

## The Runesmith #Chapter 26 Examining scrolls - Read The Runesmith Chapter 26 Examining scrolls Online -

“Sign here on the dotted line.”

“Is my name enough?”

“Yeah that’s fine, the contract mostly just reacts to your mana and not your actual name.”

Roland wrote his name into the contract that went through some changes. He managed to get the Gnome to agree to keep his true identity a secret. He also didn’t mention that he was from a noble house. The most important clause though was the one stating that the gnome couldn’t undersell his work.

There was a minimal price negotiated while taking into account what the scrolls were selling in the auction. Any other items he created would be negotiated further but he didn’t feel like the gnome was trying to rip him off, at least not too much he still wanted to make a profit.

He wouldn’t be surprised if they knew that, how far the gnomes identification skill was able to peek was unknown. He himself could only use it on certain items and he would mostly just get the general name. He couldn’t analyze people well either, if he looked at Zilyana the only info he got was that she was a ‘Sun Elf’

This was the default elven race around here, besides Sun Elves there were also Moon Elves that were similar looking too dark elves from most stories. For one reason or another, these two races didn’t get along with each other.

The woman rolled up the contract after it was finalized. He had finally accepted the offer and his life as a contract worker had begun. Luckily he didn’t really have to make that many scrolls and should be able to do his research as well. He was even going to receive a personal assistant if he did well.

He was led down into the basement, he didn’t occupy any of the rooms closer to the manager’s room. The place he received was a bit dim and had a very dungeon-like vibe to it. He had gone through some dungeon training against goblins, so he was fine with places like this.

“We weren’t really using this one, that’s why it’s a bit dirty...”

Zilyana said while opening the door and showing Roland in. There wasn’t much inside this room. Some empty boxes in the corner along with a wooden table and some chairs. The cleaning lady would come soon and some furniture would be carried over as well.

“Here is the key, don’t lose it.”

He was handed the key, he would be able to come to this place whenever he wanted and even work through the nights. The Gnome manager knew that some craftsmen liked to work hard, a bed would be supplied for him. Roland was thinking about moving from the inn here. He didn’t need to pay for rent but the air was kind of stale.

“You can start working tomorrow, Welcome to Exeor’s Magic Emporium’s staff~”

“You can call me, big sis from now on!”

The elf struck a pose by placing her hands to her hips while looking at Roland. He just looked back with narrowed eyes while replying.

“Alright...”

He almost forgot that he was an 11-year-old kid. Which had its pros and cons.

Roland also asked if the manager was the owner of this store and if the store was named after him. It was revealed that he was only someone akin to a regional manager of a larger company. It had a lot of chain stores strung throughout the city and the main one was in the capital city. When he asked the elf about the gnome’s full name she just smiled at him without revealing it.

Roland was getting the facilities and the basic materials. He wouldn’t be getting the research materials though, that was on him. He returned to the first floor and bought out every single runic spell that he could. With the contract in place he felt like he could invest in his future more.

He didn’t inform his new boss about his unique skill. Even if the gnome saw his status screen, the name ‘debugger’ probably didn’t ring a bell. He got some new spells that did various things. The orb of light spell felt similar to his fire orb spell as it just produced a light of a different color.

He made sure to find spells that worked similarly. So if he already figured out how to produce the fire arrow spell, he wanted to get his hands on a water arrow spell or an earth arrow spell. He could then compare the schematics and see if the parts or runes were similar.

This store had a limited variety of these spells. This forced him to search them elsewhere. Luckily the manager had supplied him with an armband that would hide his status. He would seem like an ordinary mana scribe to everyone else.

After a day of searching, he had managed to find a couple of elemental variations of the mana bolt spell and the mana arrow spells. Surprisingly there were none of the basic

lesser runes of those two spells. Probably the runesmiths creating these deemed those two spells below them.

He returned to the inn after a full day of running around town. The energetic half-gnome girl was running around the inn again. He was glad that she was still alive, he was slightly worried that she might have wandered into the woods again. He hoped that she had learned her lesson but he didn't really have the time to be her nanny. She had to make her own decisions.

The next day Roland returned to the store, his 'office' was now filled with some boxes that had blank scrolls in them. There were a couple of higher quality inkwells that were supplied and some sketching paper as well. He brought some of his own crafting utensils from the inn as he was already used to the quill he was using. He closed the door behind him and walked around the place before taking a seat at his new desk.

"Well, time to get to work."

This was still his job so he decided to perform his main task of scribing by recreating his staple runic fire arrow spell. He was able to scribe it down within an hour and had enough mana left to make another one. The contract stated that he was to make a minimum of ten common grade spell scrolls a week. He was of course allowed to make more of them and would get a bonus accordingly.

Roland wasn't only interested in the money though, he wanted to progress. Increase his levels and also to find out how these runes operated. The problem was that to progress he needed money and lots of it. He managed to get a temporary sponsor but it was on him if he proved himself as a sound investment.

He brought out a scroll that he had bought, it had the runic frost arrow spell on it. He also had a runic gale arrow scroll. He took out a pencil and some paper and activated his debugging skill.

He received 2000 XP for each schematic. He had also tried making schematics of lower grades to see if he could stack more experience. He made an intermediate one of a common rune for 1000 XP. When he went for the perfected one, he was rewarded with another thousand. The trick didn't work, there was some kind of cap on gaining experience from making schematics.

He had spent his first working days scribing the minimal number of runic scrolls while using the rest of his time on creating schematics of the various runic spells that he got from the other stores. They were mostly of the common grade which caused him to level up faster.

He wanted to stick all of the made schematics to a wooden notice board so that he could look at them while doing his research. He abandoned this notion as he didn't want

to leave a board with multiple 'highest' graded rune schematics out in the open. This would give away his secrets right from the get-go.

He was sure to include a clause in the contract that there wouldn't be any spying devices or people watching over his room. Still, he didn't know if those contracts were 100% safe so he would keep those schematics in his storage bag for now. When he needed to do some research he would just take them out.

He was doing this now. He placed all of the elemental arrow spells that he had gathered. The schematic that he was the most familiar with was in the middle while the two others were to the sides. He could instantly see that some of the larger runic symbols were the same.

'That's probably the component responsible for the whole 'arrow' part of the spell.'

He glanced at the other two spells. Besides the middle rune that was identical in all the other spells, there were four other symbols. Each of these 'runes' was composed of smaller parts and they all connected with each other to form a complete spell schematic. He just needed to figure it out. This was easier said than done.

'I wonder what will happen if I rearrange some of these components...'

He had all the correct pathways on the schematics. What would happen if he replaced one of the fire arrow runic symbols with one from the gale arrows? Could he produce a new spell? Would it blow up? He had multiple attacking spells to work with, he could exchange the components with each other as if he was playing with legos.

'Well, there is only one way to find out...'

He began his first test. Combining the gale arrow with the fire arrow. The spells weren't that different, they both produced elemental arrows. The gale arrow was a lot faster than the fire arrow but it lacked the added fire damage that the other spell had.

Firstly he drew a schematic while replacing the last runic symbol from the fire arrow spell with the one from the gale arrow. He only needed to place the pathways in the correct order and to make it a closed mana circuit to finish the deal.

He instantly moved his head closer to examine his creation. The most glaring thing he saw was the mass of red after he connected the largest runic component at the end. His debugging skill was telling him that it wouldn't work. He didn't get a prompt that he had created a new spell either.

He wasn't deterred; he started dissecting all of these spells into parts and his research continued. Thanks to his debugging skill he was saving a lot of time. He could only imagine how many blank scrolls and magic ink he would have to burn through if he did all of this manually.

In the end, a combination pattern that worked was made. He created a lesser runic spell by combining higher grade runes with each other. He theorized that combining two elements with each other wasn't such an easy thing. This might have been tier 3 territory as he was hoping for something like a frostfire arrow but got a glorified smokescreen instead.

There were a lot of problems with this particular rune. After combining two perfect schematics he was left with a barely working one. His debugging skill showed him red lines everywhere and even some of the components needed replacing.

He had somehow managed to graft these two spells together. He shoved quite a bit of parts together while hoping for the best. His experiment showed results but the spell he created was less than stellar.

'This isn't going too well...'

He could spend months and years doing it like this. The debugging skill was aiding him but he was only randomly combining the runes with each other. This could allow him to get some new spells but he wouldn't really understand how. Also, the whole process was too random and time-consuming.

His main goal was to figure out the way these runes worked. He already knew that they were similar to circuits and programs. They followed some kind of binary language and maybe there were even parts that had complex algorithms working in them that were responsible for the spell's shape or power output.

He managed to produce this spell within a week after randomly combining the larger runes with each other. The detail in drawing these schematics also played a big role in everything. If he missed one important section the debugging skill didn't activate, he then had to go through the entire thing to find the part he missed.

Roland finally decided to perform some live tests. He took the lesser runes as the base for his next experiment. It was the fire orb rune and the light orb spell that were quite similar. Both produced a sphere of light that varied in brightness and the element used.

He had isolated some elements that he thought were responsible. He got to work but he wasn't aiming to create proper schematics. No, he wanted to use the supplied scrolls for his research.

The way the runes started was all the same. They always had the same element there that was responsible for absorbing mana from a user. It varied in size, being larger in the common grade runic spells.

A craftsman needed to close the whole circuit onto this element. You also had to fashion additional magical pathways around all the runic symbols that weren't visible to the naked eye. These pathways were a bit thicker than the rest and their purpose was

to siphon mana into this starting component. It was more or less akin to a power input or power plug. While the person inserting mana was seen as a big battery.

The mana would be gathered through all of the pathways and focused through this power input. The other 'traces' would then carry the mana into the other rune parts. Sometimes it was quite linear while other times the mana was distributed to multiple of them at once. Just like in series and parallel circuits, the way the mana flowed changed depending on which circuit type was being used.

He also made a distinction between the mana flow and the mana pressure in the whole circuit. This pressure was akin to voltage in a battery. It would push the mana energy into the traces and be responsible on how large the flow was.

In a series circuit type, this mana voltage would be split between its components equally and it also would cease to work if one of the parts was hindered in any way. In a parallel circuit, it wouldn't lose this pressure but it would use up mana faster. This was some of the basics, now he continued as he needed to figure out the rest of it.

'I think this one might be something similar to a resistor.'

He glanced at both the spell diagrams of the orb spells. He focused on something that he believed looked like a resistor. The fire orb one was smaller in size than from the regular orb of light. His first test would be to replace the two with each other to see if the orb of light spell dimmed.

He went to scribing and completed the altered version of the orb of light spell. To his satisfaction, this little test worked. The spell activated and the light was indeed dimmer which proved his theory to be correct.

The ones he was working here were probably fixed resistor types as he didn't think he could alter the resistance mid spell activation. There were also variable ones, as their name stated they were in place to resist the injected energy that was mana. If he installed a variable resistor on a spell, then depending on the quality of the material he might be able to switch it on the fly to get a stronger spell effect. It could also blow up in his face if he lowered it too much though.

'That's one down, now to find all the other basic ones.'

Inductors, capacitors, amplifiers, fusees, and more. If he managed to distinguish between all of the basic circuit components that were in these magic runes he would be able to alter the spells. What kind of changes he could bring he wasn't sure, removing all of the resistance from the circuit would probably make the spell unstable.

If he wanted to connect the various runic spells that he had he needed to know this. Maybe if he knew where to remove or add the basic rune circuit components he would be able to correct all the badly made schematics he tried to combine. The fix could be

really easy, maybe he only needed to add another resistor to make a working Firegale arrow spell.

Roland needed to get the basics down first before he moved on to the real meat and potatoes of these runes. Then he might be able to figure out the inner workings of the 'motors'. The components that were storing the spell programs inside!

He gave out a sigh, understanding this would be hard. Luckily he had a lot of time on his hands. He had signed a three-year contract and was getting charged less for these materials. His experience was increasing at a rapid rate but the higher his level became the harder it became to level it up.

His hand moved to his stiff neck, he had spent the whole day working. He didn't feel tired, this was more interesting than he anticipated. He was slowly discovering how this magic runic language ticked and it was making him all giddy. He just needed to stick with it and maybe in due time, he would finally be a proper runic scholar.

## **The Runesmith #Chapter 27 Revisiting the guild. - Read The Runesmith Chapter 27 Revisiting the guild. Online -**

Time passed and Roland was busy with his work. He had moved past his rudimentary understanding of runes. He didn't need to rely on copying his pre-drawn schematics to get his runic spells to work. He was even able to partially affect the spells, changing small things like their output, area of effect and even some of the elemental variations

He had managed to single out some of the basic elements that were the easiest to work with. Fire, water, wind and earth. He had compiled them into his notes and could now tell them apart from the others.

This was still just a surface-level understanding as he wasn't able to change the internal algorithm. What he could do now for instance was to change a water spell into a fire one while working within some restrictions.

He was mostly working with the basic types of spells like the mana arrow, mana bolt, and mana shield variations of them. He could now successfully create the lesser versions and with them as a base add elemental values that boosted their power output.

His mana arrow could change into one from wind, fire, or water. The same with his shield spells that could transform from a semi-transparent blue sphere into a tightly formed wall of earth. This wasn't something he had achieved in a couple of days, no. He had already been working for another six months which added up. He had already been in this city for over a year and his research was showing some promise.

'Wish I wasn't limited to only cherry-picking these parts.'

Roland leaned back in his chair that had improved over this time frame. He had a new quill above his nose and he was balancing it, the magic ink didn't really leave stains like the normal kind and it also didn't leak.

He had gone through his entire stash of runic spell scrolls that he could find in the city. They were mostly similar in the way that they created a magical force that rammed itself into its target. There wasn't much variation, he wanted some that could levitate objects or ones that affected your body in some way. These were buffing spells and debuffing spells, he had managed to procure a limited variety of them.

There was also a plethora of runes that were used on equipment. This would be the next stage of his research. The runesmith territory, he had one worry though. He still needed to get his blacksmith class and without the runecraft skill he wouldn't be able to further his research. This skill supposedly only became learnable in the later stages of the blacksmith class.

The scrolls he was working with were far too fragile. After the runic spell activated it would burn away at the magic ink. The ink would then seep into the scroll and finally make it crumble into dust. He needed to constantly rescribe everything onto new spell scrolls wasting precious time and resources. He had already tried scribing on some metal but the magic ink had an adverse reaction to it and he wasn't able to progress with it.

He had runes like the impact rune that when activated while a warrior was swinging their weapon increased the weapon's weight. He couldn't really experiment much with a spell-like this. The paper scrolls weight increase was very meager and he wasn't sure what good adding weight to an attack spell would do.

'Maybe you can make the magic arrows increase the weight while flying down at the monsters?'

'But there is no human element to activate the spell at the right moment, I'd have to somehow pre determinate the arrow's trajectory and make it heavier during the descent.'

'Otherwise, the added weight might make it fly slower, could just make it heavier at the beginning and just add more mana... call it a Heavy Magic Arrow?, or Heavy Impact Arrow?'

It was fine to speculate, but the scrolls that he was using did cost him some coins. He could make fifty iterations and see if one stuck and burn through his whole stock in the process.

The best way would be if he could create some kind of reusable item that could fire off these spells. Like a magic staff, the problem was that he would only be able to do that after he achieved the runesmith class.



He took his time to look at his status screen, he had progressed through the levels and was now on the 20th. This all while scribing many runic spells and crafting various schematics that pushed him forward.

Name :

Roland Arden L 45

Classes:

T1 Mage L25 [ Secondary ]

T1 Runic Mana Scribe L 20 [ Main ]

HP

390/390

MP

2014/2014

SP

474/474

Strength

27

Agility

31

Dexterity

65

Vitality

30

Endurance

30

Intelligence

100

Willpower

76

Charisma

14

Luck

7

He felt that in another half a year he would reach the threshold and become a blacksmith. The problem with that was, that he would need to go through a drastic change in professions. Scribing runes and making horseshoes didn't really vibe so well together.

'I wonder...'

He took another glance at his skills. His Rune Mastery Skill that was L4 at the moment. It stood out like a sore thumb, it wasn't useful for crafting runes, its role lied in combat. It decreased his mana expenditure while using runic equipment. It also lowered the mana requirements for boosting his scroll spells. He had a sneaking suspicion that he would regret it if he didn't get this skill up to 19 before trying to switch classes.

He was inclined to believe that there might be some kind of special class waiting for him if he maxed this skill out. The biggest problem with this skill was that it required him to kill monsters. Also using spells out of combat didn't level it up as he tried casting the shield spell on himself and on some animals to no avail.

Killing monsters didn't give him much experience and was also dangerous. He didn't really want to wander into the woods alone as he knew the risks. Even if the monsters didn't get him, he could very well be attacked by some bandits or someone from an opposing business trying to get his secrets.

He turned his thoughts towards the adventurer's guild. There was no dungeon here but that didn't mean that the guild members didn't hunt any monsters. They did sometimes organize expeditions into monster-infested lands for various reasons. He could join one of such undertakings as a support mage. He even managed to improve on his scroll design through this time period. Which would increase his utility in a party.

The more his scribing skill increased the more he could compact the runic components. With time he managed to limit the scroll surface. Which let him create more scrolls with fewer materials, the difficulty of the crafting process increased several-fold though. He needed to fit the complete rune diagram on something that was half the size of the scroll paper that he had been using.

His aim was to fit a common grade spell onto a surface that was the size of a regular playing card. He could then just flip through them and spam his spells. The most he could manage now is fitting them on something the size of an envelope. This was already much smaller than the scrolls he was using.

Surprisingly even though he was using less magic ink on the smaller scrolls the runic spells didn't drop in power. It was like creating a smaller processor that even if smaller than the original one didn't have to be worse.

There was a little drawback though, the smaller scrolls couldn't be overloaded as much as the larger ones. The user had the option to insert their mana to make the spell stronger but the smaller scrolls just couldn't handle the increase in mana that well. This was more a problem in the materials not being able to handle it and not the rune diagram itself.

'Should I take a break?'

He had implemented a vacation period that he could begin any time and had it placed in the contract as a clause. He was allowed to take the weekends off. He also had 25 days to pick as non-working ones throughout the entire year. He could also prepare the minimum number of scrolls a few weeks early if he really needed a longer break.

His aim was not to level himself up but to level his rune mastery skill. He needed to get it up to level 9 before hitting his cap. He wasn't sure if that was achievable but he was even willing to wait before he got it there. Luckily he had already prepared by scribing some scrolls in his free time. His social life became even more non-existent due to this, he didn't even know what was happening outside anymore. The time to walk among the people had come.

He was still a steel grade adventurer even though he didn't do any work for a year. He would probably be able to find a spot in an expedition but it would take him away from here for at least a week. Thanks to the increase in both his mage and scribing skills he was a lot faster now. His high int stats showed its worth at times like this.

A year ago when he first started he could barely produce a runic fire arrow scroll in a day. Now he could make five or six of them and even compact them onto smaller paper. This wasn't his only spell that he had. He had bought out all the possible spell scrolls in Edelgard and also asked the manager to procure him ones that were common grade or below.

His scrolls were quite popular with the adventurers and were even getting shipped to other cities along with his signature. The people came up with some nicknames for his crafting persona. Due to the red comet looking mark that he stamped every scroll with. They gave him names like 'Crimson Comet', 'Red Star', or the 'Scarlet Runesmith'. Some others just called him an idiot for making so many rune spell scrolls and not making any runic weapons instead.

He was known for only making 'high' or 'highest' grade spell scrolls. The biggest factor to his popularity was that these scrolls were actually worth the coin that was spent on them. After taking into account the price of crafting materials and craftsmanship they were deemed affordable.

They were quite loved by support type classes that had higher levels of mana compared to the warrior classes. Acolytes and priests could use them for protection and even add to the firepower against boss level monsters. The superiority of runic scrolls against the regular spell scrolls once again came to light as finally some affordable ones were finally being made.

Roland moved down from his chair and got his coat. His workroom looked kind of messy, there were piles of research material, sketches, and his scribbles everywhere. He still kept the most important stuff on himself though, as the rune schematics. He had asked the elf girl how much a schematic of a rune spell could go for. The answer made his eyes pop out, he could use them as a last-ditch effort if he really needed money but for now, it was better to keep them to himself.

He walked out, he had improved his gear slightly. He was wearing a set of fine gambeson under his robe. He spent most of his money on the spell scrolls so he couldn't really get anything fancy like magical armor. This was quite good for a mage as it was quite light while offering a lot of protection against regular attacks.

He still had the heavy rapier that he received after the battle with that fencer. Besides that, his shoes were made from leather and he was wearing matching gloves. He wished that he could get himself some spell sliding gloves but they cost far too much. There was also a problem with those items as they broke down after some uses.

Just like the scrolls, the mana would corrode the materials, which meant that if he wanted a reusable resource, he would need ones that were at least made from mithril. This silvery metal was one of the best around when it came to runic gear. It came at a huge cost, he wouldn't be able to get anything below a large golden coin made with it.

The sliding doors opened up and he could see the sun being still up. Even though people were giving him nicknames involving the color red he was still wearing black clothes. If he switched to red he felt like he would be sticking out like a sore thumb.

He walked towards the adventurer house while looking at his old adventurer card. He hadn't really been using it since coming here. He had wandered into the goblin-infested

forests from time to time to grind his skills though. The goblins proved to not be the best training as they were far too weak. This is also the reason why he decided to take up a request from the guild, he wanted to join a larger expedition where he could kill monsters that were stronger and offered more experience.

He pushed the doors of the guild open and was greeted to a familiar sight. The arrangements in this building were similar to the one in Carwen. This also made him remember his old party of misfits. He wondered what those three girls were up to after over a year had passed.

He frowned slightly as thinking about the past wasn't very productive. He moved towards the notice board and started looking. There were a large plethora of quests being hung up there. Some of them even to subjugate goblins, he did always bring back the ears with him as they were worth a couple of coins.

'Is there anything worthwhile?'

There weren't many nearby monsters around the city so the goblin forest was as far as he could go without getting into too much trouble. There were more ferocious monsters living in the uninhabited lands further into the kingdom. He reasoned that there should be some jobs that he could take and that wouldn't keep him away from his work for longer than two weeks.

'Let me see...'

\*Protect convoy from bandits while traveling to the city of Stegend.\*

'That one is a bit too far it would take a whole week and I bet the caravan would stop between the other towns.'

He rejected that one, the possibility of meeting monsters or bandits was questionable and he wanted to use up his spell scrolls to level up his skill.

He started going through listings, they were all mostly protection missions placed by the merchants. They were always happy to hire some extra muscle to be extra safe. There were also some jobs asking for exploration or for finding missing people or caravans. His eyes finally stopped at one job in particular.

"Investigate and clear out Manstos Grotto from the monster infestation.\*

He started reading through this one. The description stated that this Grotto was in fact an iron ore mine which also has some rarer metals in the deeper parts. The miners had broken through a wall and tunneled right into some kind insectoid monster nest. There had already been some casualties and the mine was now closed off.

Roland rubbed his chin, there were monsters he could kill there. The only problem was that it was in some kind of mine shaft. How wide the corridors were was unknown and if the whole thing collapsed onto him he didn't think a rescue party would be coming.

He wouldn't be going in alone though, this was a large scale operation with more than one small team involved. He was also a mage so he would be allowed to hang out in the back while the warriors took all the hits. The risk might have been worth the rewards and he would get bonuses by killing more monsters.

He went through the other listings again but didn't find anything worthwhile. This mine wasn't that far, they could get there in a day or two. He didn't think that killing the monsters would take that long either. He nodded and went over to the guild receptionist, he presented his card and told the person that he wanted to sign up for this expedition. The mission didn't seem to have any rank requirements though.

His steel rank allowed him to be accepted but being a mage also added to his worth. He left soon afterward as they would be heading out in two days, he could use this time to prepare and scribe some more spell scrolls. Having more ammo was also advantageous. He was also interested in testing some of his altered spells on the monsters.

The two days of preparation passed in a flash. He had gathered what he could, besides his spell scrolls he had some healing potions and some rations all nicely packed into his storage bag.

When he arrived he saw a group of tough-looking adventurers already gathering up. There were about twenty people here and they would be probably splitting into five or four parties. There was also someone he knew here, a certain small half gnome girl that was apparently coming with them on this adventure.

Before he could ask about why they allowed a low-level adventurer like her to come with them, he was spotted. The girl's eyes went wide, then they narrowed. She zoned in on him probably recognizing him by the black robe that he was wearing. This would probably be quite an interesting expedition, he hoped that the girl could at least keep herself safe this time around.

## **The Runesmith #Chapter 28 Setting out on an expedition. - Read The Runesmith Chapter 28 Setting out on an expedition. Online -**

Some time had passed since Helci's first expedition into the forest. That was something she considered a big failure. She couldn't kill a single goblin and had to be rescued by some kid and she even got berated her for it. She did manage to level up once, the goblin that she injured had chased after her and was finished off by the human mage

that rescued her. She gained part of the shared experience after the kill and managed to level up.

This incident made her rethink her approach. She wasn't strong enough to wander alone into the forests. She also figured out that the white goblins that were in this forest were stronger than the regular green ones.

She was a scout, this was a combat class while also a utility class, so she needed to increase her combat and detection skills. She didn't receive any free weapon proficiencies as they needed to be trained by herself. She needed to increase her basic dagger proficiencies and maybe the short sword ones. She was a class relying on agility and wouldn't be good with heavier weapons.

With their good eyesight, a scout made a good archer but they mostly needed to use short bows or crossbows due to their lack of strength. Contrary to popular belief, archers relied more on strength than dexterity as they needed enough power to draw their large longbows. The dexterity and good vision then added to their aiming proficiencies.

After the first level, she had received a basic trapfinding skill. Before that she only had a passive that allowed her to see better and spot hidden enemies. It only worked on them if they weren't hiding or their skill in stealth was really low.

The half-gnome girl had decided to first train a bit, increasing her passive weapon proficiencies along with doing basic strength training. While at it she also made sure to visit the adventurer guild hoping that she could get a job there. To her dismay, not many people wanted to take in a bronze class scout into their midsts that was only on their first class.

The other adventurers didn't want to put their faith in an inexperienced tracker. Someone that could detect the enemies before they ambushed you was a cornerstone of every party. They were sometimes even considered more valuable than mages or priests.

Time continued to pass, in the day she worked at the inn while in the evening she did her training. She was quite diligent and even managed to level up thanks to increasing some of the basic combat skills. She had never trained before and had gone through her first class change. People who didn't train the basic skills beforehand would find them leveling up faster after attaining a class.

After a few months of hard work, she had her break. She managed to land a spot in a party. She agreed on lower wages and was more or less a tag-along extra. Her first job was to protect a caravan that would take her on a two-week trip back and forth. The pay wasn't great but she still took it.

This forced her to quit her job at the inn. The innkeeper wasn't happy about an abrupt leaving of his worker but he could do nothing but shrug. The first quest unfolded with some strains, their party was attacked by some wolf looking monsters. They managed to clear them out with only a couple of people injured. Soon she started leveling up and her adventurer life had finally begun. She found the encounter very exciting and was hoping for more but to her dismay, it wasn't always so action-packed.

Her party spent two weeks walking in front of a cart and sometimes riding it. The monster attacks were rare and she felt bored. The sleeping conditions were even worse than at the inn as they either slept outside or in one of the carriages. She even had to deal with the male members snoring all night long.

She also didn't like the looks that some of the adventurers were giving her. Luckily she wasn't the only female in the group and they never went too far. Her new party consisted of her as a scout, two warriors, a girl that was an archer, and another scout that was already in his second-tier 1 class that was a tracker. This was a popular class to take along with a scout as it also had monster detection qualities along with basic pathfinding skills.

Everyone besides her was a steel rank so she was the newbie of the group. She had to do things like cooking or washing their dirty clothes. She knew that they didn't consider her a real party member just yet but she had to catch up to everyone. Their ages were all comparable to her as she had a late start.

The days continued to pass and she never returned to the inn. Her levels were slowly rising but without any dungeon nearby her progress was meager. Her party didn't want to move to another city as they were okay with easy transport work. She on the other hand wanted more, she wanted to get stronger and earn some respect.

One day Helci brought news of the expedition to Manstos Grotto and how it was mostly about exterminating a monster infestation. To her surprise, the party refused this request telling her that it sounded sketchy. There wasn't enough info about the monsters and the inside of the caves might not be correctly mapped out. They were the types that liked to play it safe so they refused the request.

She went away fuming, she didn't want to do the protection missions anymore. They had spent the past four months doing those and she was still only a level 10. She wanted to progress faster but was afraid to head out on her own. Luckily this expedition was accepting almost everyone even bronze adventurers could join.

To the protests of her party, she decided to go there as a solo act. They didn't want to budge even after she asked them again and again. This wasn't considered a betrayal of trust or anything, it wasn't rare for adventurers to change parties and to join larger expeditions like this on their own. They wished her good luck and to come back in one piece.



She arrived early in the morning almost before anyone had gathered. She took her time to examine her dagger and short bow that she was now using. She was wearing light armor and the same leather vest was still on her as she didn't have enough coin to make a drastic change to her gear. She also looked at her status screen while wondering how she compared to others at her level.

Name :

Helci Scout L10

HP

240/240

MP

176/ 176

SP

335/335

Strength

15

Agility

30

Dexterity

25

Vitality

18

Endurance

20

Intelligence

12

Willpower

14

Charisma

15

Luck

9

Scout Class

Increases stamina regeneration by 20%, Improves vision by 25%

When she asked the person that had the same class as her about his stats he just laughed. He explained to her that she shouldn't ask or reveal her status screen to anyone. It was actually considered rude to do this unless you had some kind of strong bond with the person you were asking.

The people that were going to go on this expedition started gathering together. There were a variety of classes here but most of them looked to be warriors with some archers and scouts sprinkled in. There were two people sticking out like a sore thumb.

One was a youth with golden hair. He was wearing a long white robe and had a large symbol of a sun embroidered on his back. He was holding a large book in his right hand and was praying while looking in the direction of the rising sun. He was obviously either an acolyte or a priest.

The second person was also wearing a robe, it was only pitch black. He had a heavy rapier strapped to his side and was above 160 cm in height. She recognized that gloomy robe and the lanky youth that was standing there, it was the same brat that had saved her from the mountain goblins that one day.

Their eyes met and the two started looking at each other. Roland was surprised to see the waitress from the inn even more than she was surprised to see him here. She was still the only person that he knew around here, so he just nodded with his head as a sort of greeting.

Helci was slightly taken aback after Roland had nodded at her. She wasn't as annoyed with him anymore and she felt a bit back about how she acted after he had saved her. Still, she just nodded back at him and then turned around as she didn't really have anything to talk about with him.

There were exactly twenty adventurers here plus the person in command. This person raised his hand and gave a shout to make himself noticeable. He looked to be a man of about 180 cm in height. He had a robust stature and was of the human race. His hair was brown and he had a short beard.

The thing that made him stand out was that he was wearing blue brigandine armor. It was made from either heavy cloth or leather and lined with small oblong steel plates riveted to the fabric. The rivets were sticking out as little round metal circles outside this heavy cloth.

The advantage of this armor was that it wasn't a single piece of metal and allowed better movement. Roland had done some research as he was soon to reach the blacksmith class and knew that this type of armor was also easier to manufacture or repair than plate mail. He was also wearing some heavy cloth under it which was probably was the ever-popular gambeson.

The man looked to be in his later twenties or in his early thirties which prompted Roland to believe that he was at least a tier 2 class. Besides the armor, he also had a longsword strapped to his side that was probably enchanted.

"You can call me Wells, I'll be taking the lead in this expedition."

"We have twenty members, from which fifteen already have their own parties, the rest will form the fourth."

The man started listing down some basic info. He didn't add much, the exact kind of insectoid monster was unknown and the mine had been barricaded from the outside so that the monsters wouldn't wander out. Now they were waiting for the adventurers to move inside and clear them out. They would be the first organized party to go in.

Roland was more interested in the party he was getting. He was going solo so he would be joining the fourth party that was forced together. Wells was the one that brought them together and he started calling the solo adventurers out while also listing their main classes.

"Dalrak, Dwarf Shield Warrior, Steel rank."

Roland saw a robust-looking dwarf move out from the crowd and move towards where the leader was. His beard wasn't all that long and he looked young. He was also wearing heavier plate armor with a chain shirt underneath.

"Selanar, Sun Elf - Tracker and Archer, Steel rank."

This time it was a tall lanky elf. He was wearing light green leather armor and carrying around a longbow over his shoulder. He had all the usual fine elven features that all sun elves had, long golden hair, and a pretty face.

“Orson, Human - Two-handed Sword Warrior, Steel rank.”

All of his party members were of the steel rank apparently, this one was also a youth that didn't look older than eighteen. He was above 180 cm in height and was wearing a metal cuirass over his chest. His arm and leg protection was lighter, probably due to him having a large sword to swing around. He looked like your usual damage dealer by game standards.

“Roland, Human - Mage, Steel rank.”

He was finally called to action so he walked over towards his new group. The others gave him some looks that soon subsided.

“The last is Helci, Half-Gnome - Scout,...Bronze rank...”

The leader narrowed his eyes while reading the last member's name. She was the lowest-ranked party member and caused everyone to look. The girl noticed the scornful looks but she was already used to them, she knew that she was still green. Still, it was quite annoying to be looked down upon by people that were of similar age as her.

While Rolands and Helci's group gathered up the leader continued talking. The priest looking person that was seen by Helci was brought to the forefront.

“This is Priest Elric, he will be joining our expedition and as a special guest he won't be joining any of the parties.”

The leader explained that the priest was getting a special status in the group. It was their responsibility to protect him from harm as he was able to heal the people from the expedition. Roland thought that mages were seen as assets but maybe being a healer was even more important.

“Praise the Sun, my children, let the Sun Goddess watch over you and warm your souls with her eternal sunshine.”

The moment he got to the forefront he started preaching. The adventurers looked at each other while trying not to show their disdain. It was understandable that the priest classes were important assets and they needed to be protected. This didn't change the fact that most of them were considered to be religious zealots. If you asked them about Solaria they could talk you to sleep while conversing about her greatness from dusk till dawn.

From what Roland could tell the expedition consisted mostly of Steel grade adventurers. There were a few tier 2 classes on board, one was the expedition leader and the other was the priest. He also believed that the party the leader was in was probably mostly composed of tier 2s as well.

Roland had a suspicion that besides that main group of adventurers all of the rest were considered expendable meat shields. His group would be getting one carriage to travel in so they would have enough time to strategize and get to know each other. Though there was a problem already, mainly one of the members wasn't happy that they had a bronze adventurer with them.

"What is this? I didn't sign up to babysit shitty little bronze brats."

"Who are you calling a brat? You're not even much older than me!"

The ones fighting were Orson and Helci, the half-gnome. Apparently the man didn't like that they had a bronze rank with them. The small girl was staring daggers at him and stomping her foot on the ground.

"Hah? what? You want to go, shrimp?"

The man grinned while looking down at the small girl and started egging her on. Roland saw this and knew that in a party it would be better if the team worked with each other. He decided to move closer in the hopes of defusing the situation even though he didn't like talking to people all that much.

"I don't think we should be fighting before we even arrive at the Grotto, save it for the monsters."

The elf and dwarf didn't seem to care that much as they moved toward the carriage that they were going to use.

"Another shrimp appeared? We having a bargain sale or something?"

"The only shrimp I see is between your ears."

Roland replied hastily, his emotions getting to him. Before he could backtrack on his insult he heard the dwarf bursting out in laughter.

"He git ye thare gud, laddie."

Orson's face turned a bit red, and the half gnome girl also got out a chuckle from Roland's remark. Selanar the sun elf remained quiet while just sighing, he was one of the more silent types.

"Stoap yer nonsense."

The dwarf could see that this human here was on the angrier side. He had enough sense as the main tank to not let things escalate. Luckily Orson was more bark than bite and they all managed to get inside the carriage without a fight breaking out. He did curse up a storm before getting into it.

It was quite the quiet trip, the most talkative one was Dalrak that kept complaining about the bumpy road and how much his posterior hurt. Roland had worked in a more tight-knit group of adventurers and knew that good cooperation was key. He decided to at least try to talk with them to figure out what he was working with.

“Dalrak was it? How good are you with that shield and is that a polearm?”

“Aye, this 'ere? Did ye think a'd be usin` an ax or somethin'?”

The dwarf asked while chuckling. Dwarves were considered strong for their height but they lacked reach. This is why most of them favored weapons that had long reach like spears and polearms. They also used longswords or even bastard swords. The one Dalrak was using was a slightly shorter halberd, fit for his height.

You would very rarely see a dwarf using an ax. This mostly happened when they were wearing full plate armor and were sure that they could just charge into their enemy without worry.

“Aye, lea th' frontline tae me, nottin is aff tae git by me.”

Roland couldn't understand the heavy accent too well but he figured the dwarf was just reassuring him about his defensive capabilities.

“And Mr. Selanar...”

“Nothing will escape my elven eyes, leave the tracking to me.”

Before he could even ask the elf answered, he probably realized what Roland's intention was and just answered so that he wouldn't have to beat around the bush.

“I'm also good at scouting and trap finding...”

Helci chimed in while everyone was talking, the group started to slowly converse with each other during the carriage ride even Orson finally gave in and listed his two-handed sword abilities. Roland also informed them about the array of spells that he was able to cast.

He had made a lot of regular mana bolt and mana arrow spell scrolls that fit on smaller paper. He could use them to level up and only dip into the better ones if they run into trouble. If they asked he could just say that he knew a high-level runesmith that liked scribing. The close to two-day ride continued, soon Roland would get another taste of adventuring after having had taken a long break.

**The Runesmith #Chapter 29 Entering the Mine - Read  
The Runesmith Chapter 29 Entering the Mine Online -**

'Ember.'

Roland held out his hand in front of a bundle of sticks that were gathered in one place. He was a mage without elemental affinities but he could still learn this spell. It used friction instead of fire to ignite. The sticks went up in flames and Roland's new half-gnome companion tossed a few more in.

The expedition had stopped for the night and they decided to camp out in the wilderness. They would make it to their destination in half a day's time tomorrow. The leader had decided that it was too dangerous to wander during the night. Making a camp and having people take turns watching would be the best option.

Roland and Helci were voted to be the first ones with guard duty. The girl was selected because she was a scout and also a newbie, Roland was also forced here due to his young age. He was now sitting opposite to the short girl with orange hair.

"Did you cut your hair?"

Roland asked while tossing some more wood into the pile. It was quite chilly here and even while wearing this long robe he was feeling cold.

"Ah, yes."

The girl nodded, she did have longer hair when Roland had saved her that fateful day. After she gained some experience she decided to cut it short as it was a liability during fights.

"Good..."

Roland felt like the two got off on the wrong foot the first time they met. He also felt like that as the adult here he should offer her the olive branch. The problem was that he didn't really know how to talk to sixteen-year-old girls, even fewer ones that were from this world and a gnome.

"Thank you..."

"Huh?"

"You know... for saving me..."

The girl finally managed to gather up her courage to apologize. She had her head turned the other side while twiddling her thumbs. Her voice faint and quiet as Roland barely heard it. After going through the adventurer's lifestyle the half-gnome did have a lot of time to think about her past actions.

"Sure, no problem. Also sorry for shouting at you back then."

“No it’s fine... you were right I was unprepared...”

The two somehow managed to bury the hatchet so Roland moved on from this uncomfortable topic and shifted it to another. The two started talking about the adventurer life, Hilci also wanted to know how Roland was able to get his adventurer rank at such a young age. He just lied and told her that he was lucky enough to get a mage class which let him join adventurer parties at a dungeon.

The night went by slowly, there wasn’t much to do but talk so they slowly got to know each other. Hilci told him about what she was up to after she got rescued and Roland gave her a recap of his adventurer life back in Carwen.

“Come to think of it, it would probably be better for you to go to a city with a dungeon than to stay here if you want to level up.”

“I also had trouble working by myself back then, I was lucky enough to find a good party...”

He gave her his opinion, if she really wanted to level up going to a city with a dungeon would probably be faster. Still, going on simple escort missions was probably safer as you never knew what could appear in a dungeon. Sometimes some rare monster variants appeared on the top levels that could easily kill the low-level adventurers. In contrast, bandits and the surface level monsters were a lot easier to handle.

“You think so?”

The small girl crossed her arms together and moved her head down. She started thinking about something and went quiet. Roland went on with more advice hoping that it would be at least somewhat helpful.

“You could also try finding some bronze adventurers there and practice on the easier levels.”

“You sound really knowledgeable for your age... are you really a human kid or just a large halfling in disguise?”

The girl narrowed her eyes while looking at Roland that wasn’t behaving for his age. She even expected him to act more bashful with such beauty as herself. But there he was talking normally and just acting like some kind of mentor figure. He never even tried to sneak a peek at her figure like all the other male adventurers. He looked to be thirteen so he should have been at that age, this was a hit to her femininity.

“Halflings are only a meter tall...”

“Then a giant Halfling! You might be really old!”



“Stop talking nonsense. How would a giant and halfling even copulate?”

There was an actual giant race in this world but they were various types ranging from 3-4 meters all the way up to a staggering number.

“See that! That’s not how a brat talks!”

“Oh? Would brat act more like you then?”

“Yes more like m... hey!”

Roland laughed a bit while the half gnome girl stared him down. She even threw one of the smaller sticks at him which he caught with his hand and just threw back at her. Before a stick fight could break out another person walked over. This was someone from the other teams to switch them out.

Roland didn’t remain there for long and headed back to the tent that the rest of their party members were sleeping in. This was probably the worst part of this journey, sleeping in a small tent with four other people.

“Ugh... that’s why dwarves are...”

Helci complained as even before they could enter the tent they could hear loud snoring. The dwarf being a dwarf had drunk himself to sleep. This also caused him to snore like a bear, the half gnome girl never liked sleeping next to guys for this reason. At least in her old party, there was another girl and she sometimes got to sleep in a tent with her without the other companions.

“I’m surprised that those other two are managing...”

Roland commented as Orson and Selanar were fast asleep. Though the Elf had an awkward sitting up straight position and looked to be awake. The human on the other hand was similarly snoring as Dalrak the dwarf. They probably both drunk themselves to sleep while the elf might have used some sleeping aids.

The two walked in, they only had some crude blankets and hard pillows provided by the people from the expedition. Helci curled up to the side far away from the other three males and tried to sleep but the snoring was just too loud. She then noticed someone wiggling over towards her which was Roland wrapped up in a blanket.

“Hey! What are you doing? Go back you pervert!”

The half gnome was surprised that the youth that didn’t show interest in her looks had come over. Was he actually keeping it in but was in reality a wolf in sheep’s clothing.

“Pervert? The hell? Just be quiet.”

He started murmuring something to himself and after a while a little flash of light occurred. Surprisingly Helci couldn't hear the snoring of the two other men now. She glanced at Roland that had an unimpressed judgy expression on his face.

"Hush spell, it places a small dome that keeps sounds outside, best used against snoring drunkards."

"Now go to sleep, it will only last thirty minutes."

The youth then rolled over to the side so that Helci could only see the back of his head. She realized that he only came over here because the spell had a limited range. There were some lesser spells like this that Roland could practice even without an elemental affinity. The thirty minutes should be enough for the two to fall asleep while already asleep they should be okay with the snoring.

The next morning when Roland woke up he felt that something was off. He felt something heavy on top of him, it was a person and he or she was right on top of him. He opened his eyes and to his dismay it was Dalrak. He even got a nice whiff of his breath as the dwarf opened up his mouth while yawning.

"Get off me!"

Roland began pushing and pushing but the man on top of him was quite heavy. He was already level 45 and somehow managed to do it even with his meager strength stat. The others were awoken to Roland's grunts and could see him rolling the sleeping dwarf to the side while panting.

"Hey, what are you looking at?"

Orson and Selanar looked at each other while slowly backing away. Helci was also looking at the strange display while mumbling to herself.

"Now it all makes sense..."

Roland raised his brow and just got up. He wanted to give Dalrak's rear end a good kick but decided otherwise. He just left the tent while the other party members continued looking at the sleeping dwarf that was about to wake up.

After the rowdy night, everyone packed up their belongings and the tents and placed them back into the carriages as they continued with their journey. Roland somehow managed to explain himself while Dalrak just laughed about the whole misunderstanding. He even mentioned that Roland was far too skinny for his tastes and that he only liked the robust dwarven women. Then for the rest of the trip, he started explaining the beauty of wide women and how they were superior to what he called 'twigs'.

“Aye, that’s whit a real wifie is.”

“This damn dwarf makes a lot of sense...”

Orson replied with a surprising contemplative look on his face as if he was deliberating on switching over. The elf remained silent just as Roland, the half-gnome girl had her eyes narrowed throughout the whole conversation.

The carriages soon arrived at the Grotto and everything came to a stop. Dalrak’s spirited discussion would have to wait until this was over. The leader’s shouts soon could be heard as he barked out some orders.

“Everyone, gather up!”

It took a couple of minutes for everyone to reach the meeting place. The parties stood next to each other while looking over their weapons. There was a large wide river by which the grotto was located.

The natural entrance to the grotto had its base part submerged in water. The opening was close to the river which caused it to be in the water, behind it a large mountain. The people started out by using the natural opening at first but afterward they had created a separate entrance for easier access that was located closer to land. They had also sealed off part of the old mine shaft that connected to the natural grotto as it kept flooding the pathways.

The mine was dug into the mountain going up and down in several spots. The miners made sure to dig in the opposite direction of the river. This did save them from flooding but didn’t protect them from the monster invasion.

“Listen up.”

“There are several openings to the mine, we will split up here.”

Wells started explaining the battle plan. Due to the sheer amount of mineshafts that spread in the mountain like spider webs they were going to split up. Everyone was given a map with the marked mineshaft opening that they would be going through. The miners escaped quickly so the exact location of the breach wasn’t marked down.

Roland already saw a big problem with this strategy. They didn’t have any sort of communication device with them. Things like that existed in this world but they were items that cost a lot of money and used up a lot of mana. Even if they found the source of the monsters they wouldn’t be able to call for help.

The plan was for the teams to locate this location and then retreat so that the main party that was composed of tier 2 fighters could move in and do the heavy lifting. They could

also try to do it on their own if they were confident, this would increase the monetary rewards that they would be getting.

Roland wasn't sure about the level of these monsters so he wasn't sure if he would be doing any deep diving. The important priest that had come along would also leave with the expedition leader's team which made things even more dangerous.

"Everyone got their assignments, there is enough time so move out."

"We will meet back here at nightfall."

It was about 1 pm at the moment. They still have some time to do a sweep of the tunnels before nightfall. If the monsters were active during the day was unknown so they had to expect resistance on the inside.

They weren't the only people here. There was a whole enclosed camp with some guards and miners. They had some wooden buildings that consisted of the miners' dining quarters and storage areas. There was also a nearby village from which most of the workers came from.

Each party was guided to the mineshaft opening by some of the workers. Once Roland's party got there the miners started removing some of the rocks that they placed to block the mineshaft. Guards were placed in front of the entrance as protection. There were no signs of battle so the monsters probably hadn't escaped the mine just yet.

"So what do you think?"

Roland asked.

"About dwarf women?"

Orson replied.

"What? No... about this mission..."

The man just shrugged while taking out his long two-handed sword. It looked thick and heavy and hard to swing. Roland was slightly worried that this large weapon could be hard to use inside a tight mineshaft.

"I don't care, just here to kill some monsters."

Orson performed a practice swing and the sword gave out a nice swishing sound. Roland spotted a shorter sword strapped to the man's side, this made him slightly less worried as he had enough sense to have a sidearm.

“Tis juist some bugs, ye worry awfy much laddie” ( It’s just some bugs, you worry too much, boy. )

Dalrak just laughed while getting his shield and halberd out. The Sun elf wasn’t looking too happy about having to get himself into a mine shaft. The half gnome girl was just looking over her dagger and short bow. The fighting ability of those two might be hampered if the corridors got too narrow. They wouldn’t really be able to use their ranged weapons, though if their aim was good they could probably shoot without hitting their own allies.

Roland was a bit perplexed about his new party members. They were awfully lax and didn’t seem to be taking this expedition seriously. He was wondering if he was being overly cautious about it or not. He decided to check his own gear over, to the side he had his makeshift spellbook. It wasn’t the only one as he had attached four of them to his belt with a stack of 10 spell scrolls in each. He had far more firepower than last time, fire arrows weren’t the only spell that he could cast anymore.

He also had a larger stack of the lesser runic mana arrow and mana bolt spell scrolls with him. He would be using these most of the time to level his skill up. There were other various spells that he had hidden in his storage bag as he couldn’t just carry all of them on him. He hoped that his bad feelings about this mission would go away, having a whole team of tier 2s to back them up was also a reassurance.

While thinking he heard a cracking sound followed by the noise of falling rocks. The miners had broken through the barricade and were now slowly moving the rocks away. The guards examined the entrance and deemed it safe for the workers to continue. Roland’s party also moved closer as a monster could pop out at any moment.

‘Maybe I’m just being paranoid, let’s get this over with.’

He moved to the back of the party. Dalrak and Selanar moved to the forefront, the dwarf was the main tank and the elf was responsible for spotting monsters. Even in a cave, he would probably be able to somehow feel out the enemies if they were close thanks to his class and skills. Orson remained in the back with Helci to protect the party from sneak attacks from the rear and Roland as the mage was right in the middle.

After the miners broke through the opening the party ventured forward. Instead of torches, Roland produced one of the easiest light spells a mana sphere that lit the way. This was a lot better than having to hold on to torches that also brought smoke into the equation. Everyone steeled their resolve as they moved forward, going in slowly into the unknown. The real expedition had finally started.

**The Runesmith #Chapter 30 Fighting monsters in a mine.  
- Read The Runesmith Chapter 30 Fighting monsters in a  
mine. Online -**

Roland's party had to squeeze through a small opening that the miners made. This opening was then covered up and only a small head-sized hole remained. When the party returned they were supposed to communicate with the people on the other side through it. They were also told to knock on the wall in a sort of morse code so that the workers knew it was them.

On the other side, guards were stationed to keep the miners safe from harm. The adventurers were supposed to follow the map and slowly clear out the tunnels from any monsters. Along with the other adventurer teams, they would slowly get rid of the monster infestation. It was unsure on how long this would take but they were given simple clocks so that they could tell the time spent there and go out within five hours of going in.

A blue sphere of light illuminated the tunnel. This tunnel was wide enough for three people to fit in side by side, small railroad tracks were lined up on the hard rocky floor. There was also an empty minecart standing there on those tracks. It was probably used by the miners to carry iron ore and minerals to and from the exit.

"Handy tae hae a mage aroond." ( Handy to have a mage around. )

Dalrak said while moving forward, the magic light hovered above his head, Roland could position it there as it had a targeting function. This spell didn't take much mana to sustain and Roland's mana regeneration outperformed it. Thanks to this, the party could enjoy a well-lit tunnel while having their hands free of torches.

They spotted some of those torches on the walls but they were all unlit. They probably burned out after the tunnels were sealed.

Selantar was holding onto the map, he was a tracker but his strengths lay in the wilderness and forests. He wasn't that good at distinguishing rocky mine walls and remembering the tunnel layouts. He stopped and so did the others with him as he frowned.

"Can I take a look? I'm good with maps."

Roland called out to the elf as he saw him narrowing his eyes while looking at the parchment. Selantar didn't mind and just handed it over to Roland as he was more than willing to shift responsibility. The scribe class and his high intelligence helped him with maps, it was as if he had an internal GPS. He had also gained a map reading skill that probably made everything possible.

"Okay, we are here..."

He had looked through the map before but was still surprised that someone could dig in so many tunnels without modern drilling equipment. Supposedly a miner was also a class and their skills made tunneling and digging a breeze.

“If we follow this path we’ll come to a fork, the right path will lead to more tunnels that are a dead-end...”

Roland proposed to check out the tunnels that were a dead-end first before moving on to the other ones. This way they could see if the monsters were tunneling any further and would also let them cut off the monster’s escape route. This would also help them cross out already searched sections from the map easier.

The others didn’t really care that much, the faster they got through this the faster they could get their rewards. So they all nodded and followed the directions that Roland proposed. While going past the first fork in the road Selanar noted that no monsters had gone through here as he could only spot the miner’s footprints going this way.

Without making any shocking discoveries they marched through these tunnels. Just as the elf said there were no monsters found in these unfinished tunnels. Helci made sure to observe the beautiful looking male elf as he examined the path, she was also someone that was aiming for a tracker role as him.

Roland marked the dead ends on the map a bit disgruntled that he didn’t find any type of loot to take with him. He wanted to nab some metal ore samples for himself as he was going to be working with metals in the future.

They backtracked to the fork and went further each time taking the path that placed them at a dead end. This trudge continued for an hour until they finally spotted their first enemy, revealing the true appearance of the insect monsters to them.

‘Ugh, it just had to be those...’

What stood before them was a troublesome foe. It wasn’t troublesome due to its strength, it wasn’t even a particular hard enemy to kill. The troubling part was that it rarely was seen alone. It was a giant ant monster and they were now looking at a worker type.

This ant was the size of a large dog breed. When it spotted the party its feelers started wiggling about and its mandibles started gnashing in their direction. Before it could act an arrow buried itself into its eye. The monster was stunned and practically dead which allowed Selanar to finish the job with another well-aimed arrow to the head.

“Fucking Myrmekes!”

Orson called out after the Myrmeke worker drew its last breath. Everyone from the adventurers knew that this type of monster was tricky. They came in droves, there were always more giant ants around if you spotted one.

“They must have burrowed from their nest here, might be even in the process of making this mine their new lair...”

Roland said while looking at the dead monster. Depending on the level of the ant queen this could be dangerous. Though if she wasn't above a certain level then the ant monsters would be quite weak and they would be fine. The worker ants weren't that strong but if they piled upon you, it was certain death.

"What's so scary about these ants? They don't look so tough"

Helci called out, she didn't see a problem in this as the ant was easily dispatched by two arrows. The other adventurers gave her dumbfounded gazes as if they were looking at an idiot.

"What are you looking at me like that for!?"

She stomped her foot on the ground as she noticed those spiteful gazes.

"That's why bronze newbies are..."

Orson snorted while the half-gnome girl glared back at him. Roland took this chance to educate her about the dangers of organized monsters that actually had a leader. The ant workers and soldiers would give their life for the queen and they could communicate with each other. The biggest danger lied in their organized hive mind-like behavior.

"I bet we'll be seeing more of them coming here now, get ready..."

"I think the miners might have lied about this, probably to save some coin."

Everyone beside Helci nodded as they knew that a monster ant was considered a more dangerous enemy. The commission they would have to pay would increase accordingly. They could always lie if the first expedition turned out to be a failure and if the job wasn't completed they wouldn't have to pay the entire sum. The one in charge was probably willing to endanger the adventurers lives just to save a couple of silver coins.

"More are approaching."

Selancar called out to the party and everyone got ready, even Helci pulled out her short bow.

"Git behind me."

Dalrak moved to the front, the corridor was a bit wider so they had enough space to move around. Roland shifted his hand to his belt where one of his binder-like scroll grimoires was attached to. It was quite plump with a lot of the smaller versions of the scrolls. He held it forward and pretended to be muttering an incantation before firing off a deep blue colored bolt of mana.



An unlucky giant ant monster that was first to appear got the brunt of the hit. The blue bolt of mana energy slammed into its head that promptly exploded into many chunks, green blood leaked everywhere.

Roland wouldn't let this chance slip by. He had a large quantity of these lesser mana bolts and mana arrows with him, he brought them just so he could level up his runic mastery skill. The only problem was that he wasn't alone, he still wanted to at least make the people think that he was a regular mage.

The German shepherd sized ants continued to pour through the corridor towards them. They all looked the same and they tried to swarm the party of five with their superior numbers. Luckily the party they were facing was prepared.

Orson backed up Dalrak at the front while Helci and her elven companion used their bows as support. These smaller worker ants didn't seem to have a hard enough armor to protect themselves from the arrows. They were held off at the helm by a large halberd and shield along with a two-handed sword that the human warrior was wielding.

Just as Roland expected Orson was having trouble swinging his large sword around. He even found himself having to shove an ant away while using his thick sword blade as an impromptu shield. Fortunately, he had a robust dwarf by his side that could thrust his polearm weapon as well as swing it around thanks to his high strength and thick arms.

The most shocking part of this encounter was the young mage in the party. He revealed himself to be quite the credit to his team. Each of his spells landed on an ants head, killing in one shot each time. With his help, the surge of ants was safely dispatched and soon twenty or so corpses lay on the cold mine floor.

"Damn, ah didnae even git th' chance tae shaw of, guid goin laddie." ( Damn, I didn't even get the chance to show off, good going boy. )

Roland scratched his cheek a bit, he might have overdone it with the mana bolt spam. He moved himself all the way to the back so his party members probably didn't see him using the scrolls instead of casting himself. Luckily everyone was far too busy with focusing on the monsters than on the boy caster. They also probably didn't have enough experience with having mages in their party as those mostly appeared after finishing the magic academies and were at tier 2.

"No shit, was killing monsters always so easy with a mage in a party? No wonder everyone wants one around."

Before his party could examine his battle style any further he gave out a cough.

"I think we should gather up the mana stones, I can feel that there are five of them here..."

Some of them recalled that mages were able to feel the monster cores in the slain monsters thanks to their mana sense. They quickly dissected the monster ants, their feelers and mandibles could be sold for some coin to alchemists. Even the armor could fetch a penny and be made into some lesser armor.

These adventurers were mostly driven by monetary gains so they started gathering the loot. They had to give up on the ant armor as they were just too many of them and no one had a storage bag large enough to fit all of those carcasses in. Helci was the only one from the party without one of those bags, so she pouted while seeing her temporary companions packing up everything.

“Don’t worry, if you work long enough you’ll be able to afford one of the cheaper ones.”

Roland gave the half-gnome a reassuring look as he noticed that she was feeling down. The bags cost a lot if you were a bronze rank but were somewhat affordable after getting through that hump.

“Who is worrying?”

She turned her head embarrassed about her lack of adventurer gear and that she was considered poor. Her companions didn’t really care as they all were in similar situations when they were starting out. Some of them even had to work as regular hired help when they were starting out as no one wanted them around without any combat experience. There weren’t really that many people that could evade the simple labor missions like Roland did when he started out. The ones that tried too soon, ended up as goblin food.

“Th’ ants weren’t that tough, think we kin continue.” (These ants weren’t that tough, think we can continue )

Dalrak proclaimed while getting some of the ant juices out of his halberd. It was a surprise to find out that this mine was overrun by ant monsters. This didn’t mean that they should retreat just yet. The more of these buggers they slew the more money they would get. They just needed to gather up their feelers and mandibles as proof.

“Yeah, we also have the mage kid with us, it should be a breeze.”

Orson was somehow invigorated after seeing the spell-slinging capabilities of his new party member. The elf also nodded and Helci just shrugged as she was here to gain some experience points. She could already see that it was increasing at a rapid pace while they defeated these weak monsters. She had already gained one level just after this quick battle.

“Don’t see a reason not too.”

Roland also nodded, the path behind them was mapped out by them. They had a clear path to retreat and the ants didn’t seem to be digging up new tunnels that much. With

the current strategy of the two warriors in the front and three range attackers in the back, they felt reassured. They still had enough time to backtrack as the five-hour time limit wasn't up.

They continued on, Roland spotted a larger cavern on the map. This cavern was probably some kind of larger mining area that the people dug out. He expected to find some minecarts along with more paths opening for them to investigate.

They followed the railroad tracks all the way to it, while heading forward they encountered more of the worker ants. Roland was still quite greedy and was sure to always aim for the head. The other party members didn't really need to do much besides blocking the ants path while their backline fighters pelted them with arrows and spells. The archers of the group were sure to gather up the arrows as they could be reused.

The path ahead continued to be bathed in darkness, Roland even brought out a second orb of light. The ants kept appearing periodically but in small numbers as if guided by the smell of their fallen brethren. It was rumored that the ants communicated with each other by pheromones or some kind of chemical trails which made a lot of sense.

The party finally came to the end of one of the long corridors and was greeted by a large cavern. There was abandoned mining equipment scattered here, pickaxes on the ground, and minecarts filled with raw iron ore. The bright blue light illuminated the whole place and they could hear the familiar sound of clicking mandibles of the ants.

The smaller worker ant variants weren't the only ones there. There was a slightly bigger variant of those monsters but luckily it wasn't a tier 2 soldier variant. This was just an advanced version of the worker. It's larger body size brought an increase in the size of their mandibles and also another deadly aspect.

"Mana shield!"

Roland was quick to react, during his times in libraries he had studied about the various monsters in the kingdom. He knew about some of the ant monster types having acid-like spit. This acid was now sizzling and dripping down from a shield that he placed on Orson. He was slow on the uptake as he was wrestling with three smaller ants.

"Watch out for their spit! It has limited uses, duck for some cover until it runs out!"

Roland shouted while using up one of his mana arrow scrolls on the other larger worker ant. This one didn't go down after one hit, the mana arrow only managed to leave a deep crack in its carapace. It already showed more resilience than the basic worker ant.

Helci and Selanar ducked behind the large minecarts while Dalrak and Orson backed away their gazes focusing on the acid-spitting ants. One of the acid shots connected with the cart Helci was hiding behind, fortunately, it wasn't quite strong enough to eat

through the thick iron. With a couple more mana bolts and mana arrows, the two long-range attackers drew their last breaths. The party members then jumped in to clear out the easier workers.

“Fuck...”

Orson leaned forward while panting, the battle was over but the stuffy mine air was getting to him. The other party members were also tired, the time they spent here was already over two hours. A decision about retreating, for now, would probably be the best course of action.

“Aye, think we shuid return laddies.” ( Yes, think we should return guys )

Everyone nodded and looked to Roland to point out the mana stones of the ant monsters. They would quickly gather up the loot and go back, they feared that more ant monsters would be coming. No one knew how the other parties were doing either, they needed to return and ask their expedition leader about a new plan of action.

Things wouldn't be going their way as the moment they were finished with taking their spoils they heard a rumble. The whole mine began shaking around as if some kind of explosion occurred, they could even hear some kind of loud noise.

Everyone started jumping around the wider cavern as the ceiling started falling apart. Large rocks were dropping all over the place and everyone was doing their best at evading. The rumbling and sudden earthquake didn't last for long but when the smoke cleared they saw a large problem.

“By Solaria's tits, the passage collapsed!”

Orson was the first one to notice the corridor through which they came was now blocked off by large boulders. This was an amount that they couldn't clear out in a short amount of time. The miners outside wouldn't venture inside and help them either, they were trapped with the only choice of moving forward into the ant-infested tunnels that lay ahead.