

Runesmith 209

Chapter 209: Failed ambush.

“Grhiss...”

A strange sound escaped from a certain creature that was walking on two legs. This being was about the size of a human child with peculiar reddish-brown scaly skin. Its legs were sinewy and digitigrade, the feet were lizard-like with three large claws. Their jaw was similar to a crocodile with two small horns protruding from its head.

This monster also didn't lack a tail that was helping to balance its two-legged form. It had hands that were missing one digit but were still able to hold weapons. This one, in particular, was holding an old dagger that looked like it was looted from a person belonging to the other more intelligent races.

The monster was not alone, there were many like it slowly sneaking towards their prey. While most of them were of similar size some were much larger with small wings on their backs that didn't seem like they would be able to support their weight.

All of them were looking at the lights in the distance. A group of humans had appeared close to the forest that these creatures had recently appeared in. It was hard for this large group of monsters to wait for the humans to go through it thus their leader had decided to perform an all-out attack.

In the wise leader's mind, the people outside the forest would certainly not expect to get attacked before they entered it. They would be ready for a battle at that point which would make things a lot harder for them. Instead, with his brilliant plan, they would catch them off guard while most of them were sleeping and quickly massacre them all.

The monster in question was holding a large halberd in its hand, a weapon that it won from one of the humanoids. Compared to his tribe members it was a notch above the rusted cleavers that could barely produce results in battle. Thus he raised it high into the sky as it was ready to give out a shout that would signal the others to attack.

“G...GAH?”

Before it was able to give out the loud roar of conquest it noticed a flash of light coming from the distance. It appeared from one of the strange wooden contraptions with the wheels on the sides. This thing was really bright as it illuminated the tall grass most of its brethren were hiding in. Before the leader could realize what it was looking at, the damage was done.

While holding the halberd high in the air and while mid shout half of its head exploded from the collision. Before it could process that the magical projectile connected it was already crumbling down to the ground. While drawing its last breath the cries of its tribe members entered its ears as they were being pelted by bolts and arrows.

You have defeated a L 105 Inferior Dragonewt. You have gained 12213 experience points.

‘Well, that was easy...’

Keeping to his Runic Mage persona Roland was holding a staff made from aether deepsteel in his hand. At the top, it had a large mana stone that lowered the mana usage even further. What he had performed was a silent version of a spell called spiral mana lance.

After use, the projectile took the form of a drill that continued to spin towards its destinations. The spinning affected its speed and the further it traveled the more damage it would cause. While his aim was not perfect he was able to take out the largest monster from the group of Kobolds.

“Everyone, attack!”

Not soon after he had taken out what looked to be the leader did all the adventurers pop out of their hiding places. Everyone that was able to fire a bow or a crossbow took aim and the projectiles started flying. The small monsters that looked like reddish lizardmen were not ready for this quick retaliation.

Roland wanted to pat himself on the back for sending his golem closer to the forest. Thanks to this he was able to discover a large group of monsters of about fifty gathering there. They waited until two in the morning before slowly inching towards their temporary encampment.

There was a road heading towards the forest area but to the sides, it had meter-long grass everywhere. It was tall enough to hide these small lizard people that were aiming for a sneak attack. Thanks to his mapping feature he was able to alarm everyone to the potential threat.

The lookout didn't want to trust him at first but after sneaking closer to the forest himself he returned with the news that confirmed his claim. It was easy from that point, they just allowed him to take out the strongest from the group. Thanks to his spider drone he just aimed for the largest red circle on the map.

After he took out the leader the rest panicked, some of them fled towards the forest while the ones that were closer continued with their attack. But they were sloppy, more than half of their numbers were turned into porcupines filled with bolts and arrows. Then the rest started falling to his bunk buddy.

“Die you little shits, because of you I couldn't get my beauty sleep in!”

Grisalde charged to the forefront with her huge two-handed axe in hand. With one large swing, she was able to instantly take out three of the kobolds. She almost caused their sneak attack to fail when he had to wake her up. Luckily he was quick with his sound-canceling spell that muffled her angry shouts.

‘Damn, this is a one-sided slaughter, do we even need anyone else to help?’

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The woman was really going to town with these which made him wonder how he was able to take her out at the inn. The weapon that she was using wasn't magical in nature but it was made from a sturdy alloy that was even above his aether durasteel. Without examining it from up close he was unsure of the proper blend but it seemed to be a lot heavier and sturdier than most metals.

While he wanted to just sit this one out now, his eyes saw the woman that was shadowing him. Even though the battle was taking place and she was not a combatant her gaze was glued to his back. With her looking at him there was no choice, thus he pointed his staff towards the attackers to perform a small show for the audience.

The other adventurers had managed to splay a large portion of the monster wave coming their way but it was not over yet. Some of the more evolved ones were somewhat resistant to the steel iron arrows that didn't have much piercing power. Yet they would not have the same resistance when magic was involved.

For killing large numbers of enemies that didn't have much health he modified one of the most basic spells. This spell he would show off to the person grading his performance so that perhaps he could get a passing grade without much hassle.

With the basic-looking magical staff in hand, he pointed out into the air. The moment he activated the runic structure the entire shaft started exuding blue light. This light in actuality was composed of many compact runes that with his current skills could be condensed to a minuscule size.

While on the outside people could see a blue glowing orb forming up in the air inside his helmet there were other things happening. His map was now connected to this spell structure. Thanks to this feature he could now add a convenient function to his spells.

There were various spells that could lock on to a monster's mana fingerprint. Thanks to his magical map he was now able to feed this information directly towards the runic spell structure. Normally the caster would have to do that himself while performing the spell but this runic program he modified could do it for him.

It only took two seconds for the required mana to travel through the runic structures and towards the large mana stone at the top of the staff. When the spell was finished and all of the targets were locked on a large orb of blue light shot up into the sky.

"Hey, what is that guy doing?"

"What's that? Looks like a small moon?"

Some guards and adventurers that weren't using their ranged skills stood behind as a reserve to protect the regular caravan passengers. With the fight going their way they didn't have much to do than to look at their magical companion.

The caster types were still quite rare thus the glowing orb that illuminated the dark night drew in everyone's gaze. Even some of the monsters looked at the blue light that depicted a perfect circular shape. But the moment this orb reached a certain height some kind of reaction started to take place.

It was as if it was becoming more compact before expanding to a larger more irregular form and exploding. From this explosion, a vast number of beams of light escaped. Firstly they traced a nice arch upwards before increasing their speed and coming down towards the targets on the ground.

Everyone that was using a bow or crossbow stopped for a moment as the wide-area spell started connecting with the surviving monsters. They all shouted in agony as the massive torrent of magical energy rained onto them. The long bolts of energy pierced the monster's bodies while exploding soon after to add even more damage and devastation.

For Roland, this was the first real test for this magical spell that he couldn't test in a wide-open area against so many enemies. While it lacked the devastating power to kill monsters above level 100, for

ones below it there was no escape. With the more evolved Kobolds choosing to retreat only the ones with lower IQ were left to be slaughtered.

You have defeated a L 48 Crimson Kobold. You have gained ...

You have defeated a L 56 Crimson Kobold Warrior. You have gained ...

Many messages folded his system window as the monsters continued to die. Within ten seconds of him firing off his spell the monsters were defeated. The only ones that remained were out of his spell range and already back in the forest. With how they had been soundly defeated they would probably not get in their way during the trek through the forest trail.

‘Not bad, this spell would be good for farming some lower level monsters for materials.’

Roland put down the staff while standing atop the wagon that was in the front. While he was contemplating the validity of this modified tracking spell he noticed that everything went silent. When he looked to the side he noticed that everyone was looking his way.

“Huh?” “Did you see that? He just killed all of those monsters with one spell, what was that thing anyway?”

“That guy also took out the leader!”

Everyone started shouting after noticing that all of the monsters were now dead. The light show that he put up to grab the attention of the guild worker instead caused a greater reaction than he anticipated. Now he was the center of attention which might not have been his initial goal. The urge to field test his new spells along with the guild exam somewhat clouded his judgment.

“Hey what are you idiots cheering about, there could be more monsters lurking, be quiet!”

Luckily the guard leader was experienced enough to see the bigger picture. While it looked that the Kobolds were gone this didn’t mean that something else wouldn’t show up. Some strong creatures could be attracted to the sounds of battle and the light show that he created could have produced the same effect.

“Hey Wayland, you could have left some for me.”

While climbing down from the wagon to get away from the crowd he heard Grisalde calling out to him. With nothing else to do she slowly returned to the wagon that the both of them occupied. To her question, he could only shrug while also being surprised that for the first time she had called him by his name.

“I’ll do that next time.”

“Hey, what are you doing, adventurer?”

“Don’t worry, they are all dead and the rest have fled into the forest. The battle is over.”

Roland had consulted his radar that thanks to his golem had an increased range. Through it, he could see all the red dots fleeing into the forest while any other enemy had been either killed by him or turned into a pin cushion by the archers.

“Is that true?”

Ingran that was responsible for the merchant’s safety did not take his word for it. Even though he was the one that informed them about the monsters gathering to attack them, they didn’t seem to have trust in his detection skills. Thus the man looked to one of the adventurers that was specialized in this field for confirmation. Of course, after a few minutes, the man nodded to confirm as he also couldn’t see or feel any monsters in the vicinity.

“That was great, with you around there won’t be much for us to do, easy money.”

When he was down on the ground Senna poked her head out from behind Orson. The dagger that she was holding in her hand made its way towards her back. It seemed that she did not participate in the battle but instead was lurking around for any potential creatures entering the encampment.

“This brings back old memories, I feel ashamed that I couldn’t recognize ye.”

Dalrak waddled over while holding his halberd over his shoulder and a large shield in his other hand. He and Orson didn’t get to do much but as Senna mentioned before this was not such a bad deal for them.

“Oh, that’s fine, it’s impossible to remember every face you bump into.”

He replied while shrugging his shoulders. Without his high intelligence stat, it would probably be impossible for him to remember the two either. His identification skill also helped out as it presented their names to him.

“Good work but next time inform me if you are going to use a spell-like that.”

The guard leader also showed up while he was talking to his old acquaintance. It didn’t seem that the man appreciated that Roland went out on his own and used unidentified spells. But giving the man a list of all of his spells would not be something that he was willing to do nor would any other adventurer be inclined to go that far.

Yet if he made the employee mad then his trial grade could fall. Even now the woman that was shadowing him was writing something onto a piece of paper. It was strange to see her taking her job this seriously as most of the time if the person he was protecting survived until the end of the journey he should get a passing grade.

‘Could she be one of those types that likes to do everything by the book? Would she rate me on things like customer satisfaction?’

It would be unfortunate if he didn’t get his golden rank for a silly reason like that. But there was nothing for him to do, only after the journey was over would the rating be given to him. For now, he could at least act more cordial towards the guard leader and the merchant without trying to antagonize them.

“What’s up with that idiot? The bastard just hid behind the wagon and had everyone else do the work for him.”

Grisalde appeared out of nowhere with a bloodied axe. Her gaze was fixated on Ingran’s back. During the whole ambush, he didn’t really pay attention but he could hear the man shouting out orders as if he owned the palace. Adventurers weren’t soldiers so during situations like this most of them would work independently.

“Well, he probably cares about the merchant more than the disposable adventurers they hired but anyway, good work.”

Roland replied while knowing well that if it came down to it then the guards would quickly abandon them. They were a more knit-together group and probably didn't care for the sellswords they were taking on the journey. To them, the adventurers were nothing more than meat shields.

“What are you talking about? You killed almost all of them yourself.”

Grisalde laughed before smacking Roland on the shoulder which made his whole armor rattle around. Even though that was her reply a smile appeared on her face. Soon enough the commotion died down and people started going back to sleep. Not all of them would be able to calm down their nerves after the sudden ambush but either way the journey had to continue.

‘I guess this is when it starts to get interesting.’

Roland thought to himself while going back to his spot on the wagon. While he probably wouldn't get much sleep but at least he wouldn't be bothered by anyone here. Then when the sun rose in a couple of hours the adventure would continue.

Chapter 210: Hey, wait a minute...

“Hey, was that the last one?”

“Yes, there are no enemies in the vicinity anymore.”

Roland replied to the shout coming from the front, Grisalde was there pulling her axe out from the ground. When removing her weapon he could see a combination of sand and blood covering the edge.

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“Are you sure you aren't a tracker?”

Senna popped her head out of the side and started twirling her daggers. Ever since the first ambush, the adventurers had been slowly building up trust towards Roland's detecting skills. While he couldn't track anything, detecting monsters in the forest was quite easy, even easier for him than for proper scout-type classes.

The forest area was quite dense and with a lot of various creatures living there. With so many living beings around it was hard for anyone to get an estimate of all of the enemy locations. But Roland only needed to look at the dots on the map to quickly point out the next nearby monster.

“No, it's just a tracking spell...”

“That's some handy tracking spell that can last for so long.”

Senna glanced towards Roland's metal helmet as if she didn't quite believe his story. While the technology he was using wasn't all that groundbreaking, the sheer length he could keep it up was the real deal-breaker. All-day and night he could have his radar function up and it would even jolt him up from his sleep if something appeared.

“It’s not like I can detect anything, any monsters that specialize in hiding their presence would not be easy to spot for me. Don’t let your guard down.”

‘Is it this tree... there is something off about it’

He glanced towards the massive tree in the middle of the village. People were still dancing around with smiles on their faces. The more his gaze focused on it, the more he felt something was wrong. With the help of his mana sense, he tried feeling it out and to his surprise there was something.

While glaring intently at the tree for a fraction of a moment he saw something. It flashed there before him for a fraction of a second in the place of the tree. It had a strange shape of a double helix covered in strange patterns. It was something that he had witnessed before all those years ago.

“It can’t be...”

He retreated a step while shouting and almost instantly activated his debugging skill on the object before him...