

Runesmith 237

Chapter 237: Flexing?

“Why don’t you just give up? No reason to be shy about your true feelings, I’ll be sure to take care of you well~”

Armand winked at the woman that was standing on the other side of this training ground. While she wasn’t quite his type it didn’t take much to get him going. He was sure to strike a gallant pose to show off his muscles that had grown since he reached his second tier 2 class.

“What’s wrong with your head, you’ve been spouting nonsense the entire time! And you call those things muscles? These are muscles!”

Grisalde the barbarian was on the opposite end, the moment she saw her opponent flexing to show off their physique, she returned the favor. Her body wasn’t behind Armand’s in any way and she was also taller. When she was striking that double biceps pose the other adventurers started whistling.

“Damn, that woman is huge, isn’t she larger than Armand?”

“He’s got a bit more volume on her because he is a man... but she isn’t far behind...”

Some posing enthusiasts that were in the peanut gallery started giving their opinion while the two showed off their goods. Other people that were here to see a fight started to complain, but not like the two muscle brains cared. They continued to strike poses as if this was some kind of body-building competition.

They did draw in the attention of a certain guild leader. The bald man that was in a different weight category started rubbing his chin while looking at the two young adventurers. His eyes were drawn to Armand who used to be part of the faculty of the guild.

“He did improve a lot but he still has a lot to learn...”

“Guild master, what are you doing...”

“Oh, don’t mind me...”

Solana that was within the office tipped her head to the side while looking at her boss. Aurdhan who was of the Goliath race suddenly started flexing his biceps while looking out the window. The shouts of the other adventurers didn’t go unnoticed but it was not something that they weren’t used to.

“Please, pay attention and stop doing that.”

“Hah, can’t have any fun around here... maybe I should give that brat his position back...”

While the guild master was getting scolded by his secretary another group of people were looking dumbfounded at the ‘fight’. Roland had rushed towards the fence and almost jumped over it to stop the altercation but the two just continued the flex-off.

“I’m really glad that you two aren’t blood-related...”

“Yeah...”

Elodia nodded her head while looking away, her face was a bit flushed after having to listen to Armand make a fool of himself.

“...But now is not the time, let’s get him over to the Church.”

To everyone's regret before any real action could take place, Roland along with Elodia rushed to the two muscle brains. He went over to Grisalde while Elodia had to contend with Armand and his antics.

“Wayland? What are you doing here?”

“Keeping you from doing... I guess It’s to late for that, just come with me and ignore that guy...”

“But he started it first, I won’t feel satisfied until I cleave his crotch in two!”

“You want to do it with that?”

Roland pointed to the damaged axe that she was holding, after the escape it had been damaged and needed to be repaired. Grisalde looked at her weapon and for some reason tried to hide the dented edge behind her back. As a heavy axe it probably could be used to deliver some blunt damage but against Armand who was a close combat specialist, it wouldn’t be that effective.

“Hey stop that, that hurts!”

While he was trying to convince the barbarian woman to give up, he heard Armand’s pleading voice from behind. There he saw a strange scene of a vast smaller Elodia yanking on the man’s ear. He looked truly pathetic with his shoulders and arms slumped forward. Even though the person pulling the ear didn’t have much strength, he was forced to move.

“Why do you always have to get in these stupid situations, I thought you’d mature after getting the gold rank, but it seems that you need to be scolded!”

Elodia shouted while tugging on his ear, the other adventurers burst out into laughter as they forgot about the bets that they made.

“Ha ha, Armand is going to get scolded!”

“Elodia, you’re making me look bad in front of the other adventurers...”

“You should have thought about that sooner, wait until you get back home, Armie.”

“Hey, I told you not to call me that...”

The people burst out in even more laughter after Elodia brought up a nickname from his past. It was clearly something that one would call a child and caused everyone to start shouting it at the man himself.

“I think Armie needs some milk from his mommy.”

“Hey look guys, Armie is going to cry!”

Some adventurers shouted out after getting some fuel. Armand was known around by many and had built up a bad reputation. There were many other men that disliked him for being popular with the

ladies and this was the perfect time to throw in some jabs. They were safe in the crowd and confident of him not being able to tell where their voices were coming from.

“Hey, who said that... when I find you, I’m going to bash...”

“You’re not going to do anything, now start walking!”

“...”

Grisalde along with Roland continued to stare in silence at the scene that unfolded. Thanks to this strange performance before them it was clear that the animosity was dying down. He didn’t even need to repeat himself as she scratched her head before just walking towards the exit on the side. There Senna along with her two companions were waiting, all of them had stupid smiles on their faces.

“What are you looking at?”

“Nothing~”

The halfling just chuckled while Orson started mumbling something to himself.

“Hm, big muscles aren’t that bad...”

“Hoh, did ye discover something new?”

“Perhaps I did my friend...”

Roland wasn’t sure what the two were talking about, but they were looking at the muscular barbarian lady that seemed more oily than usual. Their gazes were focused on her thighs that were probably thicker than even Armand’s.

For some reason, it seemed that the woman rubbed oil onto her body that made it shine even more than usual. Perhaps it was a plan to be more slippery for the battle with a hand-to-hand specialist. Yet this was not the time to ask silly questions as they needed to get the troublemaker to the church for an examination.

“Hey big sis, why did you do that, I had to give all the betting money away...”

It was their lucky day, suddenly out of the crowd emerged Lobelia along with the two young men from the thieves guild. Renny the one that was part dog beastman and Jasper who had fox-like ears. They were the ones taking bets and weren’t given their cut after the bout didn’t take place.

“Oh, do my elven eyes spy a famous Runesmith?”

“Good to see you Lobelia, grab that idiot, we need to talk.”

After a less than heartfelt greeting he pointed to the mad Armand that was shaking his fist at some of the other adventurers. Most of them would probably bring this accident up for the next few months to come. Soon all of them excused themselves back towards the tamer side of the guild where he was supposed to get Agni registered. Before going through with that, he needed to give Elodia’s two siblings an explanation.

“What?”

“Hey, keep your voice down or I’ll keep calling you Armie.”

“Hey, that’s unfair.”

After going to a more secluded location Elodia gave a quick explanation to both Armand and Lobelia. Both of them were shocked at the thought of being infected by some strange type of disease.

“True, we could sell this information to the guild for a nice margin...”

“Hey, who is this, I like her.”

Senna popped her head out to look at Lobelia talking about selling the info. The guild in this case was not actually the adventurer one but the one that worked underground with thieves. When the two spotted each other they could instantly tell that they came from a similar background.

“Wayland, who are these people?”

“Right, I should probably introduce you, these four were on the same mission with me and then helped me escape from Reeka.”

“Hah, more like we just clung to Wayland here while he did all the work, you should have seen him sling those spells around.”

“Speak for yourself pipsqueak, I did my part.”

Grisalde didn’t seem so amused as she remembered killing a couple of monsters on her way out. The others just chuckled and ignored the small outburst.

“You have my gratitude.”

Elodia moved towards the four and performed a little official bow before them. The four were taken aback by the gesture. They were all grizzled adventurers, so a heart-filled bow of gratitude wasn’t something that they were used to.

“So is this Wayland’s wife?”

Asked Grisalde after the bow of appreciation. The large woman just nodded her head back but on the other hand, both Orson and Dalrak remained quiet.

“His wife? Oh no I am just...”

Elodia’s face got a bit red after the statement, she looked towards Roland that for some reason felt a lot of weight on his shoulders. That look that she was giving him started making him sweat but luckily he had some people to divert the conversation in a different direction.

“So that’s Wayland’s type... those clothes are deceptive... is that an E... no I think it’s and F...”

“Mmm, the lad has a keen eye...”

“The hell are you two on about?”

After getting kicked in the shin by Senna both of the idiots backed away. Roland was surprised by the keen eye that Orson had when it came to women figures.

“Not bad...”

For one reason or another Armand nodded with approval at the two new adventurers he met. The three started looking at each other with a certain glint in their eyes before bursting out in laughter. This laughter brought frowns onto the female members of this conversation that started inching away from the trio.

‘I guess those three are equal in their perverseness, better not to leave Elodia alone with any of them.’

Roland made a mental note of keeping his woman away from this trio of blockheads. He wouldn’t be surprised if not soon after they cleared things up, the three would start going to the redlight district together.

“Anyway... everyone, let's meet up at the church in fifteen minutes...”

“Do we have to?”

Asked Armand while throwing glances at Grisalde the new woman in town. Luckily after one suster from his big sister he just nodded. Agni’s papers needed to be taken care of which would take a bit of time. Thankfully with Elodia’s help, they were able to get these sorted out in about ten minutes.

...

“Here you go, please show this to the city guards whenever you take your tamed beast into the city. Also, remember to keep your beast muzzled at all times, if it causes any harm to a citizen, you will be held accountable for its actions.”

“Thank you.”

Roland nodded after seeing a stamp appearing on a small slightly above card-sized piece of paper. This thing was similar to an identification card, on the front it had his information written down while on the back there were six squares for a stamp.

It was clearly less intricate than the adventurer card that was not easily destroyed. Each time he gained a new tamed monster or his old one evolved he would need to get a new stamp of approval. The only magical part about this small document piece was this stamp that was radiating a faint mana fingerprint.

‘They probably have something to identify the stamp within the guild, it wouldn’t be easy to falsify this.’

While the document in itself would be easy to counterfeit the stamp would not. Perhaps in the thieves guild, there would be someone able to create a false card for a tamed beast that one didn’t want to have on the record. For instance, a poisonous creature could be tied to assassination but could be hidden behind a fake tamer card.

Some creatures looked similar to each other and could also have unique evolution options. Even wolf-type monsters such as Agni could evolve to have poison glands in their fangs if they were brought up in a poisonous environment. Food choices could also affect this as they did with his ruby wolf that liked to eat mana stones.

“I never get to see you anymore, want to go to the tavern?”

“Hm?”

After finishing his business he was hoping to quickly get the rest done soon. Yet when he returned to where Elodia was she was getting hugged from behind by a beautiful elf woman.

“The tavern? I’ll have to decline, I still have a few things to take care of... now let me go.”

“Should I?”

Solana was the one that was clinging to her old co-worker and making a scene. They didn’t have that much time on their hands so even with his aversion to social interactions he decided to go over to help Elodia out.

“Thanks for waiting, we can leave now.”

“Well, if it isn’t the famous Wayland, just the man that I’ve been looking for.”

“Hm?”

He didn’t like the sound of that, Roland intended to just give Elodia an excuse to leave earlier but instead, he seemed to be the focus of this ploy. Solana was quick to move toward him for a quick interrogation.

“Didn’t your mission involve Reeka? You probably heard the news, how did you manage to get here so fast?”

“I was just lucky and left before the incident...”

“That’s quite the luck you have there. The way back should be blocked, did you use a ship?”

Roland didn’t really want to talk about his involvement in the village incident or about the monsters in the city. There were probably records of him entering the guild in Reeka that Solana couldn’t confirm due to the attack. The only real proof was the ship that he arrived at, but he could always claim that he left the city right before the monster attacked.

“Yes? Now if you would excuse us.”

While Solana wasn’t his enemy, he didn’t have time. His closest companions came first, after everyone was checked he didn’t mind informing some of his allies about what truly happened there. Getting everyone in the city examined was something that needed to be done, Arthur was probably left in the dark even as the city lord. As his new boss, it would probably be good to inform him about the problem at hand.

“Wait...”

Yet when he was about to go he felt Elodia tugging on his robe. Her face said it all, it was clear that she wanted to explain everything to Solana but didn’t want to go ahead without his consent. Roland took a moment, the elven girl did help him in getting this mission sorted out quickly. Even though he almost died, it was his choice in the end.

“I’ll go with the others, you can meet us there after you are finished but on one condition, take Agni for now.”

“Awoo?”

Agni had been allowed into the guild filled with monster hunters as long as he had someone watching him. Roland couldn't go into the church together with his ruby wolf if Elodia wasn't there to keep him company.

“Alright, be careful.”

Elodia smiled while nodding before turning back to Solana who was confused but intrigued. While the two were going to have a long conversation about the true movements of the Abyssal Cult he needed to get Armand and Lobelia checked. While the quartet of adventurers didn't need a checkup they were still hanging with the new group.

When he arrived at the church without Agni in tow he could see two groups forming. On one side were the trio of leechers that were probably talking about women. On the other side were the women along with the two young men that hang around Lobelia.

“Hey, Wayland... Where is big sis?”

Asked Lobelia who was a bit confused.

“She stayed at the guild to take care of a few things, wait here I'll go get Sister Kassia she will examine all of you.”

Luckily it didn't take him long to get Kassia to let them in through the backdoor. Just like before Roland kept his eyes on everyone that was going in. This time around he noticed something peculiar, one of the people they came with looked strange. Their eyes started twitching and they started to sweat, it was as if they were feeling uncomfortable from being exposed to the environment of the temple...

Chapter 238: The first patient.

“So, how about the two of us grab some brew after we are finished here?”

“Some brew? Do you want to discuss the scripture of the radiant lady with me? How about you come to the sermon and pray with me then, Mr. Armand?”

“I uh... sermon?”

‘I didn't think that I'd see Armand ever be dejected when talking to a woman...’

Roland along with a few other people were looking at Armand's facade crumbling. They had come here to get checked up but he could not hold himself back from courting someone as beautiful as Sister Kassia. Regretfully for him, this woman was already in a relationship with the sun goddess, Solaria. The moment he tried his one-liner on the cat lady priest, she mistook it for a call for preaching.

‘At least he seems normal enough, he isn't infected and Lobelia is next after her will be those two...’

The plan was to get Elodia's two siblings here for a proper examination, but they weren't the only ones here. Besides these two another duo followed them inside of the church. They were half-beastmen that belonged to the thieves guild and liked to hang around their leader Lobelia.

In the past, the two of them along with Lobelia tried to rob him of his possessions. They took him for a defenseless merchant that was new to the guild and wanted to teach him a lesson. Luckily for them, Roland was able to control his impulses and didn't harm them too much. Ever since then he could tell that the two weren't fond of him too much.

Perhaps it was due to the beatdown in the past or his relation to Lobelia, he did not truly know or care. Just as usual they were giving him that passive-aggressive treatment while not talking much but there was a slight difference. Jasper the one with the fox years and the louder of the two was acting strange.

'Could he have it?'

"Oh, my skin feels a lot smoother!"

"That's one of the gifts of the radiant lady, her light is capable of revitalizing a maiden's skin."

There were after-effects of the divine-based healing magic. From what he could tell there were variants of healing spells. One boosted the body's natural mending capacity to rapidly seal any wound. The downside was that it would leave a scar, then there was divine healing which apparently turned the body back to a state in which it was healthier.

The drawback with those spells was time, the longer a person remained wounded the harder it would be to heal them with a divine spell. This could be countered by more powerful spells or higher levels. Thus if there weren't that many wounds it would only de-age the skin cells.

"Jasper, you're up!"

Lobelia with a smile on her face moved over to the young man with fox ears and gave him a smack on the shoulder. The response wasn't what she expected as instead of going forward with a puffed-out chest he just took a step back. His forehead was full of sweat and it seemed that he was close to losing it.

"What's wrong with you Jasper? Are you afraid of priests or something?"

"No, I just... Can we just get out of here? I don't see a reason why we have to do this, will we have to pay that nun after she is done? Doesn't this look a bit fishy?"

He turned to his friend Renny whose dog ears were flopping around while listening.

"Wait, we need to pay for this?"

Renny asked with concern in his voice but was quickly interrupted.

"No, you don't, I will cover any expenses now, move and get checked, it won't take long."

Roland was quick to reply while taking a harsher tone with Jasper who for some reason was fidgeting around.

"No, I don't really..."

"Why don't you listen to the man, my small friend?"

While Jasper was backing away he bumped into something hard. When looking up he saw a large grinning barbarian woman that was strategically placed in the doorway. Before everyone entered the church Roland asked her a small favor. He had already realized that Jasper was acting strange. Grisalde was much taller and stronger, even when he tried he could not wrestle out of her grip.

“Bring him over.”

“Wayland, is this really necessary?”

Lobelia along with Renny tried moving closer but were unsure what to do. Quickly Roland answered the question with a raised voice while also quickly moving to grab the young man’s forearm.

“Yes, he could be compromised, Sister Kassia.”

While caught by the large barbarian from one side and Roland from the other Jasper was dragged before the Priest. After pushing him down to his knees he was held in place by two people with superior strength.

“Stop with your squirming, this is for your own good.”

He tried to reason with the fox beastman but he was like an unruly dog at a veterinary appointment. There was clearly something wrong here, luckily with the two of them combining their strength, there was no escape. Sister Kassia quickly started focusing her divine energy on the man’s head.

“Wait... what is that black smoke?”

Lobelia shouted out while pointing towards Jasper. The moment the golden light surrounded his face, pitch-black smoke started escaping from his orifices.

“N-no s-stop... i-it hurts...”

“Hold him, he is infected.”

The moment Roland saw the change he could tell that this person had a parasite. The whole scene was similar to the one he saw back in the village. There the gold order member treated the afflicted people with her divine aura blade instead. It was slightly different here as Kassia was not a tier 3 class holder but thanks to being a priest her healing spell was able to perform at a similar capacity.

During the first stage of the treatment, Jasper’s body started convulsing. It was as if he was going through an epilepsy attack. Soon after dark smoke started rising from his nose, ears, and even eye sockets. His eyes started bleeding as if they were about to pop but before that could happen the healing spell took over.

“... he passed out...”

“What happened to him? Is he going to live?”

“I...”

In all honesty, Roland didn’t truly know what would happen to this person now. Back in the village, Loreena insisted on having the people with the abyssal larvae taken by the church. This wouldn’t be different, Jasper needed to be watched by people from the church and observed for any kind of relapse.

“I think we need to move him to a bed first, Sister Kassia do you have a room where you keep the sick?”

“We have a small infirmary, please follow me.”

The priestess was fast on the uptake, after seeing the dark smoke her smile was gone. Roland wasn't sure but he assumed that clerics could feel corruption from evil deities like this. This was quickly confirmed as they left the room to go towards the infirmary. Before they could get there, an old man in full priest garb appeared before them.

“Sister Kassia, what is the meaning of this? Why do I feel the influence of a primordial evil in the house of the radiant mother?”

“Head Priest, this person...”

It was the Head Priest of this church that was able to feel the miasma arising from the previous treatment. Without thinking much of it Roland decided to use his identification skill to confirm something.

Name:

Stanwyck L 141

Classes:

T2 Sun Devout L41

T2 Sun Priest L50

T1 Cleric L25

T1 Acolyte L25

The man looked to be in his older years and lacked a tier 3 class. Not everyone that was old possessed a high level. This priest probably gave up on hunting monsters in a party and focused on spreading the word of god which would hinder any progress. A priest was a battle class, it required experience points from killing monsters to progress. It was not like a crafting class that could still continue by fashioning items.

Most priests had no lust for things like strength or power. They had a comfortable life at the church and everything was provided for them as long as they could cast healing spells. Usually the younger tier 2 priests would be sent to the dungeons but after going past the hundredth level they would have an option of quitting.

This was his first time seeing the leading figure of this church, Kassia was also a tier 2 priest but her level was inferior. After seeing the knocked-out Jasper for a moment he could see him scrunching his nose.

“This young man... Very well, bring him but Sister, you will explain yourself to me.”

Kassia bowed in an apologetic fashion before they carried Jasper to the infirmary. The room wasn't very large, it only had about ten small beds that weren't even divided by anything. Some of them were occupied but there was enough free room for the new patient to lie down.

“What’s going to happen to him?”

“I’m not sure, I think the larva should have been killed by the healing spell...”

“You think?”

“I’m sorry, I don’t know much about these creatures...”

Lobelia raised her voice at Roland as she demanded some answers. He really didn’t know what the long-term effects of these monsters on a person’s mind were. The creature should have been dead and Jasper didn’t turn into a tentacle monster either. His complexion also looked better now.

“I... Renny, you need to get examined this instant, what if you have the same thing?”

“What? I could be sick too?”

“He’s probably fine, didn’t you notice how your other friend started acting after we stepped inside the church?”

“Now that you say it...”

Everyone started thinking back to the moment they stepped through the church. Even though there was no holy barrier inside of this building, healing spells were cast constantly and holy water was being made as well. These Abyssal Larvae couldn’t stomach even the faintest of the divine arts. Now Roland was sure about it, if someone afflicted entered this area they would start feeling some side effects.

“But to be on the safe side, he should be examined by a priest. ”

Lobelia nodded before grabbing Renny by his hand and dragging him towards Jasper. He was being examined by the head priest along with Kassia that would probably have a long talk with him afterward. Roland had already explained everything regarding the abyssal parasite problem.

‘I’m not sure I can trust these people with this issue’

Yet this wasn’t quite over, there was one important person in this city that needed to know the full story, this was the city lord. His brother was the city lord of Reeka and the fiasco would probably be pushed on him. Perhaps the citizens would blame him for allowing the cult to sneak into their midst.

‘That is if they actually tell them the truth, he could try to pass it off as a conflict between cultists and religious zealots that the city was caught between...’

“There you are, where are Armand and Lobelia?”

“They are in the church, we had a problem...”

“You don’t mean that one of them...”

“Calm down and let me explain, both of them are fine but one of Lobelia’s friends...”

Roland was done with the church for now so he decided to go outside. There he parted ways with the four-man adventurer party that needed to find an inn for the day. They all agreed to meet up on another day after the commotion died down. The four also needed to decide if they actually wanted to stay here, after seeing another infected person it wouldn’t be odd to leave.

After they were gone Lobelia showed up along with Agni. Due to the accident with Jasper, he had spent a lot more time than he intended on the inside. He was quick to give her an explanation that her siblings were just keeping their friends company.

“T-this is horrible, so it really reached our city... what will we do?”

Elodia was shocked by the revelation, it was one thing to hear about a troubling fact and then another to be involved in it. If one person was afflicted by the parasite then more of them could be there.

“I think there are things that we could do, but I’ll need to get some high-quality potions...”

“You need to buy potions?”

“Yes, for now, you better return to the orphanage, I don’t think that any of them will be afflicted, but it’s better to make sure, right? The idiot is inside with Lobelia, it’ll be safer if you wait for the two first, before going back.”

Elodia nodded and didn’t argue the fact. Roland knew her well enough to know that she wouldn’t be able to sleep through the night knowing that one of her family members could turn into a strange creature. She was soon gone and he was left with a confused ruby wolf that just wanted to go home.

The day was slowly coming to a close as the sun inched down the horizon. There wasn’t much time left for him to go to the shops to buy proper stock for what he was planning. This problem with the cult wasn’t an easy issue to handle but it needed to be prioritized. While the church fought with the cult they would probably funnel their forces to that forest which gave him and others time to prepare.

‘I wonder where that kid got that larva from, even though he is part of the thieves guild it wouldn’t be surprising if all of them moonlight as adventurers. They could have gotten it from the same village...’

He had a tiny theory when it came to that village and the parasites. They could have a limited number of the evil creatures and even if people passed through that area, they couldn’t infect everyone. Instead, those people would be held up by an illusion of the village and just pass through without being harmed. Perhaps the cult went through their possessions to gather information to sell it off as a side job.

“The number of infected might be lower than I initially thought...”

“Infected?”

“Hm?”

Just as he was going through a few potential strategies a familiar voice called out to him. When he turned his face he saw a woman in a maid uniform. Her cat ears were pointed towards him as if she was interested in what he was mumbling about. For people from beast tribes like her, it wasn’t hard to hear what he was whispering, all thanks to their enhanced senses.

‘I need to stop muttering to myself...’

“Good day, Mr. Wayland, the Lord would like to have a word with you.”

“Oh?”

Not that much time had passed since he entered the city. Only after coming along with Agni and the rest did he actually go through a proper checkpoint. Perhaps the guards had sent word to Arthur that he had returned.

'Did he order them to inform him if I got back to the city or something?'

"Is there something that Lord Arthur requires of me that can't wait until tomorrow?"

"You really like to joke around Mr. Wayland, I'm sure that you know why the lord would like to see you."

Roland just shrugged while showing a weak smile, he wanted to see if it was really about the incident in Reeka or just some business meeting. It wasn't strange for Arthur to be interested in what happened in the city but it was surprising that he knew that Roland was there to begin with.

'Did he put some informants into the guild?'

Arthur Valerian didn't possess much power in the city but as a noble, he did have some money. It wouldn't be hard to bribe some of the officials that had already been selling themselves to the merchants. It seemed that while Roland was trying to gain some levels to progress, Arthur was expanding his net of influence inside the city.

"I was meaning to visit him, I do think that we have a lot to talk about. It won't be a problem if I bring him along, right?"

He pointed to Agni that was looking at Mary with perked-up ears. The moment the cat girl saw the ruby wolf she just smiled and gave a nod. Soon the two and one large wolf were walking towards the city lord's mansion. There Roland would need to explain the situation that the island they were on had found itself in.