

Runesmith 259

Chapter 259: Family dinner.

'Would be nice if I could make this thing more compact, maybe if I figure out tier 3 runes it will become easier.'

Roland was down in his workshop working on the large cannon that he used for his dungeon grinding. Its design had been slimmed down and he actually decided to use some better materials from within the mining area. Yet even with those to generate enough force to kill a tier 3 monster it needed to be huge.

"Not really that heavy."

Yet even the size didn't affect him that much as his enhanced stats allowed him to lift the whole construction and hold it over his shoulder. This thing was not something one person should be able to carry around. Even though this was just the barrel it was just a thick slab of metal with runic engravings on it.

"I'm really above the limitations of humans from my old world."

He didn't really test it out but he wouldn't be surprised if he could lift a small car if he tried. The biggest problem was the counterweight as he still had his human frame. Even though he weighed around a hundred kilos it was still a bit difficult to balance it out. If two people with the same strength stat came to blows, the one that was heavier would win.

There were exceptions to that rule as there existed skills and magic to counter the weight problem. People could increase it or even their own density. There was gravitational magic that could be used for that and it could also affect the opponent by shifting their center of gravity around.

However, this was one of the more difficult fields of study. The people from this world evolved their magical skills while allowing other fields to fall behind. There was no need to do complicated math equations if a high level skill could do it for them. Even with his rudimentary understanding of physics, he was probably still ahead of the usual scholars in this world.

'Perhaps going to that magical academy wouldn't be such a bad choice...'

The notion of him becoming a scholar at some magical academy wasn't that alluring to him but there were clear advantages to that position. Their libraries would probably have all the knowledge he needed for research. By dismantling all the spells through his eye skill he would be able to apply them to his own creations.

Other craftsmen would need years and the help of their masters to even copy pre-existing structures. He on the other hand wasn't that limited as combining runes into new customized spells was something he grew accustomed to. Surrounding himself with a field of gravity where he was the only one that wasn't affected would boost his fighting capabilities by quite a bit.

"If only it was that easy..."

Roland gave out a sigh while stuffing the oversized cannon barrel into the mule golem. It was time to head into the dungeon to do his usual grinding. His levels had started to stagnate as the monsters that

he was going up against were now below him. Yet even when his level was above them he still didn't feel comfortable battling them by himself.

This was the main drawback of having taken a bonus tier 1 class when he was younger. His stat multiplier was below the tier 3 monsters he would face in there. Even with his prestige class that went above regular tier 2 classes, he was still at a disadvantage. The lack of higher tier skills was also a big problem as there was a huge difference.

This difference was greater than the one between tier 1 and tier 2 classes. The difference between a tier 1 and tier 2 stat multiplier was only 50% but when going up to tier 3 it changed to 100%. This was not such an easy gap to close even with the help of all his buffing spells and his own two-times multiplier. It was still a lot safer to wait it out and slowly kill the skeletons that appeared before him.

'Or should I just come clean and let the guild examine the entrance?'

Roland was unsure of how long that would take. The reason that he was hesitating to reveal the secret opening wasn't exactly greed but the uncertainty of when he would be allowed to get back in there. At this point, he had gathered enough precious metals and minerals to last him for his tier 3 ascension.

Yet the procedures that the adventurer guild went through weren't that speedy. First, a scouting party would be formed to probably just examine the entrance and the few tier 3 skeletons that roamed it. Then they would need to petition aid from the larger cities where the more experienced adventurers resided.

It could take from weeks to months before a proper expedition party was formed. Then another few weeks to actually delve into the dungeon. Only after everything was somewhat examined would it be open to the public. Perhaps with his current standing, he would be able to get in faster but he wasn't quite sure.

'They don't usually allow gold rank adventurers into tier 3 dungeons...'

This was the biggest problem, if he went by rank he would not be allowed to get in there without at least one tier 3 class holder in the party with them. He didn't know any platinum rank adventurers that would be happy to take a runesmith or someone posing as a rune mage with them that easily.

Things got complicated and could cause him to not be able to use his farming spot for even a year. Then if the dungeon was deemed to be too dangerous for tier 2 class holders he might not even be able to venture in at all. There weren't that many monsters over the hundredth level roaming the deepest parts of the lava zone. This would really slow down his progress to the point of it being better to go to a different city with a more suited dungeon.

'But I could also just craft instead of killing monsters...'

While deliberating on his decision he headed upstairs. There he noticed two new faces that would probably become permanent members of his company. After discussing it with both Elodia and Bernir both of them agreed to take them under their wing. The two had similar classes between each other or at least the knowledge of what their skills should be. Tier 1 skills weren't that hard to unlock or to buy when it came to production classes like scribe or crafting ones like stonemason.

"Hey, Boss!"

Bernir was the first one to notice Roland getting out of the workshop. The door opening had a characteristic sound to it. Not soon after he also heard the voices of the two kids call out to him with quite an interesting sentence.

“Good morning, Boss!”

“Did you teach them to do that?”

“Hehe.”

Bernir just laughed while the two kids looked a bit ashamed. Marcie the girl stuttered a bit through the greeting and was quick to evade his gaze. Jorg on the other hand didn't seem to mind it. Perhaps due to his dwarven roots, it was more acceptable to call higher tier craftsmen this way.

“How long before you go? You'll at least eat supper won't you?”

“Supper? Yes, sure.”

Elodia peeked her head out of the kitchen. The night was closing in and the shop had been closed for half an hour now. Roland usually made his way towards the dungeon when the sun was going down. It would only take him a few hours to get there and he wanted to be at the lava lake around midnight when most of the adventurers returned to the city.

Soon six people were sitting around the table. Bernir with his wife along with Jorg was to his left while Elodia and Marcie were to the right. He on the other hand was at the end of the table and in the seat that usually went to the head of the household.

Roland wasn't sure if they were doing it on purpose but the closest ones that were sitting to him would usually have a higher standing in the family. By the order they were sitting in, Elodia had the highest standing behind him and Bernir was to the left which put him in second place.

Fin was the only person from the trio that was missing. Due to him having a combat class of warrior he didn't really fit between the production and crafting classes that everyone here had. Armand along with Lobelia would be responsible for his upbringing instead. The young man gravitated towards the muscle-brained idiot which was somewhat concerning but he had the strength to back up his attitude. Fin would at least need to respect that.

There was still one use for him at this age. Bronze adventurers were still used by the guild for menial tasks. They made perfect delivery personnel or cleaning crews. Killing small-time monsters didn't really bring in that much money so they could counteract this by doing odd jobs.

Using the boy as a pair of eyes was also an option. He could report back to him and act as an informant on how people treated his creations. It would give him a good idea of how well he was doing on the market. This job would be better served for one of the orphans that would probably not double cross him as he was considered part of their family through his relation to Elodia.

‘Hope he won't turn to idiot 2.0 though version 1.0 is already troublesome enough.’

After pushing the image of Fin turning into another muscle-bound bro he looked towards the food. Elodia's cooking skills had only improved through the years of her using them. Level wise she was still a

tier 2 class holder and even if she wasn't given the stat multiplier like combat classes the skills still had their use.

"So, how are the trainees doing?"

While putting some mashed potatoes on his plate he posed a question to Elodia that seemed happy.

"I think Marcie is doing great, she was able to copy the fliers without a problem. I think with some practice we could start advertising your wares outside the city."

"Outside the city?"

Elodia nodded at Roland's question while she turned towards Marcie as if she was prompting her to say something.

"It's fine, you can say it just like we practiced."

"Hm?"

Roland's eyes locked together with the young girls who quickly turned away. It was clear that she was about to say something but after making eye contact she got scared. This caused Bernir to burst out in laughter and was followed by Dyana smacking his head.

"Hey, stop being rude."

"Ow, that hurts, why did you do that woman!?"

"What? Want me to do it again?"

"Uh...n-no..."

Bernir looked at Dyana's rather muscular arm that had been toned by years of swinging a blacksmithing hammer. It was quite funny to see the boisterous half-dwarf shrinking back after getting smacked but it also made Roland appreciate the relationship he had with Elodia. While he sometimes received some light taps she lacked any physical strength to cause any permanent damage. On the other hand, he wasn't sure if there wouldn't be any long-lasting damage if Dyana continued to punish Bernir with those muscular arms of hers.

"I'm sure she'll get used to it... Marcie said that she wanted to create fliers or new pamphlets for the shop. These could be given to the merchants to other cities."

"Hm... actually, that wouldn't be such a bad idea."

"See, I told you that he would like your idea."

Elodia smiled at Marcie who took a quick peek at Roland's face before turning back to her plate of food. In reality, Roland had already been deliberating on such a move. For this, he needed to create a catalog of his wares. It would be similar to what companies did in his old world when trying to entice business owners to buy items from them.

The catalogs were usually quite vibrant and contained pictures of the merchandise. They had short descriptions of each item with a price next to them. It needed to be eye-catching and easy to read. If

Marcie got her skill level up she would probably be able to copy his writing that they then gave to merchants.

“Sure but first I’ll need to organize the stock and examine the market outside the city...”

“I knew you’d say that, so I’ve come prepared.”

Elodia smiled once more while pointing to a large notebook that was sitting on the cupboard.

“What’s that?”

“Why don’t you take a look?”

They were still eating but they were not nobles. There was no real rule against talking or doing other things when around the dining table. Roland never really cared about such things so people knew that he wouldn’t mind either.

After taking what looked to be a thick notebook he examined it. Inside he could see drawings of some of his creations like the runic swords and even golems. A lot of work had gone into this and it was clear that she had been going through this for a while.

“I decided to organize our wares by most useful to least useful, just look at it before you go to bed~”

“This is... how long did it take you to make this? I could have at least helped you with the pictures...”

“You’re already busy with your own workload, this is the least that I can do.”

Their eyes met and time seemed to stop. Roland was not really used to people doing things for him without him needing to ask them about it. This might have looked like something trivial but to him, it counted. Yet the moment between the two was short-lived as the sound of sneezing followed soon after.

“ACHOOO!”

“Hey, why did you do that, you oaf?”

“Huh, what?... Hey, stop hitting me already!”

The one that released a loud sneeze was of course Bernir. He had been eating a bit too fast and his bushy beard tickled his nose. His wife was grinning wide while looking at the pair of Roland and Elodia but now the romantic scene was ruined.

“Ahh... I remembered something...”

Elodia went red in the face and quickly escaped to the kitchen area. She was not the type of person that liked showing affection outside of the bedroom or when the two were alone. This he didn’t mind as teasing her for it was always fun. Only after she had cooled down did she return with a bonus plate of roasted chicken legs that he was then forced to devour.

“Jorg had been also working hard, we might be able to replace the flooring or lay out the yard with bricks.”

Soon the conversation shifted towards the other child, the half-dwarf Jorg. There wasn't really much to talk about as the young one had to go through some basic training first. Yet Bernir his new master brought up some issues that with his help they could alleviate.

"You want to teach him how to make bricks?"

"Aye, we'll just need a proper furnace, the brick mixture shouldn't be hard to come by we can use the one I'm familiar with."

Before working with Roland Bernir had gone through a lot of jobs. It wasn't hard for him to see bricklayers doing their work. In this world they used special clay that hardened under heat to produce bricks. What Jorg would need to do was to prepare this clay mixture along with forming the bricks through a mold. Then as always, there could be magical materials added to these mixtures to make the bricks even stronger.

"Does he think he can do it."

Both Roland and Bernir looked towards the half-dwarven boy that quickly nodded. It was clear that the youth wanted to prove himself just as any other. With his class, he would have an easy time with preparing the mixture without much help.

"See, the boy is willing."

"Okay, you can go make that furnace and the molds just try keeping everything clean, if you run out of space you can use the workshop."

"See, I told you he would agree to it."

Jorg tried hiding the sigh of relief after getting the news. Bernir had probably scared him into believing this to be a hard sales pitch to his new boss. Roland on the other hand didn't mind having a proper supply of bricks through which they could build better walls or even create a better path toward his workshop. Perhaps in the future, he could have a road leading through the entire forest that connects to the main road. This would surely attract the eyes of the richer folk.

With most of the things being worked out between them, it was time to head into the dungeon once more. Yet what was supposed to be another uneventful expedition would be a bit different this time around...

Chapter 260: Investigating the dungeon.

"Let's go, boy."

"Woof!"

Just like many times before Roland and Agni sped through the now open lake of fire. In just a few minutes they were right in the middle. Thanks to Roland's mapping system that allowed him to detect people along with monsters around here they were in almost no danger of being discovered.

Even if someone popped out now Roland would know it and just go to the other side. His map would inform him about any potential onlookers. The devices that were dug into the ground didn't only

enhance the map signal, they could actually record certain patterns. There was a limit to the memory space so Roland set it up to take a snapshot of any individual that was in the area.

After uploading this information into his armor or another mapping device in his workshop he could see the movement pattern of monsters depicted as moving circles. Everything was color coded as usual so it was easy to tell where the monsters walked through and which were the adventurers.

The dungeon monsters always had a set pattern that was only broken if a person appeared. Yet he was aiming more for the moving patterns of adventurers and used this information to get down the best timing of getting through this lake.

“Okay Agni, it’s your time to shine.”

“Awooo!”

The ruby wolf’s tail wagged around as he was waiting to sink his teeth into some monster flesh. The reward would be the high tier 2 monster mana crystal that now he was allowed to eat. Thus the duo of Runesmith and Wolf entered the passage that would soon guide them towards their usual grinding spot.

...

“Hey... get a move on already!”

“Wait... give me a minute... ugh...”

“Why did you go out drinking if you knew that we had work today?”

“Shit... I didn’t want none of this, that old bastard just shoved this on me...urp...”

“Hey! That’s disgusting, why didn’t you drink a potion!”

“Those are expensive, I can walk off this hangover in no time!”

“Oh really?”

A certain sibling duo was arguing right before entering the dungeon. One was a famous casanova and muscle brain named Armand and the other was the half-elven troublemaker, Lobelia. They were not alone as their group had three more people and all of them were high tier 2 class holders and gold ranked adventurers.

“Here have some water.”

“Ah that hits the spot, at least I know I can count on you, Jasmin.”

A woman with brown hair that was carrying a large bow on her back leaned in to give Armand a wooden water bottle. To the sides of the bottle, there were visible magical inscriptions. Even though the bottle wasn’t all that large Armand was still able to chug down on it for a bit before finally giving it back.

“You’re too easy on him Jasmin, you should let him suffer some more.”

“Screw you.”

Armand gave Lobelia a glare while trying to straighten out. Even though he was literally carried out of the warehouse an hour ago his stats and skills allowed him to sober up quite fast. The two men that were forced with this task were standing in the front. One looked to be a stocky-looking shield warrior of the dwarven variety while the other was quite large and green.

“Korgak think Arm-and should stop acting like child.”

“Haha, did you hear that, get up and let's move on you pansy!”

“Aye, move it ye whoreson.”

The dwarf didn't look to happy about having to move out this early in the morning.

“Shut up all of you and you the most Wedamir, I know you've drunk at least as much as me.”

“Aye, but ah not acting lik' a lassie lik' ye”

The group started laughing while Armand tried to stabilize his legs. The world was still spinning but slowly everything was returning to him. Wedamir was a dwarf so even though he reeked of cheap booze as well, he was already mostly sober and ready for some action.

“Okay, while the idiot recovers how about we discuss this mission? Don't you think that it's a bit strange that the guild master gathered us all up? What could there be down there that requires five gold rank adventurers?”

“Korgak don't care.”

With a quick reply, the half-orc placed his oversized finger into his nose and started digging. Lobelia narrowed her eyes and turned to the potentially only sane person in this group of five that was the main tracker, Jasmine.

“I've heard that there were more people vanishing than usual, think it was mostly around the large chasm area which we are supposed to examine.”

Lobelia nodded while thinking back to the way they were given the mission. First of all, it was strange that it wasn't an official one. The guild master forced them to take this special mission and even promised some nice rewards which she could not ignore. In reality, she was the reason Armand was even on the case as no one else would probably know where he was getting drunk at.

“Could dark adventurers be involved?”

She asked while prodding Jasmine for answers. Dark adventurers was a nickname for people that worked for the guild but also attacked other members like bandits. These didn't always have roots in the thieves guild but were more common than most of the citizens realized.

“That's a possibility but would we even know when we got there? I think the guild master would have mentioned something, I don't think a dark adventurer would attack us.”

“You're probably right, then the other option is... a rare monster or a zone boss has appeared?”

“That's more likely, we should be careful if it's a boss then it could be closer to tier 3...”

Jasmine and Lobelia nodded at each other after coming to a consensus. Sometimes in dungeons, rare monsters with enhanced abilities and intellect would randomly appear. They came in all shapes and sizes but one thing was clear, they were troublesome.

It wouldn't be strange if adventurers that were used to the lower level tier 2 monsters were killed by a rare spawn or a zone boss. The first type was mostly weaker but its unique characteristic was that it could move through the entire dungeon region it appeared in. The zone boss on the other hand acted more similar to a level boss and it stuck to a certain area it spawned in.

"If all the disappearances occurred at the chasm then it might be a zone boss, we'll have to be careful."

"I agree, no use losing our lives over it but on the other hand..."

Jasmine wanted to give out a sigh while looking at Lobelia that had sparkles in her eyes. It was clear that she was thinking about the potential rewards. If it was a rare high level tier 2 boss then it would probably drop some valuable rewards. The bodies of those monsters were worth a lot and the higher the tier of the monster the more the guild would pay up as well. It was a quick way for them to get rich but also a fast way of perishing.

"Hah, why do you look so glum, don't worry I value my life more than some gold coins."

"I'll remember that."

The two women jointly nodded while going toward the two arguing men. Wedamir and Armand had a short history with each other as they were at a similar level. Both of them had a few run-ins with one another even outside the city as they didn't really have their own party. They were skillful and young but this also brought along bravado that sometimes got them in trouble.

"Are you girls done bickering?"

"Yeah, yeah...stop shouting."

Armand cracked his neck while leaning away from the tree. While he wasn't in the best condition he knew that before they reached the lower levels his recovery skills would kick in. Finally, the group of five descended towards the dungeon. It was early in the day but even now some people were coming in and out through the entrance.

Yet people of the races still usually followed the day and night cycle. Before midnight most of them would return home to rest which made the trek down into the lower levels a bit more troublesome. With fewer adventurers to clear out the monsters, the party of five had to contend with the trash mobs being everywhere.

"This sucks, those tier 1 mana stones won't even be enough for one night with sweet Tanita."

Armand grumbled while looking at the nail-sized mana stone that flew out of the defeated monster.

"Wasn't it Katerina last week?"

"Hah, you're a woman, you wouldn't understand."

Lobelia's brows furrowed while Armand shook his head side to side and shrugged.

“I don’t even want to know, let's just get this over with...”

The others nodded and soon enough they were on the tenth level. Luckily for them, the boss chamber was already open and they didn’t need to waste more time killing low level beasts. After passing through it they arrived at the smoldering hot lava area that would usually make them sweat. Yet they had already spent enough time here to gain heat resistance skills that alleviated the stuffy environment.

“Nothing seems to be out of place here at least.”

While the men of the party were lazily going out of the boss room Lobelia used her enhanced senses to look into the distance. There she could spot the usual salamander monsters crawling out of the lava puddles as per usual. A couple of other adventurers were also here and they were engaging those monsters in battle.

“Hm...”

“Is something wrong?”

“I’m not sure... but aren’t there usually more monsters in this area?”

Jasmine asked while Lobelia slowly replied while looking around. Usually, at this time of the day, the monsters would have managed to respawn. It was somewhat of a cycle that the dungeon went through on a daily basis. Adventurers would arrive in the morning to kill a large portion of the beasts. Their count would go down and only when they returned back in the morning would their numbers be restored.

“Could the zone boss be a salamander type? It could be able to summon the other monsters to its aid...”

“If that is true then we might need more people.”

Lobelia clicked her tongue in annoyance after making this realization. The group of five was more than enough to handle an upper tier 2 monster but that was only if it was by itself. Some monsters were capable of using other dungeon creatures as their minions. They were sort of commander types that the other monsters needed to listen to.

“It could be troublesome if it possesses intelligence but isn't the area it occupies strange? Wouldn't a salamander type be more suited for the lake?”

“Hey what are you two doing, we are going to leave you two behind.”

Before Lobelia could reply to Jasmine's question she was hollered over by Armand who was impatiently stomping towards their destination. The trip toward their destination wouldn't be that easy and they might even have to camp out for the night. There were several save spots for that occasion and Korgak was stuck lugging a large backpack with a tent inside.

Their trip continued and while the men weren't too concerned about the diminished number of monsters the two women were. The closer they got to their destination the fewer of them appeared and soon even the usual groups of adventurers were nowhere to be seen.

“I don't like this, it's too quiet...”

“It is, isn't it?”

Armand asked while leaning up against a rocky wall, they were at the entrance of the underground mountain path. They were tasked with examining this location and needed to get through it.

“So you’ve finally realized it?”

“Do you think I’m stupid or something?”

“Was that a rhetorical question?”

Lobelia watched as a large vein formed on Armand’s forehead but to her surprise, he didn’t try to argue. At least in situations like this, he knew when to shut up and get it together. Wedamir, who would be the tank in any RPG adventurer party, moved to the front while Korgak held together the backline to protect the vulnerable archers in the middle. Armand remained a bit in the front but somewhere closer to the women of the group.

While not many people went through this path it wasn’t supposed to be this empty. Sometimes slug or worm-type monsters crawled out from the mountain or the chasm to attack people. The parts from these could be used for potions and tinctures so there was a reason to go through here besides evading the lava lake for large parties.

They slowly made their way through the path. Lobelia along with Jasmine was sure to activate their tracking and detection skills but to no avail.

“This is really strange...”

“What is?”

The party stopped while Armand asked Jasmine a question after she spoke up.

“I can’t feel any monsters... it’s as if they are all dead.”

“Is that a bad thing? That’s one less problem for us.”

“I don’t know, normally I should be able to feel the presence of far away monsters, the dungeon should be swarming with them but now I can’t feel anything at all...”

Lobelia nodded as she also wasn’t picking up anything with her skills. While she wasn’t as good of a tracker as Jasmine here she didn’t fall that much behind. There weren’t that many ways of explaining the disappearance of monsters. Either they were moved somewhere or someone killed them and they weren’t able to respawn.

“If it’s a zone boss that can attract other monsters then this might be troublesome, it might be guiding a large chunk of them through the dungeon but if it’s not on this side then ...”

The adventurers nodded at each other and picked up their pace. With the monsters missing from this area there was only one explanation. They must have been moved by something and if they weren’t at the side they entered through then they had to have moved to the other. This path was a one-way street that brought them to the other side of the lava lake and that’s where they were suspecting the boss would be.

Yet even when they were rushing they still remained wary of their surroundings. Each of them was an experienced gold rank adventurer. They had all gone through situations where things backfired on them. Even if it seemed that everything was alright there was always a chance of an ambush waiting for them.

“Wait, there is something there... watch out.”

“Aye!”

Jasmine was the first one to spot this oddity. A strange feeling washed over her when they passed through an unsuspecting part of this pathway. Thanks to her experience she knew that this feeling was always followed by something. This time around this something turned out to be a spear tip rushing through the rock wall.

Luckily Wedamir reacted fast enough to bounce it back with the help of his heavy shield. This wasn't all as the blade of his halberd managed to sever the limb that was holding onto the spear. To everyone's surprise, it belonged to a creature that they had not expected to see here.

“Watch out, that's not a Fiery Skeleton!”

At first glance, it looked to be similar to the skeletal monsters on the upper levels but the way it moved was different. The fire that was coming from its eye sockets also covered its hands to enhance the power of its weapon. The unexpected blazing skeleton wasn't their only problem, the bigger issue was that it was not the only one here.

“How are they coming through the walls?”

The party of five quickly found itself surrounded by a swarm of flaming skeletons. None of them could use high level analyzing skills but both Jasmine and Elodia had threat detection skills. Both of them knew that each one of these was a lower level tier 2 monster.

“It must be some kind of illusion spell... this might be the reason why I wasn't able to detect their presence...”

Jasmine shouted out while pulling the string of her bow. The quickly notched arrow made its way towards one of the skeletal enemies but even though it was able to explode its head in one hit, the fallen monster was quickly replaced by another.

“Shit, they got us...”

Armand shouted while preparing for battle. They were clearly outnumbered and the limited space they could move in was detrimental to their victory. With weapons and fists raised the group of five gave out a battle shout and the battle for survival began.