

Runesmith 185

Chapter 185: Blasting away.

“...”

Roland rolled over to the side and looked at an unoccupied pillow. This was something that he had gotten only due to Elodia as from time to time she stayed for the night. Without her around it looked out of place but it reminded him of the previous couple of days.

Finally, after all these years he had managed to reveal his big secret to someone. This time without it being forceful like with his older brother Robert. To his surprise his partner had a little tale of her own, while it wasn't as dramatic as his, she was still shaken up by it.

From what he could tell, the priest that Armand did a number on was probably alive. They left him beaten and bloody there but he did possess a tier 2 class. Thankfully Armand managed to get a drop on the priest that wasn't a very physical class.

But they would probably face some charges if they were ever spotted in the region this incident happened. Elodia apparently did some digging into the issue after gaining the adventurer guild position.

To her knowledge, there was no wanted poster issued for her or for the others that came with her. There could be various reasons for that, one would be that the priest survived or that the guards didn't bother with it. They all came from a bad neighborhood, it wouldn't be strange if they just ignored the issue altogether.

Thus, for the most part, none of them were expecting their past to bite them in the behind. Supposedly Armand even proposed to check their old town of origin out if he ever got a job close to that area.

Elodia being Elodia, of course, thought that was a terrible idea, if the priest was alive and recognized Armand he could get into a heap of trouble. Roland had to agree with her. It would also be unwise to put a reconnaissance mission in Armand's hands.

'Knowing Armand he'd just attack a different priest. I think I have grown sentimental these past years...'

Normally Roland would not care if something happened to Armand but for one reason or another, the big idiot started growing on him. The two also managed to talk to each other without a fight almost breaking out.

“That's enough moping around, I have work to do.”

After a quick roll to the side, he decided to finally get up. A busy day of crafting was before him as this would probably be the last time he was using the old smelter. Everything was ready and most of the work had been done. Now without the Orphanage problem looming over his head, he could think about other more pressing issues.

“Morning Boss.”

“Morning Bernir, hope you won't be passing out today, I intend this to be the last time.”

Roland replied to Bernir that had recovered since passing out from heatstroke. He and his large wife were ready to do some work.

“My heat and fire resistance has gone up, you don’t have to worry about me boss!”

Bernir flexed his biceps while puffing out his chest. Dyana that was to his side rolled her eyes while pinching some of that belly fat that was on her hubby.

“It would be nice to not have to carry your passed-out body for once, think you need to stop drinking so much you are getting fat.”

Roland smiled slightly while watching the antics of these two. After the pinch Bernir was quite combative for once, he really did love drinking that was for sure.

“How could you even mention taking away my favorite pastime, don’t you have any love for your handsome husband?”

“Okay you two, save this pillow talk for your own home, let us go to work!”

While it was an interesting exchange between a married couple, there were more important things to do. After being rushed by their boss the two could not complain and they all spent the remainder of the day in the workshop.

This time around they were finally able to add the finishing touches to the new forge and smelter. Both of the new creations were made from aether durasteel with a pinch of red mythrill. This combination would allow Roland to even work with actual mythrill if he so desired.

“Finally it’s done, I guess your resistance did go up but we also spent less time.”

It was finally over, both his assistant and his wife were on the side. Even though they were both covered with sweat they had smiles on their faces. Just like him, they were craftsmen and for people like them, there was nothing better than seeing your creations take shape.

“This calls for a toast!”

Of course, Bernir was quick to propose a bout of drinking but for Roland, this wasn’t the end but the beginning. With the new forge and smelter now operational he could finally start improving his weapons.

Then there was the deal that he made with Arthur Valerian. While he had informed the young lord that it would take some time for him to fashion a worthy prototype he couldn’t wait too long. There was no contract between them so Arthur could pull back his support at any moment.

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At minimum, he had to fashion a golem that would be worthy of the lord’s name. If he just pushed forward an inferior product his new backer could decide to make it hard for him. He was also itching to see how much gold the merchants in the city would be willing to spend for one of his creations.

Then there was the last and perhaps the most important issue, the secret chamber in the dungeon. The materials that he had unearthed from there were slowly running out. Most of it went to the new magic smelter and forge. Part of it he had to sell off to the black market as he needed money for other things.

'I'd like to present a spider drone for the auction house, one made from aether durasteel. The current deep steel models aren't very resistant, with some of that etherium I gathered, I'll be able to improve on the magical output and they should be far more responsive to any commands...'

The biggest problem with his current drones was that he designed them for himself. No one could just access the runic programs via their skills as he could. The magical machines needed to be able to perform specific commands.

Luckily for him, there were some basic golem directives that he had gone through his years of research. In about a month's time, he believed that he could produce a golemic product that would be fit for the masses.

Thus it was time to work, even though Roland wasn't given a proper deadline he knew that making his new 'ally' wait would not be wise. Mary the maid would also be given some tasks to procure some products from the merchants. He was unable to create everything himself even with the ores from the dungeon.

Days turned to weeks as he continued to slave away at his workshop. Most would not believe that he was someone in the graces of the city lord as he worked as if his life depended on it.

This was all done so that he would be able to quickly get back into the dungeon below. While his resources were not quite as low yet, something else lingered in his mind. The secret chamber was hidden behind that wall and the tier 3 monster that he saw there.

If he was able to kill the monsters roaming that other dungeon, he would be able to quickly level up again. With higher levels came better skills and more strength that he needed. In his mind, unless he attained tier 3 he would continue to feel restless.

.....

"You wanted to see me, boss?"

"Yes, is everyone here? Great, wait a moment, I wanted to show you something."

After some days had passed Roland had managed to repair all of the spider drones along with the mule golem. Everything was almost ready for his second expedition where he intended to not only gather materials.

Before leaving though, he designed a few new toys for his assistant and others. Bernir, Elodia and even Dyana were here. They were all gathered in Roland's underground workshop where he usually tested his long-ranged weaponry.

At the end of it by the wall, there were some targets made from wood. They had vague human shapes and a few circles drawn on here and there to serve as targets.

"Is that some kind of new wand? Why is it so big... and why does it have that cylinder on the side?"

All four people in the room were gathered around one table, on it there was something that the other three didn't recognize. If a person from the world that Roland came from were here, they would quickly know what this was from how it looked.

From the outside, it had a similar shape to a rifle. The item had a proper stock that could be held against the body for aiming. There was a trigger, a grip, and even something that looked like an ammo holder that had a cylindrical shape but was on the side and a bit in front of the trigger.

Even though it looked like some kind of strange-looking rifle, there was one big problem. When looking at the barrel where the projectile would normally come out, there was no hole. Instead of it being hollow on the inside it was a thick rod made from metal.

Everything in this construction was made from metal and covered in runic inscriptions. To anyone from this world, this was clearly a strange runic staff. Then there was a strange little dial on the opposite side of the cylinder part.

"Ah yes, I guess you'd call this a runic rifle? But I guess calling it a runic staff or wand wouldn't be that off, but it will be faster if I just showed you."

Roland picked up this runic rifle into his hands and placed himself at a distance from the target dummies at the end of this chamber. This room had been made with space in mind so the ceiling was high at about four meters. Then the distance from the targets was about thirty meters.

The three other people that were gathered here just looked at each other while shrugging. They all knew that Roland had a trouble communicating with others, so they waited for him to demonstrate.

He took aim while holding the gun with both his hands. Even though he was a person from the modern days, he didn't really know much about rifles. At a base level, he did know that a gun used ammunition to produce pressure in the gun barrel to propel the projectile forward.

Luckily for him, the one that he was using didn't need something like this to work, instead, it could operate thanks to the portable batteries that he made for his golems. Thanks to this invention he was able to create this weapon that could give people with lower levels and non-combative classes a fighting chance.

Boom

A bolt of blue energy flew forward and connected with what would be the chest area on the wooden dummy. The magical blast was enough to create a nice hole while also making the whole target shake.

"I need to optimize the sights some more, I'll probably fashion a laser pointer instead if you can't get the hang of it, is something wrong?"

"Well..."

The three looked at each other while looking somewhat unconvinced. This time around Elodia was the one to speak up.

"I think what Bernir was trying to say is that we probably won't have enough mana to use a large wand like that, I can barely use that little gift that you gave me, remember?"

"I knew you would say that but you don't need to worry, you won't need to use your own mana to make this fire, look at this."

Finally, he showed off the cylinder, inside of it was one of the batteries that he used for his golems. Thanks to it anyone would be able to use this gun by just pressing the trigger and taking aim.

In reality, this wasn't anything groundbreaking as other craftsmen in this world had created similar products. The biggest difference was the power source, while they used mana fluid or crystals he used his own rechargeable batteries. With the closed cylinder from the outside, no one would be able to tell this fact.

The batteries that he produced were probably the biggest goldmine that he was sitting on. Regretfully he didn't have the ability to come forward with his design. One of the reasons was that it would be difficult to convince people that these batteries were better than mana crystals.

Then there was the actual problem, if people took them seriously he was afraid that they would try to force his secrets out of him. It was renewable energy and they only needed to create more generators to fuel them.

If the big players in the kingdom found out that they could have unlimited magical energy for their magical weaponry, he wouldn't be surprised if the high mages came knocking. Luckily it wasn't that difficult to pass these off as cylinders for mana fluid instead, most people would not even think of looking inside.

"Really, I don't need to use my mana? ... Can I try it, boss?"

"Sure go ahead."

Roland nodded while Bernir grabbed the rifle and started looking over it. The runic designs that were on it were now dim, but when they fired off they were quite bright with a blue glow.

"I think I heard of these sorts of weaponry but I think they were mostly used during the war efforts."

Dyana commented while Bernir took aim, without this gun working on pressure it didn't have that big of a kickback. Even when he pulled the trigger his arm didn't twitch that much but instead of hitting the target he connected with the ceiling right above it.

"Oops... this is interesting..."

"You should try looking through that sight, it will help you aim."

Roland helped Bernir position himself and gave him some pointers for aiming.

"Also can you see this dial on the other side, try moving it forward and then using it."

Bernir nodded while feeling that there was something on the other side, with a click the dial was turned to point on a green dot. Now he took aim again while looking through the sight but instead of the blue bolt of energy getting hurled forward a large blast of wind was created.

This time around he was pushed back and fell on his posterior. From a regular magic bolt spell, it was changed to a burst of wind energy.

“The weapon has several options, if you set it to the red dot it will create a constant stream of flames that goes in a cone, the one you just used isn’t lethal but will push anyone away, it could probably also cause an arrow to curve away from its course. Go ahead, test them all out, it belongs to you now.”

“Damn, thanks boss... but warn me next time...”

“Hey Dyana, there is one for you too there, you can go test it out and as for you Elodia, I made something smaller...”

Elodia was lacking in strength, she would not be able to hold a rifle made from heavy metal without her hands shaking. For her, Roland created a smaller version that looked more like a pistol with the battery cylinder in the middle of it. This made it somewhat look like one of those old western revolvers.

“This one can’t produce that much magical energy but it should be enough to even injure a lower leveled tier 2 warrior.”

Elodia looked at the revolver that was handed to her with curious eyes. She was not much for violence but after seeing Bernir and his wife have fun shooting at the targets, even she started to feel curious.

“But if you find yourself against a more difficult enemy, remember to run instead, and don’t forget about those runic scrolls I gave you.”

“You worry too much...”

She smiled at him while awkwardly holding the runic gun with both hands without trying to press the trigger. Roland had already given her various card-sized runic scrolls with various effects so this new weapon was just clogging up her already large arsenal.

“Well, I have to go back to the dungeon, I’ll feel better if you at least keep this by your side when you are in the shop but you’ll need to learn how to use it or you might hurt yourself instead...”

While these weapons didn’t guarantee anything, a bandit would think twice about attacking if they were against someone that was able to fire off magical arrows at them from afar. This was the best part about ranged weapons like this, they were easy to use yet hard to master. Almost anyone could point it and hit something if they fired off enough.

“If you think so.”

Elodia just nodded while slowly pointing the weapon at the target as she was instructed. As she pulled the trigger though, the flash of blue light caused her to close her eyes while shifting the runic revolver above her head to hit the ceiling.

“You guys need to stop hitting the ceiling...”

Roland groaned while taking the gun out of his girlfriend’s hands, it seemed that he would need to spend some time helping them to aim.

Chapter 186: Testing grind area.

You have defeated a Bladed Volcanic Xornotaurus

“I think I’m getting better at this.”

The neck of the large dinosaur exploded before him just like before. His grenade throwing abilities had clearly leveled up as he didn't even need to aim that much. Just like before the enemy was the same type and used exactly the same tactics. Roland had already figured out the best way to tackle this monster and none of his golems had been damaged in the process either.

"Awoooo!"

"No, you can't have the mana stone this time either..."

Agni curled up his tail while looking at the dead creature before him. His mouth was watering while looking at the beast with the biggest mana stone that he had ever seen.

"Don't be a glutton, you already devoured so many on our way here, you're going to pick up some strange skills..."

Roland gave out a sigh while cutting a hole in the dead monster. This time around he didn't plan on taking out his runic chainsaw. The monster parts would fetch some coin but he would rather spend the time on the more important issue, the secret room.

'Let me just check this chest out and be on my way... doesn't seem to be a mimic, is my luck increasing?'

After checking for traps and hidden monsters the chest was opened up. Inside they found a set of twin daggers with a simple burning enchantment. They were made from deep steel which at this point was very common.

"More crap..."

This was somewhat disappointing as these daggers weren't of good quality. For someone who could create better runic versions of the same magical effects, this was nothing. If he put it together with the items that he made, he felt like he was lowering the prestige of his own store.

'Maybe I'll make some kind of discount bin for items that don't have much worth or don't sell that well?'

While thinking about some shop improvements he tossed the daggers into the golem mule. This was already his second time here, now that he was more familiar with the road and the monsters lurking here, his speed increased.

'If this continues, I won't need to prepare any traps for that Xornotaurus anymore, but it is peculiar that the boss never changes...'

He could only shrug at this strange occurrence as instead of the boss changing, what changed were the creatures outside this chamber he was in. Without any time to contemplate this issue, he moved towards the second secret opening that led outside this room.

It took him back to the long maze filled with many corridors but no more monsters. Those only appeared when he came out of the area with the various minerals. Just like before, this could be left to Agni as he was itching to sink his fangs into some mana stones.

'Doesn't seem that anyone has been here, my secret is safe for now.'

Without waiting he hurried his mule golem up. Within it were his spider drones that he had all repaired. Thanks to the preexisting schematics it wasn't that hard to remake these golems. Bernir and his wife were able to produce them if he asked them to. The runic program they run on could also be copied over without it taking that much time.

Thus he was able to recuperate the loss of the spider drone that he had lost the last time he was here. The one that he gave to Arthur Valerian was a newer design that he made separately so he was back to having six little helpers again. While for now all of them were busy drilling holes in the ground, he was standing before the entrance to the other secret part.

'The tier 3 monster should not be able to see me...'

Roland needed to remind himself that the beings inside could not see him even though he could see them. With a pickaxe in his hand, he started striking the area that would lead him to his new grinding spot, that is if he learned to use it.

'The layer isn't that deep but it's somewhat hidden behind rocks...'

It only took him about five minutes to create an opening big enough for one of his spider drones to fit through. Just like before, he could hear the strange combination of heavy armor and bones rattling about coming from the hole he made. There were no tier 3 monsters in the vicinity yet but this just gave him more time to think about his next action.

'Theoretically, those monsters can't enter through this gap even if I make it larger, but what of their weapons or magical attacks?'

Roland had read some books about such occurrences but there wasn't much data to go off of. Finding a spot where two dungeons connected was quite rare and not much had been done in this field of study. The kitty professor didn't know anything either, this was not his speciality as he found adventuring below his very existence.

'The adventurer guild probably knows something about it but not like I can ask them for help, any idiot would figure out that I'm hiding something.'

Was it just such a rare occurrence that not many people had the chance to study it? Or was the adventurer guild hiding specific information instead? From what he knew, whenever something like this occurred the adventurer guild swooped in to take charge. This was also one of the biggest reasons that he decided to keep this secret for himself.

Roland peeked through the hole and he could see familiar shadows moving through the lit corridors. It was time to prepare for his investigation but first, he decided to gather some of the minerals that were here before venturing forward.

While he wanted to do nothing more than go through with his test, he needed to gather some materials first. If for some reason he found himself in danger and had to run, he would be wasting the opportunity for mining.

'Some of the rare ores didn't respawn fully yet... as expected.'

When looking for the rare material which was the red variant of mythril, he didn't find any in the last spot that he found it. Ores like durium that weren't as rare managed to grow back to some extent but it was clear that he could not just form this place with no end. The dungeon needed time to restore itself and rare ores took even more.

Thus together with his small group of drill spiders, he continued to scout for more ores. The ones that were easily accessed were prioritized as he still wanted to save some time. Even then, it took him about two days of hard work to get a load that he was satisfied with. After this, it was time to prepare for the worst.

First, he packed up the mule golem while also removing a satchel filled with various scrolls and runic bombs. While he didn't expect the monsters to come at him through the hole, if they somehow did, he would need to stop them.

Roland had gained quite the expertise with these runic explosives that he created. Even if they were just on scrolls they could create devastating effects. Thinking back to that tier 3 ant queen type monster that he faced, he knew that tier 3 monsters could be hurt even by tier 2 runic explosives.

It was just a matter of jerry-rigging enough of them to create a big enough blast. This time around, he was not going to have his arm explode. Without a high leveled priest anywhere in the dungeon, he didn't think he would be able to survive it.

With that in mind, he had to create an escape route for himself and Agni. The mule golem could be easily placed in the secret passage to wait. Luckily with his ever-increasing golemic knowledge, he didn't have to endanger himself too much.

'I finally got this thing working.'

The runic mines and bombs weren't his only plan, everything hinged on the crystal ball that was placed on a large square display. There were many runic symbols everywhere on it and the orb fit nicely into a top compartment. Inside of it, there was a runic battery that helped power the construction.

"Time to test it, Agni keep watch, don't want any monsters running the test run."

The ruby wolf yawned a bit while not spotting any enemies in the vicinity. Agni had cleared out the area a long time ago and now after roaming for two days, he was bored.

Roland grabbed one of the better-looking spider golems. With a gentle finger poke, he attended it to the wavelength of the device he had created. This blocky creation was something akin to a remote control just much stronger. With the added batteries and his own mana, he would be able to move the golem remotely even from a great distance.

Then there was the crystal orb on the top. It had been a while since he had started his work on runic crystal balls. It was somewhat difficult but he did manage to connect it to the golem's eye sensors. The image wouldn't be that clear as the golems saw things somewhat differently than the humans that made them.

Finally, he placed his hand on the large remote box. It started glowing with the usual blue light as the runic symbols became active. After about half a minute he was finally able to see an image.

What he saw was a blob of red coloring and also various shades of blue and green. The image he got was something similar to heat vision or infrared. Regretfully they were down in a heat-filled dungeon which made things difficult to see. Thus he started circling through the options that he had.

The golem eyes were quite sophisticated devices. They had various possible settings which infrared vision was just one. The next one that he switched to produced a somewhat bluish creature that looked like some kind of ghostly dog.

Roland's golem at this point in time was looking at Agni. The Ruby Wolf was a creature filled with a lot of mana so he shone quite brightly when filtered through the golem's mana detectors.

While this type of vision would normally not be that great as it only outlined mana, in a dungeon it was different. The walls, the ceiling, everything in this place was filled with this blue energy.

Thanks to this he was given a world filled with blue with everything being outlined nicely. The air didn't have enough mana to register as much, thus it didn't block the view too much.

'This doesn't look too bad, but I think it can still be better...'

Roland continued to fiddle around with the image the crystal ball was giving him. With the possibility of combining some of the various visual options that the golem eye offered he was finally able to make it satisfactory. Now the spider drone was ready to venture through the hole and perform some tests against the tier 3 monsters inside.

"Okay Agni, come here we will wait by the entrance, if something happens we will run, don't even think about attacking anything that comes through there, do you understand?"

"Awooo!"

Agni flopped out his tongue while running circles around Roland. He was smart enough to know the dangers but was just probably curious what his master was planning.

"Good let us begin, all the traps are set in place..."

Roland had previously blocked the opening with a larger boulder but it was now clear. The walls next to it were plastered with runic scrolls from all sides. If something tried to bust through those walls they would quickly explode. With so many scrolls there, even a tier 3 monster would be stopped in its tracks.

This wasn't all as more of the smaller card-sized scrolls were scattered on the ground. They weren't as explosive as the large ones but would probably at least stagger his foe. While it was blundering about Roland and Agni would have enough time to quickly run into the secret room behind them.

While monsters tended to chase their victims for a while there was a timer on it. After some time the monster would lose interest or forget about what it was doing. It was a game-like phenomenon that convinced him that he would be able to get away if the need arose.

With everything in order, Roland kneeled down before the box and started operating the golem through it. By inputting commands he was now able to make the spider drone move around. He was already used to this task so there was no need for any further tests and the golem quickly made its way towards the hole in the wall.

It crawled up and peeked right through it and to Roland's surprise there was a juicy test subject right on schedule. In the middle of the corridor the hole led to, was the same monster type he saw here a month ago when he was here the last time, an Infernal Skeleton Champion.

'Good, it's not the Lich, this one shouldn't have any ranged attacks besides fire breath...'

He commented while moving the golem through the hole a bit more. While clearing out the path he made sure that the drone would have enough space to move around. The path that the golem needed to take was only about one meter in length. From his tests, the other dungeon started right at the end of that one-meter-long path.

With that in mind, he positioned the golem right outside the range. He already knew that the monsters would attack the golems as one of them had already been trashed.

"Well then, here goes nothing..."

Just to be safe Roland turned around and opened the secret door that was right behind him. It was time to see how the monster would react to an attack. With another command given a latch to the side opened out and a small rod on a joint slid out.

It pointed at the monster's head area while slowly charging up with mana. Soon a bright blue arrow of condensed energy flew forward the tier 3 Infernal Skeleton Champion. Roland's face was glued to the crystal orb that was showing him the image and it was clear that the monster felt something.

The monster was looking somewhere to the side but as the projectile entered its dungeon it turned to face it. This didn't mean that it was fast enough to protect itself, the golem's aim was true, and the mana arrow connected with the monster's head.

'Direct hit... it suffered some damage.'

Roland's golem could measure its enemy's health points, the mana arrow that was a lower level tier 2 spell had managed to lower it slightly. When going through the numbers the damage was minuscule and not worth mentioning.

The monster's head that was hit didn't move much. Its face was covered by a Roman-styled helmet that didn't protect the front too well. While the helmet rattled slightly the monster didn't budge from its spot. The flames that burned from its eye sockets started burning brightly as it looked towards the area that the mana bolt came from but...

'Its... not doing anything?'

At first, it looked like the monster would do something. It started to look at the spot the attack came from and there was a clear surge in mana inside of its body. Then after a moment, it subsided and the monster went back to looking to the other side.

This somewhat confirmed what Roland was suspecting but more tests were in order. Thus without waiting he moved to fire off more mana arrows towards the monster. This time around two in sequence.

Just as before the skeleton's face was smacked with the mass of mana and its health decreased by a smidgen again. It turned to face the spot it was attacked from and waited. Then while looking at the spot where Roland's golem was, another mana arrow flew its way.

Now there was some movement, this monster was holding a sword and a shield. The moment the mana arrow entered its range it moved to block the attack with its shield. The arrow was unable to put a dent on the shield the skeleton was holding either way.

'It moved... slightly? It's still not charging the wall, nor does it seem enraged.'

While the monster turned to face the hole in the wall and reacted to the second attack it soon returned to what it was previously doing. After these tests, Roland was almost positive that he was safe but to be sure he continued for some time longer. But as time passed it became clear that this would be a perfect spot to raise his levels.