

Runesmith 231

Chapter 231: Getting to the ship.

“Ey, those spells aren't workin'... Be that thing gettin' bigger?”

“I can see that...”

Roland watched as a large ball of tentacles rolled down the road. Even when it touched his mine spell the explosion didn't cause a tiny bit of damage nor stop it in its tracks. A few minutes ago everything started, they had left the thieves guild corridor and ended up close to the port where they hoped to catch a ship and flee.

Regretfully for them, they were quickly followed by a bunch of tier 2 Lesser Abominations similar to the one he destroyed in the city with his firestorm spell. They had followed them all the way from that secret passage and were now chasing them down.

‘This is strange...’

There was something bothering Roland when seeing this scene. Most of the monsters going after them were the ones that followed them out of the tunnel. His radar showed the monsters as red dots but before they appeared the runic system would place a random number. This number would persist for the duration of the monster being in the scanning range and then get purged to save space.

If Roland wished he could begin registering his enemy's mana signature. Saving their fingerprint took more time but allowed him to easily aim some of his homing spells during combat. Thanks to those systems in place he could tell that these creatures had mostly come from the thieves' guild tunnels.

‘Think this confirms it, someone ordered them to chase after us.’

There was a person from the races in those tunnels, it was probably a high priest from the cult. He could have ordered the abominations to get them due to them seeing the secret tunnel entrance. Perhaps the cultists still wished to keep their secret lair down there a secret from the church. Even if their forces above ground got wiped out they could continue to rebuild as long as their foothold was there.

“Can nah ye use that spell ye used t' blast the door open?”

“I don't think that would be a good idea, the knockback from it could damage this carriage, aiming it will also be an issue.”

Roland replied to Isabela that kept looking back and forth from the coachman's seat. The ride down into the pier was quite bumpy, the beam attack was powerful and could even damage a tier 3 monster. It traveled fast but was predictable as it went in a straight line from his chest. With how this carriage was shaking up and down he would probably miss while also using up a large chunk of his mana.

“Well ye better do somethin', those things be gettin' closer.”

While getting another spell ready he also looked around. When coming out of the tunnels the loud noises became apparent. Soldiers were fighting with the monsters and trying to keep them away from the port where all the cargo was. From the distance, he could even see armored men shielding themselves from the spine eaters.

Some of the ships were already floating away from the shoreline which made him nervous. Isabela reassured him that her sailors would wait for her but if that was the truth they would only find out when arriving where the ship was docked at. Luckily thanks to the guardsmen protecting the valuable wares there was still a chance of the monsters not reaching the docks. The sailors were less likely to be affected by the cult parasites as they all just traveled by water instead.

Finally, after gathering his mana an orb of blue light escaped from his casting rod. It traveled up into the sky before exploding. A large mass of guided mana bolts fell down on the abyssal creatures that were chasing them and riddled them with holes. This did indeed halt their approach slightly but soon the damaged monsters started combining each other once more.

“I can’t hit their cores like this...”

The homing spell worked well against regular monsters but against these creatures that possessed a core they were less than stellar. Damaging their outer shells only slowed them down slightly. With the addition of the other spine eaters that were coming from the sides, the few tier 2 abominations that were chasing after them had free healing potions that they could absorb.

‘If I can’t slow them down with attacking spells then...’

Roland had already tried raising the ground with his earth spells but the street they were on had been reinforced with something to the point of him not being able to. The little bumps in the road were not doing anything thus there was only one thing left in his repertoire to try.

They were about halfway towards their destination and some of the rolling masses of tentacles were gaining on them. The first one forward was showing its sharp teeth but before it could get in range of its target something moist hit it. There was no pain, just a mild feeling of annoyance as it gave out a low-pitched howl. It was hit in the face by a large orb of water which was not the only one as they continued to fly its way.

These orbs of water were common aqua ball spells that Roland was now shooting at a high rate from the carriage. This attack was not meant to hurt the monster but to prepare it for the following magic. He did not know if the creature could feel anything but if it could the drop in temperature would soon start causing it pain.

The air behind the carriage started dropping below zero while being pushed outwardly by strong winds. By combining three types of spells he hoped to stop the pursuing monsters in their tracks. First came water that was quickly followed by a cold wind, the freezing temperature of the frost spell was enhanced by the strong wind and the result was quickly noticeable.

This abyssal abomination started to be surrounded by a thin layer of frost. At first, it could just shrug it off but soon the air started to get colder and colder. The tentacles that were wriggling at high speeds started to be encased in ice which tremendously reduced its speed.

It was freezing and visibly getting stuck. The other abominations that were behind it were able to quickly catch up to it, with all the momentum they built up ramming into their ally was obvious. The stopgap was successful as he fired a few more aqua balls and a frost spell to encase more of the creatures in ice.

“This won’t slow them down forever, how much longer...”

“The hell are these shits!”

Roland had been successful in stopping their pursuers but another problem arose. When he turned around he could see some strange spider-like thing jumping at Senna. Yet on further inspection, it was far from an arachnid-type monster. The appendages that he confused for spider legs were actually human ribs. Its head was composed of some tentacles and a similar lengthier one that had a blade on the top.

The creature flung itself on the halfling with those bony legs as if it was trying to grapple her. Luckily Senna had predicted this movement and with her enhanced agility, she slipped to the side. Even though her feet landed on the side of the carriage she didn't fall down but instead, she remained standing horizontally.

“Aye shit, scuttle this thing!”

Isabela started screaming like a little girl when she saw this creature lodge itself into the roof of the coach.

“I got it!”

Orson that was inside the carriage was quick on the uptake. His long sword pierced through the wood that this monster attached itself to. The blade went right through the creature's human spine which caused immediate death. The tentacle blade on its head started wiggling around as it just dropped dead on the spot.

This wasn't over as many other smaller creatures like this one appeared on the buildings on the side. It seemed that they had abandoned their host bodies that they took over to achieve a faster form to chase them down. Now they were jumping from the sides and trying to attach themselves to the damaged carriage with eight people on it.

“Na ye don't!”

From the left side, Dalrak popped out along with his halberd. One of the creatures was quickly smacked to the side by his weapon. On the right side, the same incident occurred with one of the beings being cleaved by a large axe.

“We'll take care of the sides!”

The three adventurers that were on the inside of the carriage shouted while poking their heads and weapons out. While the abyssal monsters were faster in this form they were also a lot more fragile. Smacking them away was enough to shatter their bones and even one hit was deadly.

“Ye better grab somethin', 'tis goin' t' hurt!”

Roland just like the others had switched from slowing down the main monster force to trying to get the smaller ones from attacking them. The trip could not last forever, eventually the party of eight found themselves at the end of the road. It was a miracle that the wooden coach made it all the way towards the port but now the trip was over.

“Everyone, jump!”

Before them stood a barricade made from crates, logs, and various other items that the forces behind had stacked up. The horses were clearly unwilling to smash into it so they tried going to the side. This sharp turn along with the momentum tossed the whole carriage into the barricade.

“Thanks fer the help.”

Isabela was quick to jump off while holding her magical rapier in hand. She thrust her weapon towards the two horses that were pulling them along. With a few precisely aimed hits she was able to free them from the harness before they met their demise. This allowed them to scatter a bit before the inevitable collision.

Roland was luckily on the tail end of this all, right before the crash he activated his buffing spells to jump off. It was quite the sight to behold, the noble carriage they stole started side rolling along the barricade as if it was a ramp. It shot up into the sky and quickly crashed on the other side.

When his feet were back on the ground he quickly turned around to deliver a smack with his metal rod to one of those spider-like monsters. The thing flew into the distance while shattering into smaller bone fragments and tentacles after failing. It wasn't over yet, they had arrived at the port but they still needed to get to the ship.

“Woah, that was close, I thought I wouldn't make it...”

Orson was down on the ground with one of Isabela's sisters sitting on his back. The other one was to the other side with Griscalde. Senna had no trouble performing a somersault through the air and landing on the barricade but there was still one person missing.

“Wait, where is Darlak?”

Roland asked while looking around, everyone was accounted for with only the dwarf missing. All of them started looking around before settling their eyes on the pancaked carriage on the other side of the barricade. Quickly they all bolted towards it but before they could cross to the other side they saw a group of soldiers.

“Who are you, people!”

“Fuck o', I be cap'n Isabela move, I wants t' get back t' me ship.”

The confused guardsmen were quickly shouted at by the ship captain that was already on the other side. All of the people here looked to be on edge but they could tell that they were not part of the abyssal creatures. Some monster corpses along with human ones were scattered around here but it seemed that the place was mostly under control. Yet Roland knew what was coming and that these guards would not be able to contend with the abominations that he was only able to disable for a moment.

“If you want to live, you should run.”

“Hey Darlak you stupid dwarf, are you in there?”

“Aye, Ah think a'm a'right bit mah arm...”

Orson was the first one to arrive at the wreckage with his party member. Darlak kicked open what used to be part of the wooden door to get himself out. Dwarves like him were not very nimble so during the

escape he was unable to quickly react. Instead, he just curled up behind his tower shield while hoping for the best. The result was a mostly alive Dalrak with a dislocated shoulder or perhaps a broken arm.

“Ah kin still carry mah shield, a'm fine.”

While he tried to play it off it was clear that he was in some pain but they needed to continue. Grisalde kicked the rubble to the side and grabbed the halberd that was left behind.

“I got his weapon, let's go.”

“Halt, you can't just...”

The soldiers quickly stormed from all the sides to investigate the small group of adventurers. It was clear that they had their orders and there was a possibility of them being their enemy, but before they could question them a strange deep howl came from the other side of the barricade.

“Ah, shit! Run!”

Orson threw Dalrak over his shoulder and started running after Isabela and her two sisters. The sisters had already used the confusion to sprint towards the pier that their ship was in and now the monsters that were pursuing them had arrived. Roland could also clearly tell that it were the abominations as his scanner had kept their mana fingerprint.

The soldiers standing there had all their weapons drawn and were ready to fight. By the number of dead creatures here, they had been able to protect the area. Perhaps this was the reason why they weren't taking them that seriously. Even now they were keeping Roland's way to the docks closed.

That was until the howling noises got louder and something slammed into the blockade. While previously it was only smaller monsters that didn't pose much of a threat to the trained soldiers, this time around it was something more massive. The moment the ball of tentacles collided with the obstacle it tore it to shreds.

“Wayland what are you doing!”

“...”

The others took this as a chance to bolt towards the pier where the ship was. The confused guards would not stop them when contending with the monster there. Roland felt a bit responsible for bringing those things here but he was not the one causing widespread slaughter. He was just trying to save himself along with his party members that were trying to achieve the same.

Thus he turned away and started running. The monsters managed to bulldoze their way forward but they were still far away. With nothing else to stop their escape, they continued forward while hoping to get to the ship before it sailed away.

“The cap'n be back!”

“Wha' are ye idiots waitin' fer, raise the anchor!”

“But wha' about the cargo?”

“Screw the cargo!”

To Roland's surprise, it was like Isabela had proclaimed earlier and her crew was still there. He had expected them to at least undock and remain at a distance from land where the monsters were at. Perhaps they had remained here as there weren't any afflicted and the fighting was happening outside. Nevertheless, it seemed that his plan of getting out of here would succeed.

Isabela and her sisters were fast to jump onto their ship to bark out orders. The anchor was quickly raised by the crewmembers that got to work quickly. The wooden walkway that was placed between the vessel and the pier was also quickly removed before Roland and his party could get on.

"Wha' are ye waitin' fer, jump."

It didn't seem that Isabela was willing to wait for them. Instead, she was quickly ordered everyone to get her out of this god-forsaken place. The monsters continued to screech from the distance which probably added to her panicked state. Senna was the first to arrive on the ship as she was not far behind, then came Grisalde and Orson with a Dwarf over his shoulder.

"Wayland, what are you doing?"

Surprisingly the last person was the armored man that helped them get here. At this very moment, he was just standing in the distance while glowing. Before anyone could ask more questions a large mass of black tentacles appeared out of nowhere. It knocked several soldiers out of the way while rapidly going down the steep hill towards the group that was leaving. With the speed and momentum it had, it would be able to catapult itself onto the slowly departing vessel.

That is if it didn't receive a concentrated blast of energy that escaped from Roland's chest. Before the monster could contemplate its mistake a large hole appeared in the middle. The concentrated beam of energy spread to the sides and luckily caught the core which caused an almost instantaneous death to this abomination.

While being drained and with a migraine, Roland quickly took off towards the leaving ship. The sailors on it were surprised to see someone able to move with such speed while wearing a heavy-looking suit of armor. Their jaws dropped even more after he jumped and safely landed on their deck while producing two small holes for each foot.

The chase was over and all eight of them were now on the ship. Following the dead abyssal creature came more that halted in their advance when reaching the end of the pier. All they could see were their flailing tentacles that could not reach them, finally, they were safe but could they really leave this area unscathed?

Chapter 232: Making it out alive.

The message that Roland had destroyed the lesser abomination was displayed before him along with the experience points for it. Yet this was not something that he was preoccupied with. Instead, he looked onto the docks that they were leaving. There he could see more of those masses of tentacles arriving.

"Are they going to follow us into the water?"

"I don't think they will..."

Senna asked Roland while watching along with him and the rest of the group. The only one not paying attention was Dalrak who was grasping his arm. After suffering from the carriage crash he was still feeling the after-effects.

“Har, those bastards can nah swim! Good riddance I say.”

Isabela spit out of the edge of the ship while also trembling slightly. It was clear that everyone that had made it to the ship was in the process of gathering themselves. They had been through a rollercoaster of emotions of being chased through tunnels and then the city by strange creatures. The same creatures were now on the pier contorting in unnatural ways.

“Raise the sails, we be gettin' out o' here!”

“Aye, aye Cap'n”

The ship started drifting away from the shore and allowed Roland to see everything clearly. Soldiers started storming the pier that they left to engage with the monsters that broke through the line. Various fires could also be seen from within the city along with the sounds of fighting. Just as he predicted the noble district didn't seem to be suffering that much damage due to the lack of smoke.

‘The church shield is still there, the only ones suffering are the common folk...’

As long as the merchants and nobles that had their homes in the rich district survived everything would be fine. All the workers could be replaced and all the buildings could be repaired. This was the reality of this work where the common labor force was deemed dispensable. The business owners were probably more concerned about their stores than the people getting killed.

Roland, who had worked hard to become a business owner, didn't quite like this approach. He knew the plight of the common laborer as he was one for a while. At his business, he allowed days off and even sick days, if he lost some money for a few days it was fine and nothing to lose sleep over.

Even to this day, he didn't really understand people's fascination with money as to him it was only a means to an end. Was living in a grand mansion with multiple servants so much better than just having a medium-sized family home? To him, there was always a limit where money started losing its worth. The biggest reason he was improving to this day was mostly for survival as without money he would not be able to gain the strength required to have a peaceful life.

“Awright watch it, ah think tis broken.”

“Think you need to work on your evasion skills.”

His attention was brought back to his new party members. Orson was all smiles when looking at Dalrak who was in pain. At this very moment, the dwarf was slowly getting help from Senna with his armor. If his arm was broken the bone would need to be set, this of course would be a very painful procedure.

“Yeah, this one is broken, tell me when you are ready.”

In this world filled with monsters and strife, it was quite normal to see a scene like this. Dalrak just nodded while biting down on a rolled-up rag. Roland would offer the dwarf some pain-numbing potions but he didn't have any and neither did anyone that was here. Almost every adventurer had the first-aid skill, Orson was performing the bone setting and seemed to know what he was doing.

Crack

Just a little grunt escaped from his mouth as the damaged bone was set in place. Only after they were sure that it was aligned was Dalrak allowed to douse it in a healing potion that would turn weeks of healing into a day or less. Only thanks to these potions and healing arts could these adventurers be so daring in their quests for money and fame.

“Fuck, finally it’s over... hey, do you have any booze here? I could use a drink.”

“’Twould nah be much o' a ship without some rum.”

Eve looked to Orson while winking at him with a bottle in her hand. It seemed that she was already downing it along with the other sisters. Dalrak was just leaning against the mast while the sailors worked on getting them out of here.

Just as anyone else Roland wanted to just sit down and rest but not long after they started gaining some momentum a strange howl entered their ears. At first, they thought that perhaps the abominations were just maddened by their departure but the sound was not coming from the city, it was coming from the sea.

“Ahoy, it's comin' from thar!”

The sailor that was up in the crow's nest shouted out while pointing into the distance. Roland with the help of his suit of armor was able to zoom in to see another large monster flying up in the sky. It wasn't alone as several smaller ones accompanied it.

“The heck, there are more of them?”

Everyone started panicking as the monsters appeared from behind the clouds that blocked the view. It would be impossible for the ship's cannons to do much damage to these monsters or even aim correctly. It was designed to hide from large sea monsters and battle at most the mid-sized ones while retreating. If one of those large worm monsters decided to wrap themselves around the ship they would need to quickly abandon it as they lacked a holy shield to defend themselves.

“Wait, there is something else there...”

Roland called out and the man on the lookout point on top of the main mast did the same. Behind the group of flying monstrosities, three large ships appeared. They were different than the first one Roland saw but they were carrying the church's flag. Soon enough their cannons started firing off and hitting the flying creatures.

“Helmsman!”

“I be on it cap'n.”

A large bald muscle man that had his body riddled with various tattoos quickly turned the rudder to make the ship turn to one side. The evasive maneuver positioned the ship away from the battle in the sky as they quickly tried heading away from the shoreline where the battles were heading.

“Blasted wind ain't pickin' up, hey Wayland ye're a mage can nah ye do somethin' about this?”

“The Wind?”

It took him a second to process the information before quickly heading to the back end of the ship. He had read up about things like this, some ships utilized magical devices to produce strong winds. While his regular wind-based spells were meant to cut things or mix with his ice spells he could quickly alter their structure.

With the help of his Runic Restructuring skill, he was quickly able to alter some of the runes on his armor. This could be observed by everyone here as his armor started glowing and the runes started to slightly shift into other places. Soon enough he had a runic wind blower that he could point at the sails.

“Woah!”

Orson was the first one to stagger when the strong wind energy collided with the sails and made the ship jolt forward.

“That's wha' I be natterin' about! Keep it steady helmsman.”

“Aye, cap'n”

Even for Roland, this was no easy task, most spells were made by a quick jolt of condensed mana but this one would constantly drain it at a rapid pace. But there was no other way, with his help the ship could quickly zoom through the waves.

This could not have happened at a better point in time as suddenly a large explosion caused their ship to tilt to the side. To everyone's surprise, the entire area was getting riddled with explosions that were coming from the sky. The vessels that belonged to the church were pelting the monster with cannon fire and constantly missing.

The ride was quite rough but the helmsman was quite experienced. Somehow he was miraculously able to predict where the next close explosion would occur and react accordingly to dodge it. When looking up, Roland got a good view of one of the metallic golden ships that passed over them. It was accompanied by a strange humming sound and a monster trying to entangle it.

Luckily the factions that were battling it above them didn't care about the merchant ships below. After passing everyone they headed towards land and the forest area in the distance. Their aim was clearly the village where the Abyssal Cult's relic was hidden. Soon enough the distance increased and the only thing the party of people could complain about was that they were now all wet.

Finally, it was over. The monsters in the sky along with the flying vessels were now a small speck on the spyglass. Even when new flying monsters appeared they were far away from their current location as they had made it out into a safe region. Yet not every ship had made it out in one piece, they could see that some lifeboats were floating in the distance.

“I can't...”

Roland dropped down to one knee while holding his head, during the escape, he pushed his mana reserves down to ten percent. He was now starting to really get a migraine that if he continued would cause him to pass out.

“Ye did well, nah bad fer a mage.”

Isabela showed up to deliver a smack to his metal back that probably hurt her more than him. She didn't seem disturbed by this fact as she began laughing while holding the hand she smacked him with. The other sailors around with the two sisters burst out laughing in unison as if this was a normal occurrence.

...

"Aren't you going to join the others?"

"No, I'm fine here, I need to do some repairs."

"Is that so..."

A somewhat intoxicated halfling with a mug filled with some alcohol was looking at Roland. He was in the process of fixing some runic pathways that had suffered some damage during the battles with the monsters. A day had already passed since they left the city of Reeka and everyone was taking it easy.

Not far away there was the sound of cheering and music. Orson along with Dalrak were dancing around with both of Isabela's sisters and having a good old time. Even though the danger had passed Roland could not relax, instead of partying with the others, he decided to work on his gear.

After going through this whole predicament he had to reevaluate his fighting style. His overreliance on spells was one of the problems. He was also questioning the choice of weapons, the sword and shield weren't used as much compared to the magical staff. After some deliberations, he had thought of a replacement that would fit his frame more.

"Common, relax for a minute, have a drink with me!"

"Weren't you having a competition with Grisalde?"

"Hah, that lightweight? For all her size she drinks like an old gnome!"

When peeking to the side he noticed the passed-out barbarian woman. Not so long ago he remembered hearing her shouting all over the place while challenging Senna to another drinking competition. Of course, she lost the new bet and was a few coins behind once more.

Isabela also decided to change the port they were going to. Roland wasn't sure if it was because of him but when he mentioned that he would rather get out at the city he arrived in all those years ago, the captain humored him. Perhaps she was grateful for saving her life or scared of his spell-slinging capabilities. Thanks to this change he would arrive home sooner than he expected.

"Don't be a stick in the mud, here."

It didn't seem that his new halfling acquaintance would take no for an answer. She was quick to pull out a fresh bottle of rum that was probably acquired in some shifty ways. The bottle was thrown his way so he was forced to stop and catch it.

"Hm..."

It took him a moment but finally, he decided to give in. His armor was still mostly operational and working on this ship was less than optimal. After the cork was popped open with the help of his thumb

he just took a good swig. The alcohol filled his throat and started burning it, the sensation quickly subsided as his various skills took effect.

“Yeah, that’s better!”

Senna cheered out and her mug made a clunking sound with the glass bottle that he was holding. Roland tried remembering the last time he was pressured into drinking alcohol and started recalling the party of three he encountered when he was about ten years of age.

“So, what are your plans for the future? We haven’t had the time to visit the Albrook dungeon, I heard it was a C grade. Me and the boys are probably going to check it out.”

“Oh? Are you going to stay in Albrook?”

“Ye, that’s the plan, think we can get ourselves up to the gold rank there, that idiot might also join us...”

That idiot was the passed-out Griscalde. While she was over-leveled for being their party member she would probably be a great help against the tier 2 fire monsters in the lower levels. Yet her involvement in the group would cause them to gain experience slower due to a member with over ten levels higher than the rest.

“You’re also from Albrook, right? Can I count on you to show us around?”

She smiled while taking a sip from the mug that was not meant for halflings. A C grade dungeon would be a perfect training ground for adventurers below the golden rank. The monsters were at appropriate levels with not being overly easy or overly hard to combat.

“Ah... sure.”

Roland felt like he was scammed into agreeing as he just blurted out the answer before thinking much about it. He wasn’t really sure what to make of this halfling but he did not dislike her or the other three from this party of adventurers.

“Ye two got space fer a third?”

“Hey cap’n, come on over, we were about to have a little drinking competition with Wayland!”

“No, we weren’t...”

“Can nah 'ave a drinkin' competition without me!”

Suddenly Isebala appeared and started laughing like a drunkard. Some of the people that were previously singing and cheering were drawn to the voice of their captain. Soon enough they were all cheering and chanting as the drinking commenced.

‘Why did this end up like this...’

“Drink, drink, DRINK!”

Roland looked at the glass filled with alcohol and quickly tossed it down his throat. His competitors were red in their faces while he only had some rosy cheeks. It wasn’t that much of a fair fight as the two had already been drinking beforehand but even with that, he was starting to zone out.

He had gained resistance to alcohol but even he had a limit. These two drunks had probably gone through their life drinking wine and rum as if it was water so he was still at a disadvantage. Thus the night of partying ended with him passing out at one point in time. When he woke up he could feel some kind of weight on his face.

“Ugh?”

When pushing it down he realized that it was something soft and squishy. When trying to push it away he was surprised by the alluring moaning sounds. Soon he realized that the captain had passed out on top of him with her chest pressed against his face.

‘I’m glad Elodia isn’t here.’

He wanted to laugh while placing the passed-out woman to the side. Half of the crew were similarly sleeping in strange positions while the other half continued to tend to the ship. In a few days they would arrive at their destination and then finally this little adventure that turned out to be a disaster would come to an end.