## **Runesmith 135**

## Chapter 135 Family.

"What do you think they are talking about?"

"I don't know, maybe about their unyielding love for heavy plate armor?"

Lobelia replied to Armand's question while he inched towards Roland's house. The moment he did though a growling sound was heard. This sound was coming from a certain young Ruby Wolf that was guarding the entrance.

"Can't I just kick this thing, it's getting on my nerves."

Armand scoffed at Agni but Lobelia was quick to kick the back of his leg in protest.

"He is not a thing, he is Agni and he is a good boy! He is just protecting his home and if you tried I bet Wayland would just beat you up."

"Beat me up?"

"Yeah, like last time."

"Why you, that was..."

While the two were arguing Lucille was to the side. She was sitting in a wooden chair that Bernir lent her from his workshop. The two were looking at the comedy routine that these two were performing.

"They really are close with each other."

She giggled while hiding her mouth behind her hand. Roland's assistant just nodded but he did not reply. He was far too scared to do anything, with a genuine noble next to him he was not sure what to do. After hearing stories of people being thrown into slavery for being rude to nobles he was somewhat scared.

"A...aye they certainly are a lively bunch..."

Bernir was not sure what this was about but after taking a look at that Robert fellow he noticed the resemblance. He wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed but even he realized it.

Together with the conversation at the beginning, it looked like his boss was connected with the nobles. This could spell disaster while also being lucrative depending on what this connection was. From the quick fight it seemed that the two were related, was his boss some kind of noble bastard?

"They are really taking a while, I hope everything is alright. Mr. Bernir, maybe we should go take a look?"

Lucille commented after having drunk her tea that was made when Robert and Roland started talking.

"It should be fine, I don't reckon they will start another fight... I think?"

Bernir did not know how to reply to this question at all. The history between his boss and the noble was a big unknown. They did manage to calm down for the time being, so it was looking fine.

"You are right, it's better to give them some space!"

...

"Oh? So she still remembers me?"

"Surprisingly yes, this must be because of Lucienne's mage class."

"At least she has her elemental affinities..."

Roland leaned back in his chair as he had discussed a few things with his older brother. The conversation switched to the family members and Robert informed him about everything he knew.

There weren't really that many people from the Arden family that he cared about. Lucienne, his little sister that used to follow him around, had recently turned ten. With this came her ascension ritual and surprisingly she had gained the same class as he did.

Lucienne was Robert's full sister as she and Roland were only half-siblings. Francine the second wife was quite ecstatic as her standing in the family was cemented. Having a rare mage in the noble house was always seen as a boon.

There were many paths she could follow but it seemed that her fire affinity was the highest. Apparently, this matched her fiery nature as Robert stated that his mother had trouble controlling the little squirt.

"So she still remembers me?"

"Yes, she has an astonishingly good memory and she learns really fast."

Robert was smiling, it seemed that he was a doting big brother that was proud of his little sister. Apparently, like most mages her learning capabilities were above average. She found reading and learning quite easy.

There was a small problem due to this. Lucienne was able to vaguely remember her older brother named Roland. This brother had gone missing almost seven years ago. Thus the little girl had put it upon herself to find this missing brother.

"I hope no one is taking her seriously, just send her to the mage academy, she will forget about me soon enough..."

"I don't think it will be that easy..."

Robert painted a picture. Lucienne for one reason or another was very adamant in her beliefs. She was sure that her older brother was alive somewhere and that everyone should keep looking.

"Wait, she was sure that I was alive?"

"Yes, for some reason she was convinced and not even mother could talk her out of it. It turns out that Lucienne was right, how about I tell..."

"No, don't tell her I can't trust a child to keep a secret."

Robert frowned while Roland started thinking. Lucienne's fixation on him was something that he was not counting on. He also had a little theory about why his half-sister was so sure about her claims. There might have been a reason why she was convinced as one class in particular in this world had such skills.

'She might have the talent to be an oracle...'

Oracles were one of the main classes boasting capabilities to predict the future. Diviners, Seer's there were a few types but they all were under the umbrella of the magic classes. To get one of these classes a person would need to start out as a priest or a mage, then also gain a rare talent to go with it.

Lucienne's belief in Roland being alive might not have just been a feeling, it could be something backed by a magical skill. This skill might have not shown itself into the open yet or the girl might not have mentioned it to her parents for one reason or another.

It would not be strange if her fixation on him somehow activated this skill and let her confirm his status. These classes were rarer than the usual magical classes, her worth would skyrocket if she managed to get one.

If this was the truth, the people at the magical academy would probably find this out sooner or later. Lucienne would need to reach tier 2 to unlock one of those classes which would leave Roland with a limited time frame before his younger sister discovers his whereabouts.

'It feels like hiding was never an option...'

He was already discovered by Robert but there was still a chance to reason with him. The younger sister on the other hand sounded a bit more emotional. It could still be a red herring and she might never get the class.

Roland then steered the conversation in a different direction. Reyner and Edwin had left the knight academy a long time ago. They were busy working in the kingdom's army and gaining merits.

They were two years apart which caused them to butt heads together but Robert's info was limited. They apparently never interacted with him that much and so he did not really know what they were up to

Their father Wentworth has been a mystery as well. Robert could count the one on one encounters with him on one hand. It didn't seem that Wentworth interacted with his family much besides forcing them to eat at the table together whenever they were all at the estate.

The oldest sister Sophia had apparently married a viscount not so long ago. Dianna, who was a bit younger, was approaching that age as well and as always they were planning to marry her off to someone rich or influential.

Roland did not really remember his older sisters that much. Most of the time he tried to keep to himself while being trapped in the Arden estate. With a lack of interest from him, the others didn't seem to open up either.

Then the last one was Martha, his old maid that had tended to him in his youth. Robert could not tell him much besides seeing her sweeping around the estate. Hearing that she was still alive and well would have to be enough for now.

Roland was not the only one that was asking questions though. Robert started grilling him as his turn came. Roland had to explain his class but he only mentioned being a Runesmith but he was not sure if his older brother bought it. Haven being bested in a strength contest by a runesmith was a hard pill to swallow.

"Can I trust you to keep it a secret?"

""

Robert started thinking, there was a lot of information to process but after a moment he finally looked at Roland and nodded.

"On the Arden name, I shall make a vow to not disclose this information to anyone."

He was a bit surprised that he was able to get a vow out of his thickheaded brother. He knew that the man took being a knight very seriously.

Vows like this were not just spoken words, for someone that had a knight class a broken vow could cause them to lose the requirements for higher classes. Though if he switched to something else then it wouldn't matter.

The moment the vow was pronounced Robert's body began to shine. This light was something akin to a written contract, if Robert broke it he would suffer a debuff.

"I didn't think that you would go this far."

Roland was a bit stunned that he got this man to agree to his request this easily. Through their long conversation, he did figure out why Robert was acting this way. It was mostly due to Roland going missing and Robert maturing enough to feel bad about his younger days.

His conscience seemed to have weighed down on him. The days that he bullied his younger brother came back to haunt his dreams after he disappeared. This was also probably the reason why Robert had an emotional outburst earlier.

Going through close to seven years of regret only to find out that the brother he was worrying about was still alive, was enough to trigger rage.

"You are still my brother."

Robert commented while standing up, Roland on the other hand didn't know how to feel about this. The attachment to this family had withered with time, the man before him felt more like a stranger to him than a family member.

Still, he had to give it to him, he had earned some brotherly points for that vow he made. Even though Roland could never see himself as a true Arden this didn't mean he could not be friendly with some of the members.

The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb was an old misquoted saying. He was someone that believed in it as the bonds people made along the way were sometimes stronger than family bonds.

"I see, I'm surprised that you are the same Robert that I used to know, are you sure you're not some kind of changing in disguise?"

Roland replied while being surprised that this young man before him was the same young brat that he thought of a nuisance. Thanks to his mind being of an adult he never held the things against the young man. It was mostly an annoyance that he hoped to leave behind after he escaped the estate.

"Hey, what's that supposed to men?"

Their conversation was then brought to a stop as Agni's growls started getting louder.

"I think we are done here."

"Yes, remember to contact me."

Robert gave Roland his current address to send letters. He would also await contact through Lucille's magical crystal. This would really force him to buy one. With it Robert could even buy the services of other mages to call him, he would just need to right number to reach him.

"What's all this noise?"

Roland opened up the door to the outside, there he saw a maddened Armand shaking his fist at Agni. His Ruby Wolf was quite menacing, his teeth were out on display. Lobelia was also there, clinging to Armand's waist as she tried to pull him away from Agni.

"Woof!"

The moment Agni noticed Roland he snorted at Armand and turned around. His hind legs did a digging motion as if he was burying some excrement that he made. He then slowly moved to the side of his master while leaving Armand with a red face.

"Stop bothering my wolf or I'll tell the guild master that you weren't doing your job properly."

"Teach that mutt some manners first!"

Armand was clearly mad about Agni nibbling on his ankle.

"Oh right, you're going to pay for that, right?"

"Huh?"

Roland pointed to his busted gate that Armand shoulder tackled into scrap wood and metal.

"Hey that was an emergency you can't fault me for it..."

"Of course I can, I can also report it to the guild."

Armand was clearly mad but he couldn't do much about it. The gate was trashed and after he arrived inside the fight was already over.

"Mr. Armand was only doing his job, don't worry I'll cover the costs of your gate Sir. Ro... um, Sir. Wayland."

Lucille had to stretch out after standing. Robert had already walked over to her after removing himself from Roland's house. She was already aware of his true name as she was given the short version.

She also knew that he didn't want the people in the town to know that he was the son of a Baron. Luckily Armand was a bit late to the party and neither he nor Lobelia were able to hear the previous conversation.

Roland was also back to wearing his helmet, all so that his face could not be compared to Robert's. Armand wasn't really the problem here, Lobelia on the other hand had enough brain matter to figure things out.

"Ah right, I didn't get to show you how the shield works..."

Bernir moved over with the runic shield that was made for Robert. Before they could leave he would need to show the last trick of this shield.

"It's not much but it could help you push a troublesome enemy away from you. Also please don't go past the rope..."

"I won't!"

Lucille shook her head and flailed her hands around as she was the main reason that Roland's secret got out.

Roland moved over to the backyard that had a new hole in it.

With now the shield back in his hand, he demonstrated its fifth function. With a firm grip, he injected his mana into all of the runes. This caused the shield to light up again while sending out a burst of condensed energy.

This was a magic that would push anyone in front of the user away. It had enough magical energy to even force the larger beasts away. This spell had no elemental affinity and was more akin to a physical pushback.

"This spell is called Repulsion, don't confuse it with wind-based spells."

"A repulsion spell, how interesting."

Lucille commented while Robert got his shield. With a bit of training, he would learn how to handle this item. With this test product, Roland had also gotten a bit of an insight into the market.

It would be hard to sell an item like this as most adventurers would not be willing to take the time to train with a multipurpose tool like this. While in combat it would be hard to concentrate, a blunder that could activate the wrong spell effect could cost someone their life.

Finally, it was time to say goodbye to his long-lost brother. Just before the exit that was ruined by Armand, Robert decided to turn around. He held out his hand towards Roland for a handshake.

While feeling slightly awkward, Roland took the hand of his half-brother. They shook on it while nodding, he wasn't sure what Robert was implying but he nodded his head as their hands parted.

Soon Roland and Bernir were left to their own devices. He would probably need to explain a few things to his assistant now but before he could speak up, Bernir was first.

"You don't need to tell me, anything boss, I don't care who you really are, you could be the reincarnation of Solaria for all I care!"

He laughed out loud while Roland just took down his helmet. With no Robert here anymore there was no real reason for him to go around in heavy armor.

Roland looked down at the red-bearded Bernir and nodded.

"Thank you, now let's fix this gate before it gets dark..."

"Aye, I'll go get the nails."

"Woof!"

"You want to get the nails Agni?"

Bernir laughed at the ruby wolf that started wagging his tail and the two made their way towards the shed. It seemed that it was finally over, in two days the nobles would be gone and he could finally continue with his life...

## Chapter 136 Preparing for business.

'There they go...'

It was about ten in the morning and a group of knights was moving out from Albrook city. He could see a nice-looking carriage in which his new noble 'friend' was occupying. This was clear by how close his half-brother was sticking to the carriage.

'What do I do now...'

Roland had a decision to make, it didn't seem like Robert would be betraying him. The vow was made, by how seriously Robert took this whole knight business it didn't look like he would go back on it.

There were of course ways to break such vows, ones that didn't result in the vow taker getting any debuffs and curses. Though they were extremely costly as they required the help of rare items or people with rare classes to remove. Thus being betrayed by his brother wasn't out of the picture just yet.

Then there was the problem with his younger sister Lucienne that could find him when she got older. Her being an oracle or deviner was not a sure thing yet. Many events could transpire during one's life which could take his sister in a totally different direction.

'Does it even matter at this point?'

Roland turned around while heading back into the adventurer guild. There was a new thought going through his head, one that would end this all. It was just to go tell his father everything and be done with it.

At this point, his class path was already cemented. It would be hard for his father to salvage this situation and force him to turn into a knight at this point. His class was also special, so it would probably be seen as a boon for the whole Arden estate.

The problem with that was that his money-making capabilities were too high. He could very well see himself being locked away in the estate smithy working the whole day just to make money for the family.

Then there was the whole assassination attempt. He didn't expect his father to do much about it as the only witness was eaten by a bunch of dungeon monsters.

Assassination attempts and nobles went hand in hand. Unless the heir was set in stone there would be tension between the siblings. Some even saw it as a trial between the youths, the one that remained would have proven themselves as the best person for the position.

He was not a knight or a mage, if he proclaimed that he did not wish to inherit the estate then there was a possibility that his siblings would just leave him alone. After talking with Robert he saw that there was a possibility of co-existing with his family members.

Even though he might be able to somehow move past that assassination attempt. This didn't mean that he wanted to be involved in noble affairs. It would still be a big pain in his posterior to have his overbearing father looming above him.

'I'll just wait, no use getting involved just yet.'

He decided to not reveal all of his cards. There was still a lot of time for him to build up his operation. Even if his sister came looking for him it would probably be at least five or even ten years from now. If she was even allowed to travel was also up to debate.

She was still a woman and in this world noble women had one main purpose, to produce heirs for the man of the house. Would this special class be enough to save her from this fate remained to be seen.

Even with that, girls of noble birth were still expected to be married by the age of thirty. It was seen as strange if a woman by that age wasn't able to produce at least one child. There were a few exceptions as always but this required a lot of personal strength.

Something like this existed for the commoners as well but mostly for the farmer and laborer side. The lady adventurers didn't adhere to these norms and could more or less do what they wished.

It was actually quite a common occurrence for the women adventurers to be girls that run away from a forced marriage. The adventurers guild offered them an escape but they needed to take a big risk. Not all of them ended up in a favorable position after the years, some even returned back home to live an easier life.

'Glad I wasn't stuck in a girl's body when I came to this world.'

The doors of the adventurer's guild opened up and a Roland in a set of armor walked in. Now with no nobles remaining in the city he didn't care about being seen. His brother that he was hiding from had also seen through his disguise.

The only thing he would try to avoid is being recognized as a noble. His resemblance to Robert was there but there were enough differences for most people not to notice. Even Lobelia wasn't able to piece it together so it would probably be fine.

"Welcome, Mr. Wayland."

"Good morning."

Elodia called out to Roland while moving out from behind the counter.

"The guild master has informed me about everything, I'll be showing you around today."

Today was a somewhat special day. His contract was signed and he needed to start his work. Elodia here was to show him the way towards all the affiliated adventurer stores. Some of them were directly here while others were sprinkled through the city.

"Let's start with the shops inside the guild."

"Yes, I'll be in your care."

Roland nodded while Elodia took out some kind of file. In it were probably all of the information about each shop.

The first one was built to the side of the adventurer's guild and could be accessed by one of the doors in the back corridor. This was also the side that Roland and Elodia made their way in.

On the inside, he could see various bladed weapons and armors alike. This was the back of the shop so they weren't as neatly placed or organized. He could see a few people carrying these items from here to the front of the shop where they would probably be presented to the buyers.

"This is the main guild shop, you can come here and take any wares for enchanting."

"Good day."

A rough-looking man looked at them. He was wearing a bandana over his head and had a scruffy beard to go with it.

"Good morning Mr. Russel, let me introduce you to Mr. Wayland."

Roland looked to the old man that was clearly checking him out.

"This is the Runesmith? Isn't he a bit... young?"

It was clear that his age would be a problem. Most craftsmen started out after getting their first tier, 2 class. This mostly happened in their early twenties while at about thirty they would start becoming proper masters at the craft.

"Don't worry Mr. Russel, when it comes to runecraft then Mr. Wayland is very distinguished."

"Distinguished?"

The old man glanced at the runic gauntlets that Roland was wearing and just nodded.

"It does look runic..."

It was clear that this man here would not really be able to appraise the runes for their worth. He was more of a normal worker that just hung around in the shop.

"Mr. Wayland is free to take the items from here so be sure to accommodate him."

"If it's the order from the top, then I can't do much about it."

Russel just shrugged and finally left to go tend to the shop.

"I must apologize for Mr. Rusell's behavior."

"It's fine."

Roland didn't care much, respect had to be earned and not given freely. After the runesmithing goods started popping up he would probably change his tune.

While they were here Roland picked up one of the blades and looked over it. With his appraisal skill, he was able to see the grade and the materials that the items here were made from.

"Would it be enough for me to make a list of requirements and someone picking them up for me later?"

There were quite a bit of weapon and armor parts in here. It would be quite troublesome if he needed to go through each one by himself. He was not willing to enchant blades of lower quality or that were made with non-magic-resistant metals. Someone would need to go through all of these and pick out the ones that were worth investing time into.

"That wouldn't be a problem."

"Great, my assistant will bring you the list and you can also give him the goods... Or perhaps you could just send someone to deliver them to my house directly?"

Bernir would be utilized as an errand boy to his fullest potential. Though now after he also became a tier 2 armorsmith Roland was feeling bad about making him do such tasks. It would be much better for Bernir to practice his craft and not waste time by constantly going on fetch missions into the city.

"House delivery? Think that wouldn't be a problem."

Elodia nodded while also writing something down. Soon they left the adventurer guild and headed towards the city. There he visited a couple of shops and smithies. After going through a few he noticed something.

'Not a dwarf in sight...'

The craftsmen and craftswomen were all from other races. He wasn't sure if this was a coincidence or if the guild master was just trying to usurp the union's grasp on this city. Albrook was still young; it would probably take a few more years for everyone to entrench themselves.

This was something only a big company like the adventurer's guild could do. Not even the dwarven union could just outright ban anyone involved with the guild, they would go bankrupt. The dwarves were dependent on the adventurers, who went through weapons fast. The armors also needed constant repairing.

Not that this meant that there weren't ways that they could make it difficult for the guild-run shops. Dropping down the prices and offering discounts for everything would quickly spell disaster for the guild-owned shops.

The other revenue stream would be the nobles and their military organizations. They were quite large but with so many dungeons everywhere the adventurers took up quite the bulk of their operation. Unless there was some kind of war effort in the background the union depended on adventurers to sell their wares.

Finally, they were at the last store, after this Roland would be finally able to go home and resume his work.

"This will be the last spot. The person inside is also both an armorsmith and a weaponsmith."

"This is..."

"Oh, does Mr. Wayland know this shop?"

Roland was standing in front of the store that he visited a few days ago. It was the same one that he picked the shield up for Robert.

"I've been here once."

Soon the two entered the store and were met with a lack of customers. This was also something that was the same in all the other stores. It was clear that the dwarven union was making it hard for all the other craftsmen to make a living.

From what Roland could tell this was a basic tactic to get rid of their competition. The union had vast resources, with this it was easy to undercut the other craftsmen that needed to make a living to survive.

Through this, it was also clear to him how the guild master managed to get this many stores to sign a contract with him. They had no other choice and probably had no love for the union's tactics.

"Be right with you..."

After entering the store he could hear a dinging sound. It was the sound of metal hitting metal. This shop had its own smithy on the other side and it was clear that someone was working. After a few minutes of waiting the store owner that he saw a few days ago finally showed up.

"Oh? Well isn't it Mr. Runesmith ...hm?"

The large woman looked a bit sweaty. She stopped for the moment as she saw Roland before her, this time around he was not wearing a helmet.

"Not bad, I'll give you an eight and a half. Maybe in a few years, you'll be a nine but you'd need to be taller to get a ten."

His previous score of six was raised after his face was seen. He was already quite tall but the woman was still a few centimeters over him. Roland didn't think that he would be able to grow any more than this, which would leave him as a nine.

"This is Ms. Dyana, she is one of the blacksmiths working with the guild, some of her wares were on display at the main guild store."

"I see that you are already acquainted with Mr. Wayland here, he will be working with us."

"Oh, he will?"

Dyana got closer to where Roland and Elodia were and quickly delivered a smack to Roland's back. Luckily for Roland, he had enough strength to tank this hit without falling down on his face.

"Great, maybe some enchantments can make me sell something, I'll be counting on you, handsome."

"Ah... sure."

He just nodded while the large woman became more handsy. Roland could even feel something soft press into his side as the woman got closer.

"So what do you need? Swords? Axes? Maybe spears or armor? I can make it all."

The woman possessed both the armorsmith and weaponsmith classes and was close to level one hundred. By the looks of the wares here he would have to agree that she was a better blacksmith than he was.

"I would need items made from deep steel or similar metals that can resist mana degradation in the runes."

"Mana degradation huh?"

The woman finally let Roland go while she started thinking. Most regular smiths didn't really care about things like that as they just used the best available metal. It didn't particularly need to be good for enchanting as long as the weapon could kill monsters.

"How about these?"

Dyana handed Roland a longsword which he then quickly checked with his analyzing skill.

HighA sword made by a competent craftsman...

He could even see the dimensions, the whole sword was 120 centimeters long while the bladed part was at 105.

"It will do for now..."

Roland mumbled while looking at this sword but his words were taken a bit more seriously than he had thought.

"Hey kid, what do you mean it will do for now?"

When he looked up to the woman that was all smiles previously he could see her maddened face. It seemed that she took his comment badly as if he was mocking her craft. Craftsmen that were proud of their work certainly were not good at taking criticism.

"I apologize, this is a fine sword. I didn't mean it like that."

"Then how did you mean it?"

"It's made from materials that are limiting to my craft, have you ever heard of a rune forge?"

"Rune forge? Isn't that something that those midgets like to use to get their alloys?"

"Yes, Something like that..."

Roland quickly started explaining. This was a guild run store and he had already discussed a few things with the guild master. What he was getting here at, is that he wanted to produce special ingots for the blacksmiths that were working with him.

They would then produce wares from these fantasy metals that wouldn't require external mana stones like the sword that Dyana gave him here.

"Ha ha, I see now, should have said that sooner! Sorry about that."

Dyana laughed some more and started vigorously patting Roland's back. He was really forced to tank those heavy hits but thankfully Elodia was here with him.

"Ms. Dyana please stop, Mr. Wayland looks uncomfortable."

"Oh, does he now? He looked happy just a minute ago."

The two women started glaring at each other for some reason while he was left standing in the middle. He coughed into his hand to get their attention.

"... I'll be sending a list over to the guild to gather some equipment for the initial runesmithing."

The first batch of runic weapons would be made with his traditional mana stone technique that left them on the outside. Then if they are successful in selling them they could introduce the improved version that would also cost more.

With that his visit to the shops was over, a lot of work awaited him and his assistant. With so much to do it might soon be time to expand his business to the next level.

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Deep inside of a sandstorm, two vague figures could be spotted. The surrounding area was nothing but sand with no vegetation or water anywhere.

Suddenly a monstrous sandworm burst from beneath the ground charging at the two cloaked figures. The monster opened up its toothy mouth that would easily be able to devour a full-grown man.

The creature descended at one of these figures but suddenly the larger person's arm started twitching. It expanded in size while turning into something resembling a blade. As the monster descended it was promptly sliced in two pieces by this monstrous sword arm that this person produced.

The sandworm creature fell down to the ground before these two strange figures stopped.

"I hate this place, I have sand in my underwear. How much longer will we be here?"

A female voice could be heard from the smaller figure while the other one that changed their arm into a sword remained silent.

"The high priest was graceful enough to give us another chance, we must prove ourselves."

"Ye, ye. The high priest, blah blah. This all because of some stupid kid, I hope he suffered a painful death."

"I agree, that child dared to desecrate the holy artifact, he deserves to suffer, his death... was not certain..."

"Not certain? What are you on about? There is no way he could have survived a stab from my blade!"

The woman screamed out in a maddened rage which was mostly silenced by the continuous sandstorm.

"Calm yourself and focus on the task at hand."

The woman gave out a sigh while walking through these sandstorms. Even though the winds were strong enough to fell a tree these two seemed to be just fine. Soon the monster corps was swept away by the sands as the two vanished within the desert storm.