong decision. This only showed the young nobles that if someone had connections they could get away with murder. Even though they were trying to keep it hidden, probably some of the knights knew what was going on. Something like this would certainly not go down well during an actual war.

While shaking his head about this deal the rest of the people started moving. He was now separated from his two old companions while Agni remained. His Ruby Wolf had actually leveled up quite a bit thanks to the boss fight and then the many monster encounters after it. He would probably be evolving soon as he was already level 46 at this point.

“Woof!”

‘Tamed beasts have it easy...’

Roland patted the wolf on the head while grumbling that Agni had it too easy while leveling up. Even with his debugging skill he wasn't this fast.

“Let us head out!”

The knights seemed a lot more coordinated after the two weeks of being here. Now without the two slow mages in the party, they were even able to get through the lake in one piece.

While walking he could only think about it finally being over and that his identity was safely kept hidden away. He had to commend himself on adding a few more attachments to this helmet and having Bernir almost weld it in place.

The helmet visor that he was using was also slightly different and even when he opened it up, the top part of his face was covered. He had enough space to get food into his mouth without Robert noticing anything.

Sometime later they arrived at the boss room exit. They had to make a temporary encampment there while waiting for the second part of the knights. They needed to spend one more day here till they moved back up.

He noticed Robert and Lucille glancing his way from time to time but now he was back to his old party. The adventurers had their own encampment while the nobles spend the time together.

After not having much sleep for almost a whole week, he retired to his tent that he had to mostly set himself yet again. Armand had gotten the hang of setting these up, so he would not stay awake for that part.

Even while being stuck with the talkative Sister Kassia in his room he managed to fall asleep rather quickly. Unbeknownst to him, the woman prattled on for hours as due to his helmet she couldn't tell that he was dozing off.

The rest went well and without a hitch. The High Knight and Percival returned without getting ambushed by overleveled monsters and they all headed up. All of the knights had leveled up while fighting the tier 2 monsters in the lower levels so they had no problem with these tier 1 variants.

“Finally I’m out... I’m not going into this stinky dungeon for at least another month!”

Lobelia sprinted up the dungeon stairs and was the first one outside. The other adventurers were quite interested in the large party of knights and adventurers that were coming out. There was one person in particular that stood up. The beat-up armor was making a lot of noise and it looked like it was going to fall apart at any minute.

It was finally over, Roland could feel the clear air and even see the sunlight shining down into his visor. He had made it out in one piece and had gained a lot while doing it. What remained to do was to return home and count the coins...