

Runesmith 233

Chapter 233: Back on land.

“Ughh...”

“Egh, that’s disgusting.”

“Shut up you damn shrimp...”

Grisalde proclaimed while leaning her head over the edge of the main deck to relieve herself of some food. This brought a smile to Senna’s face that was to the side just watching as the oversized woman was still vomiting after getting drunk once more.

“I hate this ship... how much longer ‘till we get to land ... URP!”

“Nah much o’ a sailor. We’ll be thar soon, want some rum?”

“Leave me alone.”

Isabela started laughing along with all the other sailors that couldn’t help but tease the large barbarian woman. She didn’t stomach the waves too well and along with the proclivity to get drunk, she spent most of the days flopped against the edge of a deck.

Roland at this time was closer to the bowsprit of the ship and looking out into the distance. There he could almost see the port town that he had visited all those years ago. Due to the situation, they found themselves in, the captain decided to first reach the closest safe haven.

‘We should get there within the hour, finally I can put this whole mess behind me.’

His long mission to get this golden rank was finally over. With his new card, he would be able to organize his own small expeditions if he wanted and command other adventurers. Some of the prices would also be lowered and he would get paid more but was this worth what he had been through?

The biggest problem was the reemergence of his old enemy, the Abyssal Cult. Even now they were probably still setting the city and the forest ablaze. The only lucky part of that whole mess was that due to the chaos his name would probably be forgotten. His old enemies would probably turn their attention towards the church instead.

‘That is if the Church wins...’

There was a possibility of the cult actually winning the battle. If they managed to catch people from the golden order that knew of his involvement he would find himself in danger. The possibility of that happening was very low and he didn’t believe that the cult would go that far. Their main mission was probably to either retrieve that illusion device or destroy it.

‘After they take care of that thing they will probably try to lay low for a while...’

That was the usual way criminal organizations went with their business. If they started sticking out too much they would try to hide. The people in power couldn’t send out their forces to track them down forever. Everything cost money and after some time had passed they would be able to return to their evil ways.

'Although now everyone will be alert to their presence, I'm not sure the nobles will just let their cities be invaded, just how many of them have already fallen?'

Edelguard popped into his head, there he had a run-in with the cultists. He had presumed that the cultists were just hired assassins to clear out the merchant union in the city but after coming in contact with the brain slugs he needed to reconsider his position. Could the person hiring them be part of the cult? Perhaps he was forcefully conscripted?

"Hey, how about you try to smile from time to time."

Senna interrupted Roland's brooding session and brought him back to reality.

"Would you look at those two idiots."

She didn't ask about his thoughts but instead pointed over to Orson and Dalrak that were leaning against some barrels. They looked like they had their life sucked out of them.

"What happened to them? Are they sea sick or drunk?"

Roland wasn't really that noisy and kept to himself so he wasn't sure what the problem was here. Only after seeing Isabela's sisters walking out of their private cabin did he realize what this was about. He recalled seeing the two men interacting with these ladies and going inside that very cabin.

"Ye dwarves were supposed t' 'ave a lot o' stamina."

Eve shouted out while bringing everyones attention to the two floppy men.

"Aye, sorry mah lassie, th' spirit is willing bit th' flesh is weakening..."

"At least yer dwarf can still speak, that scallywag passed out in the middle, had t' do all the work meself!"

Christie, the second sister grumbled while looking at the passed-out Orson. The man was barely moving and his complexion was quite pale. When looking at the two men he wondered if Isabela and her sisters had any succubus blood running in their veins. This was a possibility as their sex drives were a bit over the top. He did not indulge in these kind of events for a few reasons, the current one being that he had already settled on one woman and didn't really see the point of branching out to any others.

"Maybe this will keep them from spending their money on whores for a while, we'll have some money to buy better equipment. Hey Wayland, you know Albrook right?"

"Yes, that's right."

After having a good chuckle Senna turned towards Roland. She was clearly looking at the runic armor that he had on. Previously he didn't make it obvious that he was the one that made it but after going through some repairs on this ship it became more obvious.

"We'll probably be stuck there for a while, know any good places with good weapons..."

"Are you looking for anything specific?"

He replied while playing dumb, it didn't take a genius to know where this conversation was going. Senna was obviously looking at his runic items with a glint in her eye. Normally he would ignore such deliberate prodding into his business but during his journey, he had started realizing that perhaps it was impossible for him to do everything himself. Even though he was probably the main driving force behind their escape, without everyone else he would have probably not made it onto this ship by himself.

"Well you know, that big lug is missing an axe and she will probably need something fit for a gold rank adventurer... probably something with runes in it."

Senna pointed to Grisalde that was apparently now part of their party. Her weapon had been dented during their escape and needed some repairing.

"You are right, might as well replace it now instead of repairing it, probably something with an impact rune to increase the cleaving power..."

The barbarian woman reminded him of his old acquaintance that used a large hammer with that kind of enchantment. It was perfect for people with low mana capacity and a lot of strength. It would just increase the weight of the weapon during the swing to produce more damage.

"Now, where could we find a nice runic craftsman that could help us out with that..."

"We can agree on the price later but It'll probably be cheaper than whatever you can get in the other shops. If you want something just ask it directly"

"Oh, so you own your own store?"

Senna asked, seeming slightly surprised.

"Yes, something like that."

"That does fit you more..."

"What does?"

"Owning your own store, don't take this the wrong way but you don't come across as someone that works well in a group."

"Yeah, that's probably accurate..."

Roland started thinking back to his past where even when he worked for others he was mostly doing everything himself. When working for the gnome he received his own small workshop where no one bothered him. Since then he preferred to just not interact with other craftsmen and do everything his way.

"So, Wayland. Who are you really?"

"What do you mean?"

His heart skipped a beat as Senna continued questioning his true identity. Luckily for him, this was not related to his noble birth in any way.

"I mean, you are obviously not just a mage, you can work with a hammer..."

“Oh, I’m a Runesmith.”

“A Runesmith, hm?”

There was no problem in revealing his identity as a craftsman to anyone here. In Albrook his name was already known and they would have found out about it sooner or later. Yet, Senna didn’t seem that convinced as she just nodded while raising her brow.

‘I guess that’s a normal reaction, other runesmiths can’t really do what I can...’

Even though other runesmiths would be able to create similar weapons and armor, they would not be able to use them as efficiently as he. The regular Runesmith class wasn’t suited for battle, if he didn’t achieve the Lord variant the armor that he was using would have to be trimmed down. Without his high mana capacity, there would be no way of him ever using that many powerful spells at once.

“Wha' are ye two natterin' about, we'll be dockin' at shore soon. How about ye get those two sobered up unless we can keep 'em.”

Isabela came around to break up the conversation that they were having. She pointed to Orson and Dalrak that looked like they were at death's door. With how Grisalde was in a similar state it would probably be up to him to pull them up. Senna was still just a halfling and would not be able to drag them down to the port.

“Does this happen often?”

“Not that often but I could tell you some stories.”

Senna laughed while Roland decided to get back into his suit of armor. With his help and some smelling salts that the sailors lent them, the two were back among the living. Yet, their legs were shot, they could not hold themselves steady even after he helped them up to their feet.

“What were you doing last night... do you expect me to carry you?”

“Wayland you don’t understand, my pride as a man was at stake, you would have done the same.”

“Aye, we might ‘ave lost th' battle bit won th' war!”

“Stop spouting nonsense, why do I put up with these two perverts...”

The two men exchanged strange bittersweet looks with each other as if they went through some life and death situation the previous night. Roland could only imagine what the two had gone through to get into this sort of state. In the end, he needed to lend both of them his shoulder while escorting them down the ramp after they had docked.

“Don’t think we are the only ones that escaped from the city.”

When they arrived at the shore they spotted a few damaged ships not far away. The people here were all shouting and giving recounts of the flying monsters that appeared which made things more obvious. After helping his weakened friends to a bench he decided to listen in on the conversation.

“What are the nobles and church doing, how could they have allowed something like this to happen?”

“Why are we paying taxes if they can’t even protect us? I heard they massacred half of the city!”

The rumors were exaggerated in most cases but the whole thing put both the nobles and the church in a bad light. People were clearly maddened by the leaders that had failed them. Normally such news would be kept secret but this catastrophe was too large. There was no way to halt the spread of these rumors and there would probably be factions that would just fuel them further.

‘Anyone that is against the Solarian church and the Valerians will try to smear them...’

He could only imagine what Arthur was thinking now. The city of Reeka belonged to one of his siblings. While this would pull their name into the mud it could be an event that helped his new associate out.

Perhaps if he proved himself in some way, they would divert some of their funds into the new city but that was still somewhat unlikely. Unless Albrook gained another valuable resource besides the C grade dungeon, it just didn’t have anything worth investing in.

“Fuck, I need some water, why don’t those bastards have any water? Do they just drink wine every damn day?”

While trying to listen to the people in the small port city the loud voice of Grisalde broke his concentration. She was able to get down the ship on her own accord but wasn’t looking great either.

“Ye adventurers 'ave no guts.”

Isabela laughed while following after the large woman from behind. With three people from the adventurer party down for the count, it was up to Senna and Roland to continue the conversation.

“So about our bounty...”

“Wait, you’re going to bill us, after all, we’ve been through?”

“Camaraderie won't fill me belly, I 'ave a ship t' run 'n we lost most o' our cargo, but ye did help us get t' the ship so I can lower it slightly...”

Roland didn’t really care one way or another, he had intended to get on this ship beforehand and had prepared the payment. Without saying anything he just placed the amount in Isabela’s hand.

“Pleasure doin' business wit' ye.”

The ship captain turned towards Senna with an open hand. Very begrudgingly did she fork up the money but there seemed to be an issue.

“If I count handsones share wit' this, that still leaves one scallywag out...”

Senna grinned widely while looking towards the annoyed Grisalde who was listening in on the conversation.

“Fuck you, give me back the money you stole from me and I’ll pay!”

“I won it fair and square~”

He could see the two women looking at each other with some animosity. Grisalde did have some coins when they arrived on the ship, but he saw her gamble it away through the entire trip.

“I guess I’ll have to pay for my silly friend back there, I’m sure she’ll pay me back eventually~”

Senna made a spectacle by paying Griscalde’s share of the ship fare. This looked like a planned scheme to get the higher-level barbarian to come along with them. With her around, they would probably have an easier time fighting monsters down in the dungeon.

“Well if ye ever needs a ship don't be a stranger 'n...”

Isabela pocketed the few coins that she received but didn’t look all that happy. She had lost a lot of the cargo and probably a lot of money during this whole fiasco. Her ship was luckily not damaged and perhaps there were some wares that she could gather here or people wanting to go to the mainland.

“Wait, this is...”

“Ye know wha' 'tis, if ye needs somethin' t' leave the island I'll give ye a good price.”

Before walking away the chesty ship captain delivered a smack to his armored behind. What he received was a small card with a few names on it. It was obviously something related to the thieves guild through which he would actually be able to contact Isabela. She was a member and smuggling goods directly through her could be more lucrative than selling them on the black market.

“Hm...”

For the time being, he decided to put this card into his spatial bag. Due to the auction house, he did not need to use the black market to earn money. Instead, he could grow through the more common ways but if times were tough then perhaps he could look into this contact. Having Isabela on speed dial could also save his life just like it did during this small expedition.

Finally, he was almost back, while his mind was filled with future problems he still managed to think back to his home. There, people were waiting for him, people that he actually enjoyed the company of and didn't smell like rum all day. This was a rather odd feeling that he had almost forgotten existed.

“A place to call home, huh?”

“What are you mumbling about Wayland?”

“Nothing...”

“If you’re not busy then help me with these two idiots...”

“Yeah sure but don't expect me to haul their drunk asses through the entire city.”

Thus with two bad-smelling men leading against his shoulders, he headed towards land, there he first needed to get some proper food and then find a way to get back to Albrook.

Chapter 234: Coming home.

“I’m feeling like a new man!”

“Aye, there is nuthing better than crakin' a cold beer in th' mornin'.”

“Don’t get used to it, we are running out of coin because you two bastards always throw it away on cheap booze and whores and now we even have a freeloader with us.”

“Who you calling a freeloader?”

“You.”

Senna pointed at Grisalde who was eating some food with the others. Roland was sitting between the two women that continued to shout at each other. This reminded him of the first time he met them, that time Senna was escaping under the table while Grisalde tried to bash her head in.

Orson and Dalrak were ignoring the two while enjoying their food. After the party of five left the port they were forced to rest at the nearby tavern. Due to a small refugee problem, they needed to wait for the carriage. It would be leaving soon so they were just having breakfast together before departing.

While everyone was being loud and obnoxious Roland was just looking outside while tapping his fingers on the table. Even though the danger was over he was feeling restless. The trip back home would be faster on the carriage but for some reason, the worrisome thoughts didn't leave his mind. Soon everyone noticed that the table was starting to shake and the source of it was their new runesmith friend.

“Wayland?”

“Huh?”

He snapped back to the real world as Orson called out to him. His strength was above regular tier 2 class holders so it wasn't that hard to make the tableware clutter.

“Is something bothering you, Wayland?”

“Oh... I guess I'm just a bit anxious about returning home...”

“That's surprising.”

Senna chimed in from the side and actually looked somewhat confused after he blurred out the answer.

“What is?”

“Well, don't take this the wrong way but you don't look like someone that is bothered by many things...”

The other three nodded in unison while finishing up their food which left him also a bit confused.

“Hey, even I get anxious from time to time, do you think I'm some kind of golem or something?”

“Now that's a good way to put it!”

Senna laughed out which brought a frown to Roland's face. It seemed that his quiet demeanor was attributed to a lack of emotions. This was not true as he felt that he was similar to everyone else, just a bit introverted here and there. Yet his new party members apparently didn't feel the same way.

“You know that I can hear you right?”

Roland raised his eyebrow at Senna, who was sticking her tongue out at him while laughing. After shaking his head he made a mental note of trying to fix his introverted ways. Perhaps with the number of people increasing around him, he could stop replying in short one-liners and actually hold a conversation that doesn't include runes or business.

“Let’s go, next stop the city of Albrook!”

“Aye!”

A few of them cheered as the time to leave for their new destination was upon them. They all had met up with him outside the city and had never actually been there. Albrook had become a new destination for adventurers and they all were interested in the new dungeon but also mostly about the possibility of gaining more gold.

Thanks to Senna’s skillful mouth the adventurers were able to land a temporary position as guards. They would protect the small caravan of travelers and get a free ride. While Roland had enough left to pay for this trip there was no reason not to take up this offer. Thanks to his and Grisalde’s golden adventurer cards they were instantly hired.

The journey back home was an uneventful one though. No monsters had crossed their path and neither did any bandits. Yet this didn’t stop Roland from constantly activating his debugging skill every time they came to a halt. After what he was through he could not trust his eyes anymore. Those evil devices were also portable, at any moment a cultist could appear and put everyone under their spell.

Even tier 3 people from the church were unable to break it, only he thanks to his unique skill could. If at some point in time the cultists came to realize this fact his life would be forfeit. At such a time his only hope of survival would probably be the church, not even his noble heritage would be of much use.

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“So you can’t recommend anyone?”

“Well... there is one idiot... I mean person but it would be better if you didn’t speak with him too much...”

Roland wanted to roll his eyes at the questions that Orson was giving them. It was as if his mind was only filled with ass and tits. Even after passing out on the ship, Orson was already itching for more fun and asking about the red-light district.

He never visited those types of places unless he wanted to visit the thieves guild so he had no idea what to say to his new friend, the only person that could probably point him in the right direction was Armand. Yet when looking at Orson he could not shake the feeling that they were quite similar.

“Stop with that stupid shit!”

Senna smacked the back of Orson’s head as he was derailing the conversation.

“So back to those dwarven union bastards!”

“Such a pity, that they would do such a thing.”

Dalrak shook his head after Roland described the years of his back and forth with the merchant guild and the dwarven union. He informed them about the price gouging and all the small things they tried to do to force him out of business.

“But you must be a good craftsman to last for so long.”

“I know a thing or two, luckily Runesmiths don’t grow on trees and rarely move away from the main cities.”

Everyone nodded while he continued to explain the power dynamics that were in the city. He colored everyone in a mostly gray light while putting Arthur slightly above them. Though Senna was mostly interested in the thieves guild and a way of getting in contact with them.

“Can you bring me along the next time you go to the market?”

“I guess if I bring you as a guard then they will have no problem letting you in..”

As a member of the black market, he would be able to bring in bodyguards. Yet if Senna wanted to actually perform missions for the guild then she would need someone to vouch for her. Roland knew a few people like that with Lobelia being on the forefront.

“It’s good to have people in high places!”

“She will decide though, I can only introduce you.”

He shrugged as Lobelia had the freedom to disregard Senna’s plea. There was a possibility as Senna was a guild member but belonged to a different region. The underground guilds weren’t as tightly connected as the ones like the adventurers guild, each one was slightly different. Depending on the guild master she could very well be refused entry.

“So that’s Albrook?”

“Yeah.”

After the conversation was over and some more time had passed they had finally arrived at their destination. The chimneys from the dwarven workshops were constantly releasing smoke into the air but besides that, the city seemed peaceful. As always he could see new people stuck at the main gate and this small caravan would probably be the same.

Yet even though his new friends were all looking at the medium-sized waiting line his attention was drawn to another place, towards the forest. There he could not see any smoke as he had designed his workshop to filter all of it out instead. He had promised to help them in the city and introduce them to some of his acquaintances but being stuck in a line was the last thing that he wanted to do now.

“This might take a while so...”

“Just go, your wife must be waiting for you. When we are finished with our accommodations we’ll come and visit you at that workshop of yours. ”

Senna grinned while smacking his armored back.

“She isn’t my wife, we just sometimes live together...”

“Poor lassie, to have an unfaithful husband”

Dalrak shook his head while somewhat hiding a grin under that beard. Orson who was walking next to him started laughing and followed with a few jabs of his own.

“If you live with a woman then you are as good as married, but if you want to join me on my next expedition, then I’ll keep it a secret.”

During the trip, he had informed everyone about his living conditions and also Elodia. From the point of view of adventurers, if anyone settled down in one spot and had a significant other, then they were practically married. Commoners didn’t always go through the church to hold a ceremony, they also didn’t require proper documents.

“Wayland I thought you were the serious type but you’re the same as those two leechers.”

Grisalde joined in on the joke by acting disappointed and sighing.

“Screw you guys.”

Roland replied with a frown on his face. It was clear that they were busting his balls by how they were acting so after turning around a faint smile appeared on his face. Although the people he met were loud and sometimes annoying he did not dislike their company. They treated him like a member of their group their bonds were tight after all the trouble they had been through.

“Damn, look at him go... that’s a man on a mission, that woman of his is in for it.”

Smack

“Hey, stop hitting my head.”

“Maybe I’ll cure that chronic stupidity of yours if I keep smacking.”

The group of adventurers laughed as they saw the usually quiet Roland slowly picking up the pace. Even though he wanted to make them believe that he didn’t care about much, it was clear that he did. The way he just fast walked towards the forest area and took off confirmed it all to them. While all of them would need to register at the adventurer guild they were hoping to remain here for a while, Wayland seemed like someone that was heading places, and perhaps they could join him on this trip towards greatness.

...

‘...’

Roland had suddenly activated his armor’s boosting feature to allow him to run faster. After what it had been through it wasn’t in the greatest shape but it was still holding strong. Thanks to this whole predicament it had gone through extensive field testing which would allow him to restore it into a better version if he so wished. Yet this was not what he was looking forward to, instead, a few familiar faces entered his mind.

‘They are doing well, right?’

Normally he would have used a magic device to contact his home by now. Regretfully the crystal ball he took along for the trip had been blown up along with the cultists during the battle in the village. Without finding a replacement he needed to wait until this very day, that he returned.

Finally, he saw the trees clearing up to present him with the path towards his home. It was a strange feeling, he had not been gone for that long, not even a whole month had passed. Traveling was nothing new for him as he had already changed the location where he lived before. Now on the other hand it was different, he did not want to leave this place where he had managed to build a home for himself.

‘Am I getting sentimental at my age?’

In reality, he was not a young man anymore. If he counted the number of years he spent in his original world he would be around forty. Was this just a sign of his advanced age or was there another reason that he was attached to this place more than the others?

‘I still can’t shake this bad feeling...’

He zoomed through the path like a madman. After what had happened to him during this trip his paranoia had only been made worse. His level was too low to defend himself against the Abyssal creatures on his own. The weapons he created were inefficient and if he ever encountered a tier 3 monster then his life would probably be over. There was much he needed to improve on and he wanted to hasten it.

“Awoooo.”

“What is it Agni?”

Before coming out of the forest he was halted by a familiar voice and howl. It was a strange feeling as he froze in place, the people that he wanted to meet again were just there. The feeling of awkwardness washed over him, how should he greet them, should he just wave and greet them or smile instead?

Luckily while he was frozen in place with his thoughts clouding his return someone quickly approached his destination. He did not need to look at his radar to know that it was not a human that was running this way. Before he could say anything he was tackled from the front by a red blur. Normally he would be able to take this kind of tackle without going down to the ground but today he was willing to give his pet wolf a pass.

“Awwwwwo!”

“Hey, stop licking me Agni...”

His helmet flew to the side as he had removed it during the run through the forest. Due to this mistake, he was now getting his face licked by an overzealous Ruby Wolf. At first, he was just happy to see him but after moments passed the face-licking started to get a bit annoying.

“Get off me Agni, stop that already!”

With some force, he raised his body along with Agni’s only to have the wolf’s nose bump him in the face. Finally, with a hard push, he managed to get some space between himself and the wolf. Even then it didn’t seem that the ruby beast would halt his assault as he tried to jump on his master again.

“Down boy, Sit!”

Only when he changed his expression and called out in a more commanding voice did the ruby wolf decide to sit down. Agni’s ruby tail was thumping the ground while kicking up dust, clearly, he had

missed his master that had vanished for multiple weeks. The open mouth and flopped-out tongue made Agni look as if he was smiling which also quickly transformed Roland's maddened expression back to a more cheerful one.

"Agni what are you doing, did you find a squirrel again? How many times have I told you to leave them alone..."

"Oh, hey... It's been a while..."

For some reason, he was feeling a lot more awkward than usual. Perhaps the near-death experience he had been through had made him think a bit more seriously about his life here and the woman before him. He could see her just standing there while wearing the uniform from his store. Yet before he could continue with the conversation she took off running.

"Wait, be carefu..."

"Just be quiet for a moment."

Without giving him a warning Elodia jumped at him and put her hands around his neck. To save her from bumping into his armor he managed to grab her waist in mid-air so that she wouldn't bump into him too hard. Her face landed in his chest as she could not reach his head and there she remained for quite some time.

"Hey? ... Are you crying?"

"I'm not crying!"

The sniffing was quite noticeable and how her smaller body was trembling was worrisome. Without thinking much he decided to place one of his hands on her head while hugging her closer. There they remained for a minute until Elodia managed to calm herself down. With a quick push, she freed herself from a hug and looked up to him with quite a lot of tears in her eyes.

"I... I thought something happened to you, I've heard about Reeka, and...ah sorry, I'm a mess..."

Elodia pulled away while removing her glasses to wipe the tears away. It was normal for the news of the cult's attack to have spread as they did a bad job at hiding their presence now. The tears were not something that he was expecting; instead, he thought a stern lecture to be more careful would await him when he returned.

"How about we go in and I'll explain everything to you, there is a lot we need to talk about."

Elodia nodded while also grasping Roland's hand that was offered to her. While he wanted to do nothing more than go to his bed and sleep for a whole day, there were some things Elodia and his workers needed to know. This mostly concerned the cult parasites that needed to be checked for in the church as fast as possible.

Only after that was done could he put his worries to rest. Only then would he be able to relax and put this horrible trip behind him. Yet already he was happy, his home was here, and in it were people that he learned to care for.

"Welcome home Roland."

“Yes, I’m back...”

He replied with a small smile on his face while walking towards the entrance gate. His previous journey was at an end but the next one was already around the corner.