

Runesmith 217

Chapter 217: The aftermath.

Name:

Loreena L 204

Classes:

T3 Divine Swordmaster L54

T2 Radiant Sword Dancer L50

T2 Aura Swordsman L50

T1 Blade Acolyte L25

T1 Sword Warrior L25

The monster was dead and the battle was over. The accountant by the name of Melaina had managed to deliver the finishing blow while the monster was distracted by Roland's magical blast. Her clothes were in tatters and revealed a body fit for a warrior with many muscles and scars.

Yet this was not what Roland was looking at this point in time. His gaze was on the status screen of this woman that had been updated. Loreena was her true name and her classes were quite interesting. Probably the item that kept her status screen had been destroyed along with her clothes during the battle which allowed Roland to take a peek.

Loreena had certainly been blessed with good swordsmanship, even her first class was a Sword Warrior. This class was usually taken by people trying to rank up into tier 2 swordsmen down the line. The Blade Acolyte was unknown to him but it indicated the relationship with the church.

That was nothing new as during the battle the woman brought up her relation to the church a few times. The golden aura blade was also a dead giveaway that she was related to some kind of deity. The coloring would be dependent on the god they were involved in. The cultist for instance would probably have a more darkened blade either pitch black or dark purple.

This battle also gave him a bunch of experience. He delivered two large blasts to the high level tier 3 monster. Even without delivering the killing blow he was rewarded with three level ups and was fast approaching the tier 3 threshold.

Name :

Roland Arden L 129

Classes:

T2 Runesmith Lord L50 [Secondary]

T2 Runic Engineer L4 [Primary]

T1 Mage L25 [Tertiary]

T1 Runic Mana Scribe L 25 [X]

T1 Runic Blacksmith L 25 [X]

HP

5272/6252

MP

4418/15333

SP

7643/9155

Strength

164

Agility

130

Dexterity

202

Vitality

169

Endurance

181

Intelligence

236

Willpower

217

Charisma

18

Luck

11

Besides getting some new stats his dexterity was pushed past two hundred which gave him another trait. It seemed that he would not need to worry about fumbling when working with his hands even less.

Increases the nimbleness of a person's hands allowing them to perform tasks faster and with grace.

While his old Runesmith Lord class was more equalized in all fields his new Runic Engineer seemed to put strength and agility into the backburner. This was fine as he could bridge the gap with the help of his armor, the more mana and intelligence he possessed the more his spells would scale of them.

No new skills were unlocked which was normal. Usually, new skills would be unlocked every ten levels or so, sometimes it was even rarer. Nothing was a guarantee and some classes required the person to unlock the skill themselves by some kind of revelation.

A skill book was the best way but an individual could acquire a skill on their own accord if they managed to figure something out. It was similar to gaining a climbing skill just by going up a tree a few times.

“You have my gratitude.”

“I didn’t do much, just distracted it for a moment.”

While glancing between the interface he saw that the woman from the church regained her footing. Even now her breathing was erratic and the glistering aura blade had crumbled into dust with only a sword hilt remaining in place. He had to give it to this weapon, it was quite fascinating and compact.

Could he create a magical version of it that would not consume all of his mana at once? An Aura blade was considered to be equal to something like Mythril. While this was not the strongest metal out there it was from the top shelf. Yet it would still be damaged while a blade made from Aura could be recreated multiple times.

A sword hilt wasn’t even needed, if a person’s aura blade skill was high enough they could even create it from thin air. Yet the more space it covered the more resources it burned up. A hilt was not as important thus most master swordsmen used separate items made from similar alloys. The one this woman was using looked to be high quality with various gems placed on the sides that perhaps augmented the blade in some way.

“Don’t sell yourself short Mr. Wayland, you were able to cause damage to an abyssal creature you will have my eternal gratitude”

The woman did something surprising as she bowed her head before someone of a lower level. This caught him off guard as most people with power would most likely brush his involvement to the side. Yet now came another problem, what was this all about. What started as a regular rank-up test for a silver grade adventurer turned into a cult eradication mission.

“Don’t worry about it, more importantly, Ms. Melaina... are you feeling alright? I saw what those cultists did to the people, your eye...”

Roland could see the woman’s legs shaking, even though she was standing up there were many wounds on her body. Then there was also her left eye which seemed to have been occupied by one of those tiny leech-like monsters.

While he seemed concerned about the woman’s wounds in reality he was somewhat prodding for answers. If she was from the church she probably knew what this was all about, perhaps he could finally figure out what this Abyssal cult was after.

"I am immune to the abyssal influence... but what did you just say? You saw the cultists perform their dark ritual, could you explain yourself?"

The woman seemed to react strangely to his question. After thinking for a moment he realized the mistake he made.

"I, well..."

Loreena was part of the church and was here probably to hunt down the Abyssal Cultists. This meant that she should be somewhat aware of how they conducted themselves. Roland did not know if the church actually knew about the runic items they were using to evade detection.

Considering that this high level tier 3 swordmaster had a strange creature inserted into her eye socket, they probably didn't. This made his involvement in the cult peculiar, perhaps it made him look like an accomplice. The information about the cult was really vague but if someone knew something it would be this knight from the church.

"That's what I would like to know, weren't you already fighting these bastards when we were in that smelly temple?"

Senna appeared out of the blue between the two, right behind her Orson and Dalrak were already arriving with a somewhat mean-looking barbarian.

"That's true, it took some time to awaken you from that Illusion."

"Illusion?"

"Yes, you probably remember coming to this village and experiencing many various events, I'm sure if you ask the others they will give you a different recount of their experiences."

Loreena started nodding while listening to Roland, while his innocence was probably not proven he could quickly clear up the misunderstanding. What he needed now were allies that would help him against the Abyssal Cult. What better way to keep them off his back than sending another large force their way.

'If I give this woman enough information then perhaps the church could take care of the cult for me...'

"Can you see that large double helix-like tower?"

"Hey... wasn't there a large tree inside the village instead, how did that thing get here..."

Senna replied while looking at the ominous-looking thing. All of them saw the initial village scenario with the dancing women and festivities before their own imagination and cravings took over. The large tree was the center of the illusory world and without accessing the core rune or destroying it there was no way out. Without his debugging skill that showed him the runic structures, it would be impossible for even him that was already a skillful high level runesmith.

"That's the symbol of the Abyssal cult, it represents the evil god's twin tongue and you say that it was responsible..."

Loreena commented while looking at the tower in the distance. While he wanted to ask her a few things, there was a barrier of levels between them. The woman was tired but she would probably be able to take care of all of them in a flash. While he was fine giving her some information, it would be better to get something in return without getting forced to go present a lecture to the church.

“So it’s this evil relic, you must tell me what you know about it!”

Soon the woman stepped toward Roland while putting the sword hilt to the side. Yet she didn’t seem to be in quite the condition that he expected. The moment that first step was taken she tumbled forward and fell onto her face. The display was quite comedic as right after getting a bloody nose she quickly got back up. Her face was emotionless as if she was trying to make everyone ignore what had happened and it worked.

“How about we mend our wounds first?”

Roland proposed while looking around. About a quarter of the caravan travelers had been killed by the monster and cultist. Then another quarter had fled in all directions during and after the monster was killed. The merchant owner was nowhere to be seen and there were still many injured people everywhere.

“Are there more of those bastards around? Should we make a run for it before more of them appear?”

Orson asked while Roland quickly replied.

“That’s a possibility...”

“There won’t be any more coming.”

Loreena shot down the answer quite fast and explained even quicker.

“They only summon that monstrosity if they wish to cleanse the area. They would not have done it if any meaningful support was coming.”

“So that thing was supposed to destroy the whole area along with us?”

Loreena nodded while stumbling forward and rubbing her head. It seemed that she was dead set on getting information out of him but at her current state even he would be able to make a run for it. There was no reason though, she didn’t seem as much of a zealot as the other church members.

“Hey blondie, get a grip of yourself you did enough, what good will it do if you pass out?”

Surprisingly Griscalde was the first one to walk over to the swordmaster and give her a shoulder to rest on.

“You have my gratitude...”

The two women looked at each other and it seemed that the Divine Swordmaster took up the offer. Soon enough they all headed towards the caravan where people were gathering. After the monster was dead all of the tentacles turned to dark sludge that started to quickly evaporate. It was as if the cultists were never there to begin with.

Everyone gathered around the remaining wagons where they had their supplies and healing items. Some of the merchants had escaped, this included the main one that took off with the cart Roland once occupied. Regretfully there was no priest among them and Loreena was poised for combat.

This left potions and other healing items to mend the various wounds that were sustained during combat. The monster didn't manage to instantly kill everyone, some were missing limbs or had their body drained of most vitality while still surviving. In their current state, they could very well die before reaching the next destination.

Then there were also the people affected by the strange parasites. After a small break, Roland and some of the other adventurers decided to go back to the temple. These infected people were all still asleep even when the runic item stopped sending out signals. The only person that could help them now was the church member that seemed to know a thing or two about these cultists.

"So, it's not an occult relic but a runic one?"

"Yes, it seems to be sending out signals via sound waves that affect anyone that gets within range, at first I thought that it was by sight but after examining the control device I realized that it wasn't."

While they were moving the people out of the temple Roland started talking. He disclosed some of the information about the large tower. How he found the core rune inside the illusion he did not mention but most of the things he told her was the truth. The medallion that he took from the dark priests he also handed to the golden order member that soon confirmed her identity.

"You can call me Loreena, as you might have realized I am a member of the church. I must thank you for your continued assistance. With this much information, we might finally be able to put a stop to these evil heretics! That they would use illusion magic by way of sound and that it would even affect me, this was truly a blunder..."

"Ms. Loreena, I have told you about the runic item and the way of interfacing with it but could you enlighten me about something."

"Yes?"

"What were you doing here and will I be able to pass my gold rank test?"

"Gold rank test?"

She stopped in her tracks while looking at the armored man that delivered the sentence in a monotone voice. Soon to Roland's surprise, she gave out a resounding laugh that was heard by almost everyone in the vicinity.

"Hahaha, that someone would worry about a gold rank test in a situation like this... very well Mr. Wayland let me tell you a bit about my mission. It was not a coincidence that I found myself here, this area has reeked of abyssal decay. You have seen those little creatures, they call them Rift Larvas."

"Rift Larva?"

"Yes, that I would have the joy of being infected by one. Worry not, we of the golden order are blessed by the goddess, such an evil creature will be burned away with time."

This instantly explained how the woman was able to awaken while everyone else was still in deep slumber.

“We must get these people to the church before the curse spreads further.”

They continued with their task at hand while Loreena spoke about her secret mission. While she kept it vague and left out any names he continued to fill in the gaps himself. Some way or another she had received a tip about the activity of the cult here.

She had clearly worked together with the adventurer guild to get the position of an instructor. Her disguise was quite intricate as even the cultist didn't discover her true identity. The larva would have burned away eventually, perhaps she might have been able to free herself from the illusion before they were sent back to the city.

“Can I ask you something?”

“Yes, Mr. Wayland?”

“What do these cultists hope to achieve by putting those rift larvae into people?”

“That is sensitive information that I can't disclose, I hope you understand.”

Roland nodded while not being offended. He was still only an outsider that was not part of the church. Perhaps he had saved this golden order member here today but it didn't mean that he was owed an explanation. There was already enough that he knew, with this much he could make his own theory that was probably not far from the real truth.

“Shit, does this mean that we won't be paid?”

After the long talk about the cultists was finished everyone gathered at the caravan area. Senna was stomping on some dirt while shouting. With the disappearance of the merchant leader, their reward for the transport mission was debatable.

“That merchant probably went towards his initial destination, I wouldn't be surprised if he goes straight to the guild or the ruling noble when he arrives there.”

Some of the wagons were missing but a lot of merchandise was still here. The merchant had made it out with his life and was probably going to try and get his wares back. It would have been surprising to Roland if they ran into a rescue party being formed in the next city they would visit.

“If we take these wagons to the guild they should take care of it, the merchant will have to pay one way or another.”

Dalrak chimed in as he knew the usual procedures. If the merchants didn't pay up then their items could be confiscated as collateral. The guild would then just sell everything off and if it was enough give the adventurers their full salaries back.

“I hope you are right.”

“So does that mean I can drink all of the booze? There is a lot of it here...”

Orson called out from the back while holding a bottle of wine. He had rescued two bottles from one of the carts and was already drinking. The second bottle was tossed towards Grisalde that just smirked.

“Hah, we can just tell them that they were already empty when we got here!”

Soon enough all of the adventurers started shouting out and raiding the liquor-filled wagon. Roland just shook his head but was fine with it, everyone was tired. What they needed was some rest and relaxation before journeying towards the original city.

Chapter 218: Time to go back.

“Here.”

“Thank you, so you are really going to stay behind?”

“Yes, this runic tower will help us against the evil heretics! I must thank you for lending me your runic expertise.”

“Is that so...”

Roland bowed before the golden-haired woman that was now looking a lot better. She was not a tier 3 class holder for nothing as within half a day she had recovered all of her lost health and stamina.

They had remained in the village until the next day. There were many injured people which required them to use up all of their healing potions that still remained. Luckily the next city wasn't far away and the lands were now protected by the Valerian noble house. Running into bandits would be even less likely than having another cultist encounter.

During this time he had explained about the strange runic device as much as he could. He implied that it was due to his rune related class that he was able to awaken from the strange illusory world. To his surprise, this was enough to get Loreena's approval. It seemed that she was somewhat able to discover the fake village.

Yet without any way of finding the core rune she was unable to free herself. Instead, she activated the defense mechanism and found herself being attacked by strange monstrosities. Only after Roland managed to disable the tower's signals was she able to awaken.

“Will this letter be enough?”

Roland looked at a sealed letter that Loreena had written up for him. Due to her secret mission, she needed to remain here. This brought a problem to the table as he still wanted to pass his gold rank quest. If the person that he was required to escort didn't arrive at the city then he would certainly fail. However, Loreena was thankful enough to write him up a letter that he was supposed to pass to the guild master of Reeka, the city that was his last stop.

“Yes, if you mention my name and give him this then everything will be taken care of.”

“Thank you and as we discussed before...”

“You're a strange one Wayland, anyone else would be honored to be rewarded by the church your role in this incident was not minor are you sure you don't wish to reconsider?”

“Yes, that would be best. It would be better if the cult didn’t know that I was involved in this affair.”

This was the only thing that he asked her for. She would be taking credit for everything while he would be left anonymous. He believed that the cult could get their hands on the official report which would point them straight to his workshop.

“As you wish then, I will keep this between you and I, but know this. I will be forever grateful for your help.”

He nodded while slipping the letter into his spatial bag. While he and all the others would be leaving this one woman would remain here. A few hours ago he saw her use a similar letter transportation spell as the cat professor from the magic academy. There were several blue swallows flying in all directions.

In their previous conversation, he implied that runic mages along with runesmiths would be indispensable in examining this relic. He himself wanted to go at it but his skill with tier 3 runes wasn’t quite there yet. In spite of that Roland was not going away empty-handed.

With the help of his debugging skill, he had copied over the schematic of the control medallion that was now in Loreena’s possession. With so many attempts at copying schematics from stores, he had gotten the hang of it now. Both this and the relic’s main schematic was noted down but the more important part was the inside runic structure.

This he did not really have the time to research and copy from the larger relic. The only item he would be comfortable in decoding was the medallion that worked like a remote control. This was already a big step in the right direction as it could help him design countermeasures against that ‘signal’ the main runic item sent.

From what he could deduct the initial spell was activated by sound. Yet the possibility of a combination of sight and sound could not be excluded yet. The pulsating signal was there and it might be enough to block it to be protected from being caught in the illusion.

“I must also thank you for pointing me towards a worthwhile expert, that someone with connections to the magic academy like you was here, is truly a blessing from the goddess.”

“Ah yes, that person should be able to decipher the runic structure if you manage to get them here...”

Roland decided to go with a little gamble. He was not able to get through the complex marriage spell that was implanted into this double helix. There were high-tier runic mages that were more experienced than him and one of them was his mentor. Thus if Loreena managed to yank the cat over here to do some research, he might be able to get the information from him later.

‘Phew, for a moment I thought that she would force me to stay behind and help her decipher everything here.’

As he walked away his pace started to increase. The woman he interacted with could probably slice off his head in one move if she deemed him to be some cult member. Luckily after helping her with the strange tentacle monster he had gained her trust.

While he was able to survive this second encounter with the Abyssal Cult it was yet again thanks to another person. Without Loreena appearing out of the blue he would either be dead by now or running for his life through the forest like the other escapees.

His armor was able to pierce through a high level tier 3 monster but it would only work on an immobile enemy. It was not something he could repeatedly use against a fast-moving enemy or one that could regenerate themselves like this one.

Then there was also the problem of his armor's runes degrading from overloading and being empowered. After two shots some of them had already degraded from the highest rating into the intermediate one. Without the ability to quickly mend them, they would have probably not been able to function past the second blast.

'Should I focus on immobilizing my enemies or a more sustainable form of combat...'

Roland was not a battle expert and was limited to mostly encountering monsters in the dungeon. He had the basics down thanks to being trained at the noble household during his childhood. Yet even with a quick wit and battle awareness, there was no possibility of combating people with monstrous skills.

During the battle, thanks to his parallel thinking skill, he could keep up with some of the monster's movements. Yet even if his mind could keep up it was not the same for his body. It took some time to inject mana into the armor to boost his stats and then react. Only by boosting himself with various spells was he even able to see part of Loreena's sword movements.

He did not feel like he would last more than a few seconds during an exchange with that woman. The gap between him and a tier 3 class holder might have gotten a bit smaller but he was nowhere near strong enough to win a proper one-on-one duel. The only way he could see himself winning was by luring his opponent into a drawn-out battle where he utilized golems, ranged spells, and explosives.

His weapons were able to pierce through the monster's body but this monster was specialized in regenerating itself. Its body was not heavily armored yet still proved troublesome for the high level tier 2 adventurers. The monsters varied in shape and specialization and depending on it he would need to alter his tactics.

"Are you finished with telling your girlfriend your goodbyes?"

"Yeah, we are finished, we can leave now."

"... well you're no fun."

Senna's attempt at teasing Roland had failed as he just ignored her comments. He had spent quite some time explaining the runic device while trying to squeeze some information about the cult from Loreena. To his dismay, she was unwilling to give out much besides some of their structure that he had witnessed here. While going up onto the new wagon which he now occupied with Dalrak, Orson and Senna he started thinking back to it.

The Abyssal Cult worshiped a prominent evil god that supposedly lived in some kind of void dimension. The thing they worshiped had no gender nor did it have a set physical form like other gods similar to Solaria. There was one thing that everyone agreed on, the creature had some kind of double helix protrusion coming out from its body that the cultists turned into their calling card.

Loreena told him that the creature that they thought was corrupted by the void god's divinity. The corruption would rob the corrupted of their will and turn them into a creature with a desire that originated before the transformation. The monster's form was something that was supposed to resemble its master. It was the same for the Abyssal Warlocks, he had seen one of them before and the tentacles along with growing more eyes was a similar trait they shared.

His new acquaintance didn't go into much detail but it seemed that those tier 3 warlocks would be around the level of the Golden Order Knights she was a part of. She did not mention the goal of this cult nor what the brain parasites were for. The evil gods and monsters from other dimensions had various strange motives but mostly it was a battle for believers.

'Perhaps the larva were there to alter the brain and turn anyone into another abyssal worshiper? Or perhaps they would turn them into mindless monsters to bolster their forces...'

Roland did not prod further as the reason was not that important. Even without knowing it, he knew that the cult had to be stopped. People with these larvae in their heads would not be aware of their existence. This was truly a terrifying thing to realize, anyone he knew could be infected.

The only way of curing those little pests was through divine energy that was in possession of high level priests. Yet without realizing that the process of contamination took place, no one would seek out a priest to have this cursed creature removed. It would fester in their head for god knows how long perhaps waiting for the right time to take the host over.

Fortunately, he had witnessed the removal of these little monsters by the hand of the divine swordmaster. The procedure was a lot easier than he expected as even without a proper healing spell it could be done. Loreena just needed to use her divine aura blade that radiated holy energies. After holding it close to the afflicted area the larva would deteriorate.

It was truly not for the faint of heart. During the procedure, the larva would panic and crawl outside through one of the host's orifices. This would either be the nose, the ears, or back through the eye socket. By this time it would have shrunk from the five-centimeter size down by a half and then directly turn into a puff of smoke.

'It should be enough to go to the priest and tell them to focus their energies on the head...'

After witnessing this spectacle he had made up his mind to get a checkup. While he didn't think that this was such a prevalent affliction he could never know. This expedition showed him that no one was safe, some of his acquaintances like Armand and Lobelia left the city regularly. They could have gone through this area on their travels and been infested by Abyssal parasites.

"What do you think will happen to those people?"

"I don't know, just leave it to the church."

As they were slowly moving away from the village, Senna posed a question to Orson that just shrugged. Even though they had removed the abyssal larvae from the inflicted they had stayed behind in the village. Loreena told them that the people that were directly affected by the abyssal corruption needed to be further inspected.

It was actually surprising that she just allowed all of the rest to leave. It didn't seem that she was trying to hide that the incident took place like some other people in power would. He could not imagine the Valerian household allowing this info to leave the village if they could stop it. It would make them look bad that they allowed the evil cultists to occupy one of the villages in their main territory.

'I guess the church doesn't care? or is this woman just a peculiar case?'

After spending many years in this new world he had gained some insight into how the people in power operated. Mostly they would withhold any kind of disturbing information like this and try sweeping everything under the rug. Even when corrupt nobles were discovered everything was done to keep the information from spreading. They wanted to keep the commoners feeling content with their power structure, if it seemed that the rulers were incompetent then a revolt was more likely.

Loreena was a peculiar case then, even when being part of something called the Golden Order she didn't feel like a proper knight. Her class distribution made her look like an adventurer as usual someone at her position would have a paladin class instead. People with those classes were usually a lot more fanatic about their belief in god.

How she handled the infected was also quite mild. From his research concerning the wars between the cultists and the church zealots, the results were mostly more bloody. The Paladins usually went to more extreme lengths of erasing anyone with potential ties to evil gods. It didn't seem that he was the only one thinking this as his travel companions started to speak up.

"Aye, that girly scared me for a moment, though she would have taken that lass' head."

Darlak spoke up after their smaller caravan had finally left the village and they were on their way.

"Yeah, when she pulled out that glowing sword I thought she would slaughter them all."

"Yeah, that was strange? Was she really from the Golden Order? Heard those guys aren't much different from the cultists."

The denizens of this world confirmed his thoughts as it was more likely for a high tier church member to burn the village down along with the afflicted than to help them out directly. Yet she still had them stay behind, if those people survived when the rest of the inquisitors arrived at the palace was up to debate.

"You don't think that she just sent us away so that her church allies can ambush us in the woods? You all saw that woman use that communication spell."

After speaking about religious cleansings Senna started looking nervous. It seemed to have gotten the attention of the others that quickly grabbed their weapons to protect themselves.

"Why would she do that? Not like she wouldn't be able to kill us in the village by herself."

Roland commented while not believing the conspiracy theory yet but the others weren't convinced.

"She wouldn't be able to get us all but if there is a larger force surrounding us then perhaps..."

Senna replied while somewhat making some sense. There were a lot of survivors in the village and Loreena might not have been able to kill everyone if they spread out into the forest.

“There were others that escaped before we even left, at this point what can they do? Stop making stuff up you idiots”

Grisalde called out from the top of the cart all of them were now on. A part of the adventurers along with the merchant owner had already escaped before the monster was slain. Even if the church killed them all now the information would already leave this place.

Luckily the kill would be attributed to the Golden Order member and not to the wandering rune mage that was along for the ride. He had gained a good shield to shift blame onto but if his new acquaintance would be able to keep his involvement hidden was unknown to him.

One thing he was convinced of though, the woman sounded genuine in her words so he was not expecting any paladins to cleanse this smaller caravan. Thus while his adventure companions continued to stress out about it he just leaned back and already thought about what he could do when he returned home.