

Runesmith 207

Chapter 207: Setting out again.

“Oh, so back then you were using a fake name? Rodan was it?”

“Yes, something like that, just call me Wayland from now on.”

“Aye, that’s fine.”

Roland had managed to calm everyone down. Soon he gave them a recount of his adventures with a somewhat altered version of them. There was no reason to tell them about the strange cultist that he had a run-in with or his noble roots. After the explanation, he revealed to them that Roland was the fake name and Wayland was the true one.

Luckily his two distant acquaintances probably didn’t care much or had any reason to doubt his words. They had managed to get rid of Grisalde that was now snoozing while resting against the inn table. Her and the halfling girl had argued for another hour and had decided to get into a drinking competition for one last bet.

Roland just wanted to leave the moment it started but all the people in the inn started chanting when the two women continued to down the cheap booze. Even Dalrak and Orson were in on it, it was as if the previous brawl never happened.

It was strange to see the large barbarian lose out, it was clear that the halfling girl had some type of skill that allowed her to stomach barrels of alcohol like it was water. That didn’t stop her from ejecting a large part of it back onto the floor. She was still part of the shorter races.

“We didn’t have time for an introduction, but this is Senna. After we parted on the mainland we had gone through many adventures, she is quite the good tracker.”

Name:

Senna L 81

Classes:

T2 Trickster L31

T1 Thief L25

T1 Scout L25

She had an interesting tier 2 class that he hadn’t seen before but only read about. This was a somewhat similar class to a rogue but it had various perks to hidden attacks and concealment. From what he knew they were specialized in dagger combat along with throwing skills and even illusionary skills that could confuse their enemy for a devastating blow.

“So it’s just the three of you and you’ll be joining the caravan I’m in?”

“Yeah, that’s right.”

Replied Orson, who had a strange look on his face when looking at Roland.

“Hah, stop yer staring, no need to be jealous that the kid outpaced ya.”

Dalrak delivered a smack to the back of Orson’s head. During the conversation, he revealed that he was doing this for a rank up quest which meant that he had to have gone through the second tier 2 class change.

“I’m not jealous, you are jealous!”

Orson didn’t take the hit lightly while glaring at Dalrak, who was all smiles. The two seemed to have grown together past the two years they had been adventuring. While they weren’t quite there if they continued with time they might be able to reach tier 3 which would probably be the stopgap.

“Hah, what a lightweight.”

Senna finally returned to the table they were sitting at after going outside to take a breath of fresh air. After the first discharge of unidentified liquids, she was chased out from the inn. It seemed that the innkeeper was fine with fights but not with someone that forced him to mop the floors.

“Wayland was it? Thanks for the backup but I didn’t need any help, everything was under control.”

Now that the girl was closer he could get a better look at her. Halflings did have more humanlike proportions but were about half the size. This girl looked to be about three feet tall, her hair was brown and tied into a ponytail. Her eyes were quite large with a hazel hue to them, she looked somewhat youthful and the constant smile on her face made her seem somewhat cheerful.

“I’ll remember not to intervene next time then...”

Roland just nodded at the smirking girl that might have ended up as a bloodstain on the floor if the barbarian woman stepped on her. She was smug about winning the money and by how it looked there was probably some cheating involved in that card game. Yet with no proof he could only speculate.

“Hey lass, don’t be like that, if it wasn’t for Wayland here we might have been clobbered to death by that lady.”

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Dalrak seemed to be the voice of reason as he probably knew that he and Orson would have a hard time handling the woman themselves.

“Ha ha, it was going all according to my plan! You two should have just made a run for it, try thinking from time to time you blockheads.”

Senna on the other hand shrugged while giving out a sigh. Perhaps she was stalling Griscalde so that the two could get out of there before making her own escape. Her Trickster class was focused on agility which allowed her to evade someone with a higher level for so long.

“The caravan will be leaving in a few hours, I’ll see you there then...”

While the halfling started arguing with her two party members Roland decided that it was probably a good time to make his own getaway. Midnight was approaching and they needed to gather before six in the morning. This didn’t leave much time to rest for anyone.

“Aye, we’ll see you there, It’s reassuring to have ye with us, Wayland.”

“Yeah, see ya.”

After giving both Orson and Dalrak a firm handshake he was off. The barbarian woman was left passed out by the table as no one was brave enough to move her. The only person in that position would be Roland but he didn’t want to get into another fistfight if something went wrong either.

‘This sure is a small world, even though it’s supposed to be much larger than earth.’

After going back to his room Roland wasn’t all that sleepy. The run-in with old acquaintances made him think of some bad outcomes. Perhaps ignoring all safety measures wasn’t such a good idea thus it might be better to stick to wearing his helmet through the entire mission.

“That person from the guild should be there... but until then...”

Roland glanced at his status screen and at one skill that he had somewhat disregarded.

Advanced Mana Reinforcement L4

Increases the amount of your mana by a set percentage.

It was an old skill that he had picked up after escaping from his first predicament. It was around the time that he met these two adventurers and a certain nosy assistant. There was so much work to do in his workshop that he mostly forgot to train up.

This skill required constant meditating and focus. But with the amount of work and lack of sleep, it wasn’t the easiest thing to level up. Most of the time he found himself either too tired or too busy to focus on it. Now on the other hand he would be traveling for at least two weeks which left him with a lot of free time.

‘If I max it out I’ll get a flat 25% added to my MP pool.’

Thus Roland closed his eyes and got to it, his body started to faintly illuminate the darkroom he was in as he started to absorb the ambient mana in the surrounding. If he performed this meditative training in an area with higher mana it would certainly speed up the process.

Hours passed and soon it was early morning but even though he had been on it for five hours he did not manage to level up his skill. The rays of the rising sun that hit Roland’s cheek successfully woke him up from his meditation. It was finally time to move on to their next destination with an increased number of adventurers.

Roland’s armor went through some improvements, one of them was an easier way of fastening it to his body. Instead of the basic leather straps that most armors possessed, he had managed to reproduce a more magical solution.

He had removed the top part of his armor set for the meditation. With more skin, the skill would progress faster as always. Now after putting on the chest piece he would normally need someone to fasten the armor piece from behind.

Instead, the whole armor began glowing with the belt-like straps reacting the most. It was as if they were tiny snakes slithering towards a specific target. They slowly flowed into the clasps that also collapsed on them for a tight fit when the time was right. With the help of this new self clothing armor, he did not need Bernir to help him get it on.

This was not something that he came up with as there were various magic spells that could help people put on clothes. This was a minimized version that only worked on certain parts and not the whole set. Maybe in the future, he could just jump into the air and his armor set would just fly onto his body as if he was a superhero but for now, this would have to do.

When he was out of his room he also noticed other people going out. Some adventurers were already downstairs and eating, he on the other hand decided to eat some of the homemade food that Elodia gave him for his travels for now. Thanks to the spatial backpack he had enough of it for a week or two if he rationed everything well. If he ran out then he had enough dried meat and fruits to last him for even longer.

Luckily there was no sign of the loud woman that he had a run-in last night. Perhaps it would have even been better if she didn't show up for the rest of the transport mission. If she caused only drama at each checkpoint of the journey then perhaps it wasn't worth the hassle. Regretfully he was not the person making the decisions here and he didn't expect the merchant to know or care about the altercation.

Soon he made his way back to the meeting point, there he arrived a bit earlier than everyone else. The workers were yawning while still packing up, with nothing to do he just found himself a good spot to sit and wait. With time everyone else started to appear along with his old acquaintances.

"Good morning."

"Good day."

Dalrak, Orson, and Senna had arrived and made their way towards where he was sitting.

"You don't mind if we join ye right? It's always better in a group."

Dalrak seemed to see the bigger picture. Roland was probably the strongest adventurer around here or at least one of them. It would be beneficial to this group of three to get him to join them. Other adventurers would be less likely to bother them and then during a monster encounter, they would have someone to rely on.

"Go ahead, I'm just waiting for everyone to gather, though I'm probably going to be stuck in the front wagon again..."

Unless more high level tier 2 helpers arrived he would be back to guard duty along with Grivalde. The woman didn't seem to be here yet but it was the same for half of the other adventurers.

"So, you came from Albrook? How is it there?"

Orson asked while sitting down on a tree stump that he brought over from somewhere.

"Oh, it's not bad but the heat in the dungeon can get to you if you're not using any protection."

“The dungeon? No, you misunderstand me, I’m not interested in the dungeon, how are the ladies there?”

“... the ladies?”

“Yeah.”

“Here he goes again...”

Senna seemed annoyed at Orson’s question while the dwarf just smiled.

“Well... I guess the same as in any city? But there are some sun elves at the adventurer guild?”

“Oh, sun elves, tell me more brother.”

While yesterday Orson seemed to have his pride hurt after he saved them from the barbarian. This time around he was interested in the women from his city. When Roland thought back to the old days he also remembered this man to had been somewhat driven by the thing between his legs.

“What, you want me to describe her or something?”

“Now you’re speaking my language, I knew we would understand each other eventually.”

Orson moved in even close while Roland wasn’t sure what he should do. Luckily for him, someone showed up before he was forced to disclose the cup sizes of the guild receptionists.

“Hello, is there a Mr. Wayland here?”

What he heard was a voice that belonged to a woman. When looking behind Orson he saw someone that didn’t quite fit this place surrounded by testosterone-driven adventurers. It was a young woman that couldn’t be much older than twenty. She was of average height with an average build. In both her hands she was holding something that looked like a suitcase.

Even when he didn’t answer she continued to shout out loudly while looking at a piece of paper. She was certainly sent by the guild for the rank-up test but she was probably not an adventurer herself.

‘Did they really send a receptionist?’

Sometimes there was a lack of adventurers in an area or they were just unwilling to go through the hassle of shadowing a new gold rank adventurer. Thus they would send out someone else that worked at the guild.

Perhaps the reason for this was the type of mission that he chose, with it only being an escort mission the guild employee didn’t need to worry about monsters. They could just remain in one of the armored wagons while peeking through an opening to see if he was properly doing his job.

‘This might actually be a good turn of events...’

Roland decided to stand up as people started looking at the woman with braided hair that was shouting in all directions. Her inexperience was showing but this could go in his favor as the woman might not be able to judge him properly if he actually did something to fail the test.

“Yes, I’m Wayland, did the guild send you?”

“Ah yes, you must be Mr. Wayland, it is a pleasure to meet you, my name is Melaina. I will be observing you through the rank test. Here this is for you, please read through it but if you can’t I can help you.”

The woman was wearing an oversized hat that perhaps was meant to help her avoid sunlight. She looked like someone that mostly stayed cooped up inside doing paperwork inside of the guild. She was wearing an outfit with a long skirt that would be unfit for running away, she would be a sitting duck if monsters managed to claw their way here.

“What is this?”

Roland took the note from the woman’s hand and looked at it. On it, there was a short explanation of the test that he would need to fulfill. The woman here was actually part of the grading system. She was to be escorted to the adventurer guild at the last city this caravan stopped at, if she was injured in any way then he would be penalized for it.

“So let me get this straight, I’m to be your bodyguard while also protecting the cargo?”

“I see that you understand Mr. Wayland, I will be in your care.”

The young woman smiled while looking at him with her large eyes. There was a small silence between the two before she finally spoke back up.

“So um... could you show me to my cart? I’m not really sure where I should go...”

Roland looked at the piece of paper and then back to the clueless girl. It seemed that the guild just dropped someone troublesome his way.

‘Well this is going to be a hassle...’

Chapter 208: Traveling.

Name:

Melaina L 68

Classes:

T2 Analyst L18

T1 Accountant L25

T1 Villiger L25

‘She really does lack any kind of combat classes, reminds me of Elodia.’

Roland was looking at the young woman before him. The short letter that he received from her informed him about the specificity of the test. It wasn’t much, he just needed to deliver the Melaina unharmed to the last destination. Probably the unharmed part was the most important component of the mission.

“So Ms. Melaina I just need to ensure your safety for the entire trip, is that right?”

“That’s right and Melaina is fine, I think we are about the same age.”

“Okay, then you can just call me Wayland.”

After having their greetings Roland pointed Melaina towards the merchant leader that she needed to have a talk with. If he understood this correctly, the guild would cover most of the fees that the merchant would need to pay him. Thanks to this the merchant would get a cheap high-level adventurer as a bodyguard while the guild could dump off someone that was untested.

“Okay then, I’ll be watching you Wayland please remember to perform to your utmost ability as is expected of a gold rank adventurer!”

“Expected huh?”

“Is there a problem?”

“Oh, nothing...”

Roland shook his head but the moment the girl mentioned gold rank expectations he just wanted to laugh. Armand was a gold rank adventurer and he could not be considered very trustworthy. The way she was speaking made him feel that her field experience was close to zero.

The only expectations on a higher rank adventurer would be their capability to solve problems. How they solved those problems most of the time didn’t matter and doing it with extreme violence was expected. Her words made it sound as if he was to conduct him like a noble knight or at least that was how he understood it.

“I’m sure you have a lot of work to do, so I will excuse myself then but please remember that this is still a test!”

Finally, after the greeting and a quick back and forth Melaina turned towards the merchant group. She had to make herself known and probably give another letter to the people leading this caravan. Now Roland had to contend with her looking over his shoulder and perhaps lowering his score if he did something that she deemed wrong.

‘I hope she doesn’t expect me to go out of my way to perform at this job, an adventurer also has to know when it's time to quit...’

The biggest worry he had was that this examiner would have some heightened expectations of him. Yet even if it meant that he failed this test he would not put his life at too much risk. There were far too many people back home that depended on him, the higher rank was nice but it was not worth losing his life. In half a year he could try again and then his equipment and skills would be even higher which would make it easier.

“Wayland, get back to the front cart, we are moving out!”

“Sure.”

The guard leader shouted towards him to go back to his spot while he headed towards the new adventurers that arrived. Like he expected Orson and Dalrak were not riding in his cart, they were even forced to carry some of the crates instead of just acting as guards.

While the new adventurers were getting their tasks handed out he took some time to look at them. There were two new gold ranked adventurers coming along. Together with them, there were four golds and about twenty-five silvers coming on this expedition. This was about the usual ratio of one to five that only increased when going up the ranks.

“You’re already here?”

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Finally, his wagon partner made her appearance, the barbarian woman Grivalde was here. When she stepped in her weight made the wagon tilt slightly. Yet this time around she didn’t look as grumpy instead, her face was smiling for some reason. This was surprising as he did manage to embarrass her yesterday by shoving her back.

“Yes, as you can see.”

She just sat down on the opposite side as if nothing happened. Perhaps the small display of his strength had changed her opinion of him but even if it did Grivalde didn’t apologize for her behavior. Instead, she just looked to the side where she spotted a certain halfling walking around.

“Hey, isn’t that the runt from yesterday?”

Roland frowned as he could see that the large woman was now inching towards the exit.

“Just give it a rest, we are all part of this caravan. If you cause more trouble you might not get paid but well, that’s up to you.”

He just shrugged as after meeting the halfling he realized that some tomfoolery was involved. The barbarian was probably scammed by Senna and ended up losing her money. It was impossible for him to keep watch over the barbarian to not try anything funny and it was not his responsibility either.

If the halfling decided to cheat people out of their money she needed to be fine with the consequences. The only part that he didn’t like was that some of his acquaintances were involved with it. If it wasn’t for them he would have also stayed out of the drama.

“You know what, you might be right.”

“Oh?”

Roland was surprised that perhaps the barbarian wasn’t that dense but he was quickly disappointed by the follow-up.

“Yeah, I’ll just challenge her to another game, double or nothing!”

“Oh..., Well good luck with that.”

Finally, the wagons started moving and he could see that they had doubled in the amount of cargo they were now carrying. He was still riding the furthest cart which gave him a good vantage point to observe the rest.

'Now will this go as smoothly as everyone thinks it will...' After leaving this region they would be arriving at the lawless zones of the island. Such places were mostly thinly populated where not even villages existed. Without a large human presence, monsters would flock to the unregulated space.

There were a couple of things they had to watch out for, the easiest would be monsters that didn't wander in packs or in smaller ones. Those would probably not be an issue due to the size of their caravan. Then there was one of the worst they could meet, organized monster tribes.

These were creatures like goblins or lizardmen. They would form their own villages with many members whose strength was above an average human. Monsters were naturally gifted with high stats comparable to battle-focused classes of humans. Then when you added the intelligence factor they made for tough opponents.

The kingdom didn't have enough resources to wipe out these wandering tribes consisting of monsters. Goblins were one of the worst as they multiplied comparatively fast and were quite violent.

'Well as long as it's a couple of goblins we should be fine.'

It was hard to judge the difficulty of the job taken, the adventurer guild took it upon themselves to predict the possibilities of this trip. They had judged it to be under a tier 3 level threat which was why only silver and gold rank adventurers were here. But predicting such things was always a gamble, depending on the items they were transporting they could be targeted by high-level bandits.

'I guess there is no reason for me to worry too much, the next stop was in five days.'

Roland liked to have a plan thus he went out of his way to ask about the route they were going to travel. They were finally going into the danger zone so he decided to look over the map that he brought along. This didn't go unnoticed by his fellow wagon partner who at first seemed interested but quickly went back to snoozing.

'We will be taking this route...'

He brought out something that looked like a red crayon to help him mark all of the potential danger zones. The easiest ambush zones were ones where they had the low-ground or minimal space to maneuver. But an area with a lot of space could also be deadly if the enemy had a large force that could encircle them from all sides.

'These should be the toughest spots... which makes the first one...'

Thanks to his good memory Roland could easily remember the next location without the need to constantly look at the map. After noting everything down in his head he returned the map to his backpack.

"Hey hold up, I'm supposed to get on this one too!"

As they were leaving he heard someone call out to them. It was your average-looking adventurer and with a quick glance, he was able to get his class which was a ranger. Yet instead of sitting with him and Griscalde, he used the small ladder on the side to get on top of the cart.

'So that's our lookout, luckily I have my own way of scanning the area.'

The importance of scouting classes was high as they could quickly inform everyone about an ambush. Previously someone else was up there but it seemed that he was replaced by another adventurer with a slightly higher level.

This person would not last through the entire trip so he would probably be switched out by someone else within a twelve-hour period. Two other trackers would be on the opposite side doing the exact same thing. Roland on the other hand had his scanner through which he could map out the whole area with an improved range than before.

While Griscalde was slowly dozing off he finally decided to take out one of his improved inventions. It didn't look like much as it was just an unsuspecting box made of metal. But what counted was the inside which had a runic battery and a signal-enhancing spell that would boost the range of his radar.

This it would do without the need of him constantly needing to use his own mana. The most important part was that he could use it while he was sleeping. An alarm would go off if monsters or other living beings entered the range. Only with this alarm clock around could he relax otherwise sleeping would be a challenge.

Time started to pass and they were finally on their way towards the next trade location. While most of the trail would probably be safe there was one area that was sketchy. Before they arrived at it Roland would have to suffer through the trip.

'This is why I don't like traveling...'

The wagon he was riding in was really uncomfortable, he had to spend the entire trip sitting down on wood which made his legs quite numb. At one point he even thought about pulling out a pillow to make it more comfortable but with the hardened adventurers around he would just make a laughingstock from himself.

"That's enough, everyone listen up, we will be staying here for the night!"

Called out the guard leader as he signaled everyone to halt. During the nights they would sometimes stop to camp out. After going into the danger zone it was becoming too dangerous to continue when the sun was down. Monsters started lurking in the distance thus instead the armored wagons were positioned on the outer area as protection.

'For it being a volcanic island the nights can get cold.'

Roland had decided to stretch out his legs while others moved the carts into place. The reason for them stopping was the forest in front of them. It had dense trees that could hide monsters and bandits. It was a good decision to create an encampment before moving inside and instead of going through it while the sun was up.

The sun going down only made the forest look more gloomy, the red coloring that made the trees look redish didn't help. There was certainly trouble inside of that place but if the monsters decided to attack a loud convoy was debatable. This was still a task on the safer side where attacks were rare.

"Wayland, you will take the first shift but don't worry just try to stay awake the scouts will signal you if there is trouble."

“Alright.”

After looking at Grisalde the guard leader shoved the night shift onto the other highest level holder. Half of the adventurers would need to stay up while the others could set up tents or get their sleeping bags out to sleep around the campfire.

They were certainly not hiding well from any potential threats but the loud noises human’s produced did act as a deterrent to wild animals. They came in numbers which gave them a certain amount of protection as wild beasts would shy away from encampments with too many enemies yet some other types would be drawn in.

While some monsters had a degree of intelligence there were ones that were only filled with killing intent. If they smelled the food that the humans were cooking they would quickly show up to the party. Even if they were somewhat intelligent it didn’t mean that they could judge their own or opponent’s capabilities correctly which ended up in them being wiped out during an attack.

‘This seems like a good spot...’

Roland looked back towards the encampment that was about a hundred meters away from the spot he was at now. There he saw Melaina poking her head out with a clipboard in her hand. She was clearly noting down his behavior that might have looked a bit suspicious.

From his backpack, he pulled out a metal object that had spider-like legs attached to it. This was one of his golem spiders that he had decided to bring along for the trip. After setting it down he opened the little compartment that was large enough to store his mapping amplification device.

His armor was connected to this spider drone of his so with the command it quickly activated on the spot. While the people with the tracking and detection classes were there, he didn’t believe in their skills too much. If one of them fell asleep on the job and something decided to attack them at night it would be over.

With that in mind, he decided to have the golem head out into a safe location and dig itself a hole to hide in. The metallic creation was quick to follow its programming and with being able to somewhat glance through its golemic eye, he could monitor where it was going while heading back to the camp.

When he returned to his wagon there was a person missing, the barbarian lady had apparently gone somewhere. He on the other hand had to remain here for guard duty. The person from the guild was watching him so he actually needed to do his job properly without dozing off. If he moved where everyone else was chatting he might get a demerit.

‘I just need to last for a week or two if we get into trouble...’

After giving out a sigh he sat down with his legs outstretched. In the corner of his eye, there was his radar that showed him the position of his golem and what it was doing. With the increased range he was now able to push his radar into the forest area where some creatures could be lurking.

‘Don’t see any monsters, just regular animals, clear for now.’

Just like before the color-coded map painted a picture before him. While there were living creatures there, they were mostly wild animals and birds. With some fiddling, he created an easy runic program that would send out a signal if any monster came into range.

'This should do it.'

Roland now had two options to either take a nap while his radar did the work for him or continue with his mana skill training. Thanks to wearing the armor others would not be able to tell that he was sleeping on the job unless they came into range. But no one was really interested in guard duty so he was safe from intrusion.

'Think I won't get another chance to train that skill again, training it is.'

A quick decision was made but the training would have to be suboptimal as he was unable to remove his armor. It was still better than nothing and thus while ignoring the map for now he continued with the betterment of his skills. But if he would be free to continue with his training remained to be seen.