

## Runesmith 265

### Chapter 265: Evacuating the miners.

"This is a message from the adventurers guild, please evacuate the dungeon, a high-level tier 3 Lich has been spotted in the lava region, if you see it do not engage and move to the higher levels in an orderly fashion... I repeat a tier 3 Lich has been ..."

"Huh, what is that?"

"Is that some kind of golem?"

A group of five adventurers spotted a blue spider creature quickly moving around the area. It was quite a bit away from them but the loud message that was running on repeat could be easily heard by them. This quintet of adventurers had just arrived in the lower region and was now unsure of what to do. If they believed in the words that were being played, then the best way of surviving was to go to the higher levels or even inside.

"Hey, did that thing say that it's unknown if the monster can go to the upper levels?"

"Is something like that even possible?"

"I think there was something like this a few years back, a high-level orc monster appeared in a low-level dungeon and went on a killing spree... maybe we should go?"

The party looked at each other, they were not in any danger of starving anytime soon. There was no reason for them to put themselves in any danger. There was a possibility of this being some kind of ruse. Perhaps a rare monster did appear and whoever sent out this golem was trying to keep people away while they killed it.

However, this was a far-fetched theory as quite a few adventurers knew to who these spider drones belonged. Wayland the runesmith was close to being a household name in the city and this mechanical contraption even had his logo on it. If this was some kind of scheme to get people out of the dungeon then it was very sloppy. A punishment from the guild would be in order for attempting to evacuate people under false pretenses.

"Should we just wait for now? It could be some kind of prank?"

"It could be a costly prank... but hey, someone is coming!"

The tracker from the group pointed toward a woman that was running their way. She was quite fast and also someone they recognized. Gold rank adventurers were on the rarer side and ones that had cute faces were even rarer. It was Lobelia that was charging forward and right before passing the party of five she shouted out.

"What are you idiots doing, didn't you hear the

Announcement

? Get out of here now and when you see other adventurers tell them to leave the dungeon!"

She zoomed past the stupefied group that instantly started backing away. It was one thing to listen to a disembodied voice and another if a gold rank adventurer said the same thing. A tier 3 Lich was loose in this dungeon and everyone knew what that could mean. An unlimited army of undead skeletons could be swarming this way soon. Thus all of them quickly turned back to the boss room they came from and booked it after the half-elven girl.

...

"... please evacuate the dungeon ... "

"Are you finished, Wayland?"

"Yeah, but you could have left with Lobelia already."

"Hah, I'd get an earful from Elodia if she found out that I left you here all to yourself."

"I see... thanks."

Roland wasn't sure how to react to the smiling Armand that had remained with him. To alleviate some of the damage he did by releasing the Lich into the dungeon he remained by the lava pool. There he quickly jerry-rigged a speaker system that would send out an evacuation notice on a loop. It was quite loud so it drew in the close-by monsters that his self-proclaimed brother-in-law dispatched for him.

Only the two men and Agni were left here. Lobelia had taken it upon herself to run towards the guild to inform it. The guild master was the only tier 3 class holder that they could count on to defeat the Lich. If they were lucky then perhaps there was a platinum party passing by to lend a hand but that was probably unlikely to happen. Those types of people spent their time around areas that were more beneficial to them and this lower-level dungeon was not one of them.

"No problem, you can repay me later, I do need a new pair of boots and I've heard those too can be enchanted."

"I guess if they are made from the right materials that would be a possibility... but we should talk about that after we get out of here, alive."

"So are you done?"

"Yes but..."

Roland looked at his small monitor that was blinking inside of his helmet. There he was able to see a somewhat large force of people approaching the other side of the lava lake. Wedamir had gone back through it to reach one of the dwarven mine encampments. One of his golems had also gone to that spot to inform anyone that was in that section about the problems they were facing.

Jasmine and Korgak went towards another area entirely. Everyone was trying to do their best in helping to evacuate the unsuspecting men and women that were here. It seemed that at least some adventurers were willing to risk their lives for others. None of them actually tried to escape to the top without having a proper reason. In reality, he could do the same but due to the fact that this was somewhat his fault, he felt that he needed to stay here.

"You should probably go where Korgak and that girl went, they might need your help."

“What about you?”

Armand answered while seeming a bit confused. There wasn't really much left to do here and the skeletons might soon arrive. There was also a possibility of the Lich appearing on either side of the lava lake. Roland's plan was to remain here and help with the evacuation effort. He was on the stronger side with his level probably being the highest down in these dungeons.

“I'm going to stay here, I can at least stop some of those reanimated skeletons from killing people.”

“That's surprising, I didn't think that you were the heroic type.”

Armand laughed while shrugging but it didn't seem that he was about to leave. Roland wasn't sure why Elodia's adopted brother was willing to help him but he wouldn't refuse it. The help from a higher level tier 2 berserker was always appreciated.

“Heroic type...”

Roland wanted to laugh as he was anything but a hero. First off this all happened due to his fear of the abyssal cult. The only reason that he was remaining here was to soothe his bad conscience. It wouldn't be hard to just run and leave everything in the hands of the adventurers guild.

It wouldn't be hard to deny that he was involved with the Lich and there was also no solid proof of how long he was using the secret mining area. If he just ran to the city lord that he found it a few days ago before the Lich appeared he could be in the clear. Perhaps he could even spin it in his favor. He could play it off that discovering the mine could have triggered the Lich as a defensive mechanism that no one could have predicted.

“You probably couldn't be more wrong with that one...”

“Huh, what did you say?”

Roland mumbled to himself while Armand was trying to look to the other side of the lake. People were quickly gathering on the other side. There were actually many dwarves there as it seemed that Wedamir was successful in informing their side. It was probably better that the dwarf went there as he wouldn't be surprised if the union members ignored his golems thinking that it was some kind of bad prank.

“Nothing, you should get ready, they are coming and there are a lot of them...”

His brutish brother-in-law nodded while following Roland's gaze. Dots on his scanner started to appear and soon enough the strange clattering of bones could be heard. A swarm of blazing skeletons appeared from the chasm area.

“Damn, where did all of those bastards come from, there weren't that many of them before.”

Armand shouted as he was taken aback by the sheer number of the tier 2 skeletal warriors. Some of them were carrying spears while others had swords or shields made of bones. Some of them actually had metallic weapons that were probably stolen from the adventures they had killed.

‘There is a lot more than I expected...’

His mapping device was of no use to him now as there were just too many red dots to see anything. The first line of defense was already being initiated as the monsters started blowing up. Inside of his mule golem, he had a vast array of explosives that he used to set up mines. These skeletons were not very intelligent and just continued to run towards their doom.

A reanimated being had limited intelligence. They could carry out simple tasks like going in directions their master pointed out or attacking. The master would need to direct them directly to be able to evade such obvious traps. This Lich probably gave them a vague order that they would carry out, something in the line of killing all people they saw. Thus they would just follow it without paying any mind to their own life.

“Haha, that’s quite the show, look at them explode.”

“Be careful, they’ll break through soon...”

“Huh?”

While his bombs were taking out a large chunk from this skeletal army the assault continued. The bones piled up and soon acted as a bridge to get to the other side. If there were more skeletons than bombs then they would surely get here and if the Lich appeared from behind then he would be able to reassemble the fallen monsters. This was the danger that his creature brought with itself, a relentless army of reusable pawns that knew no fear and never tired.

This didn’t mean that they would get here. They were coming here in a predictable pattern without using the terrain to their advantage. The lake of lava was spreading to allow passage to the miners on the other side. At least until it closed again Roland would attempt to stop the swarm of angry skeletons. The mines were slowly running out so instead, it was time to use some of his own ranged magic.

Holy magic would have been the best to contend with these creatures that were resistant to the second-best element, fire. In his possession, he had access to all the four main elements from which probably the one that produced the most physical attacking power was the best. In this instance that would be earth and it was also favored by the topography here.

The large hammer he created started glowing in a brownish hue. Through it, he could activate a stronger spell than the usual spikes that he used. The runic tremor spell was triggered, the large spike at the end of his hammer shot out a beam of light that after colliding with the ground produced a large magical circle.

This circle appeared just for a moment before the spell effect was triggered. The ground under the skeletons opened up to reveal blistering hot magma. The monsters tumbled right in and even though they were resistant to flames their bones could not take prolonged exposure to lava.

This dungeon was like Roland’s backyard and this was true for this area especially. He had examined everything that he could for a potential tunneling attempt. It wasn’t hard to find the weak spots that were close to lava. Only thanks to this knowledge could he actually move the rocks away as in an instance where the ground was excessively hard, even his spells would be unsuccessful.

Yet not the whole region could be exposed to more puddles with magma. Some of the monsters sprinted through after the shaking stopped and continued with their maddened charge. This he

answered with a swarm of magical arrows that his hammer was able to produce as well. After locking on with his runic system the skeletons were pelted by the mass of blue lights. Thanks to the lock-on system he could choose to go for the weak spots that had a certain mana pattern to them.

“Hey leave some for me!”

Armand smacked his fists together which made the gauntlets that Roland made glow. The runic patterns became visible as several buffing spells washed over his body. Instead of straight-up attack spells, Armand preferred enhancing his body and through these gauntlets, he would be able to.

Even he began to see action as some of the skeletal fiends managed to get through the barrage of spells. With just a few smacks they exploded into chunks of bone or flew into the exposed lava puddles that Armand tossed them into. While the battle raged the people on the other side started reaching this side of the lake. They could see what was happening and without looking made their way towards the exit to the upper levels.

“Hah, not even one thank you?”

Roland looked towards Armand who had smacked away two skeletal soldiers. He was purposely taking the fight to another location. Slowly they were guiding the monsters away from the lake while the miners and lower-level adventurers escaped. It wasn't hard as these mindless drones had only eyes for the closest living beings to them. After a few smacks, they were tossing themselves at him and Armand without any regard for their life.

“You can charge them for your services after we get out...”

“Hey, that's a good idea! The guild should reward us handsomely for this overtime.”

In a sense, Armand was still on a mission. This wasn't really in the contract but could be used as an excuse to get more money out of the guild. It seemed that everything was going well, while the swarm of skeletons continued to funnel out Roland purposely created more lava pits to force them through paths he wanted them to take. Their number was concerning but they were managing to hold out while the others evacuated.

“W-what's that?”

“Skeletons, they are coming! Run!”

To his dismay, another small army appeared. They came from the other side and reached the lake before it started to close. The miners and workers were still carrying a lot of their equipment which made them slower. Without the ability to bring animals down into this dungeon or large carts they were left carrying everything in large spatial bags. Those could fit a lot of items inside themselves but still didn't fully cancel out the weight.

As it stood the skeletal beings would meet up with the fleeing dwarves closer to this end of the lake. This would all occur before the lake could fully close to bury the pursuing army and probably some lives would be lost. There was a way of helping them but he was hoping to use this trap on another pursuer.

‘It might have not even gone through the tunnels and be back at the chasm...’

His backup plan was not meant to stop these creatures but if he didn't do something then lives would be lost. Thus when the skeletal battalion reached the middle of the lake he relayed the information through the signal enhancers to the secret entrance. There a large number of runic bombs had been placed beforehand and would be used to burry those monsters in lava.

A huge explosion erupted as the skeletal creatures reached the middle of the lake. It produced a large pillar of magical energy that brought earth and lava with it. The secret area under the lava lake was connected to another basin of this fiery liquid. By triggering a massive explosion the connection was made and it was bursting with molten rock.

The ground gave up under the monsters that were tossed aside due to the initial explosion. Following it, some of them were splashed with molten rocks that halted their advance. When combined with the lava lake closing up from the other side the maneuver was successful. Given this time the fleeing dwarves would make it to safety while the undead creatures would be buried under lava.

It did seem like this was over, even though the assault continued from this side Roland was already preparing to retreat. Some guards from the dwarven camp even started to help, Wedamir was among them and after spotting Roland in the distance he seemed troubled.

Yet this was far from over as even after everyone had gone through the lake that had closed a strange occurrence was sighted. The middle of the lake started rising up as if a large round object was trying to pierce through the heavy magma. Roland instantly knew what was happening and was quick to retreat. The only hope of stalling this further was inside of his mule golem...

### **Chapter 266: Blasting away again.**

"We made it laddies!"

Everyone cheered as they watched the lava swallow up the swarm of skeletons. This group of people had come from the mining camp in the mine. Everyone had somewhat expected this line of work to be dangerous but they never envisioned themselves fleeing from a small army of skeletons. Luckily a massive eruption of some sort that exploded in the middle of the lake saved them all and now their pursuers were gone.

They naturally questioned the strange explosion but they couldn't really stop. While the enemies from the rear were gone another large group of them was coming from another side. This area had also become flooded with magma which was proving to be a stopgap for the monsters.

There they also noticed two humans that were keeping the monsters at bay, one was swinging a large hammer around to produce various spells and the other just crushed the skeletal heads with his fists. Wedamir, who reported the monster attack had gone over to offer some help and it seemed that everything was going well. However, just when everything was going well a strange phenomenon started.

"Shit, get these people out of here, make them toss all of their equipment away and run if you want to live."

"Ye can't expect us tae juist..."

"Just do it!"

Roland grabbed Wedamir by the collar while shouting. There was no time left as the Lich was here, and while the others couldn't see it yet, it was there. The multiple explosives were supposed to stop it or at least keep it from progressing as the underground would flood with lava. His plan was to set off the explosion while the Lich was inside the secret chamber below the lake but he had to detonate it prematurely to save the miners.

Now the creature was slowly lifting itself up from the underground. This was presented to everyone through a strange red sphere rising out from the ground. Roland knew that inside of it was the Lich and the circular shape was just the mana shield it was producing. It was coupled with the levitating spell to make it look like some kind of large bubble.

There was no time to lose, Roland only had one weapon capable of contending with a tier 3 monster of this caliber. This was the large cannon that produced the mana-drill spells he used for farming experience. At this moment it was inside of his mule golem that he quickly sprinted towards.

'Common, open up...'

He already sent the order to his golem to turn around and open the large latch but this model wasn't really built for speed. In his hurry, he had to actually tear it open to get to the equipment he needed. There was no time to actually attach this cannon to a stable base or to the battery unit that used the mining area Elokin's crystals.

Luckily he had updated this cannon to be used with other attachments. It was still an experimental model that could go together with this slightly upgraded runic suit of armor. The cannon already came with thick cables that would carry the required energy. What he needed to do was connect them to his armor.

There wasn't really much to it, there weren't any latches, just a flat surface at the end of the cable that would stick to his metallic armor through magic. It was quite similar to magnetism which didn't suck up that much mp. Thanks to this solution the cables almost guided themselves towards the entry point that he included on this improved armor.

Small blue sparks flew as he attached the last one to his neck. The other ones were tightly connected to his back and chest without getting in the way of him holding it up on his shoulder. The small turret that he had on the other shoulder that previously continued to shoot at the skeletons had to be turned off. The mana it required needed to be moved towards the large cannon.

"What are ye..."

"I told you to go, that thing is here already, if you want to save your people you should run."

Wedamir that was somewhat away, continued to ask questions while battling some skeletons away. Finally, as he noticed the lava bubble rising up warning signals started going off in his head.

"A' body, listen the th' human, yer lives are more important than th' equipment yer carrying."

"Ye can't be serious! If anyone listen to him, everything that ye lose wull come out o` yer salary."

The dwarven adventurer wasn't the man in charge, this title belonged to a foreman that was overseeing the entire mining operation. He was an old dwarf that clearly saw that the company that he was working

for was above the simple miners. Probably the punishment for him would be severe if all of this equipment was lost here. It seemed that for him the miners were more replaceable than the pickaxes that they were carrying.

It was understandable that the foreman didn't want to get in trouble but he was underestimating the threat here. Without seeing the Lich that could devastate them with a few spells he would probably be unwilling to give out an order to abandon everything. To Roland's surprise, Wedamir was the one to step up.

"Whit do ye want, ye'r not part o' th' miners guild."

Without giving an explanation Wedamir's fist made its way towards the supervisor's jaw. The man did not have a proper battle class so a punch from a high-level tier 2 warrior wasn't something he could take. It was an instant knockout that made the hired guards and other dwarven adventurers that were here stunned.

"Someone grab this idiot, ah will explain everything to th' union chief after."

Roland had no idea who this dwarf was that was hanging around Armand and Lobelia. He had mentioned one of the union member's names and called them his uncle. Perhaps this was not an honorary title and instead, Wedamir was actually related to one of them. This would make sense if he felt comfortable in knocking out a foreman of a mining expedition.

If that wasn't the case, then perhaps he could see the bigger picture here and he just prioritized the lives of others over monetary gains. Roland didn't really have the time to worry about the union's dealings as his current situation was also dire. At least now that the miners were dropping their heavy tools and bags they had a better chance of escaping.

As if right on cue the smoldering hot bubble of lava rose high enough to reveal the monster inside. The green flames that accompanied this lich became visible to everyone. Roland had remained vigilant even while the dwarves were having their little argument. The cannon that he was holding over his shoulder was already ramping up.

### ??????? Lich L 171

His analyzing skill couldn't fully identify the monster, the question marks represented the type of the monster before him. Liches were already tier 3 monsters and were an evolution of a mage skeleton. This one was in possession of some kind of special class that he could not identify. The only thing that gave him some information was the creature's level.

'Its level is lower than that of the abomination at the village but its defenses against mana are vastly superior to that monster's.'

The biggest problem wasn't the monster's level but how it was able to shrug off every magical attack that he produced. In theory, his chest cannon should be able to at least deal a good amount of damage if it connected but the mana was being affected by something. At first he believed that it was just some type of skill or spell but the longer he thought about it the stranger it became.

Normally a battle between mages was decided by their mana. The person with more always had the advantage both in defense and offense. While it was possible to interfere with other people's mana it



wasn't something easily achieved. Mana disrupting existed but it usually occurred with one party having a vastly higher stat pool along with amount of mana.

The Lich here was strong but Roland also had a prestige class that boosted his stat multiplier. In his opinion, the monster shouldn't be able to disperse his magical energies this easily. There was one way of this being probably though, if the mage grew accustomed to an enemy's mana pattern they would be able to affect it to a greater degree.

'I can only hope that this works...'

There wasn't much time here as his cannon was already glowing blue with energy. His aim was to catch the monster off guard, now that it rose out of the magma lake it was time. The Lich didn't show much respect for his magic, it didn't seem to see it as much of a threat. To some degree, it even looked as if it wanted to get hit by it.

This of course brought back the memory of seeing it jump into the mana beam on one of his grinding expeditions. At that time the monster was hit but didn't die then afterward it had never shown its face again as if it was hiding. If this Lich was intelligent then perhaps it decided to hide away to understand the mana beam that hurt it. It wouldn't be strange if it cracked his mana pattern during the farming spree and was now able to affect his spells.

Something like this was usually not an easy endeavor. An experienced mage would need to spend weeks or months analyzing such a pattern actually to be able to affect the spells during battle. Even then a person's mind was a fickle thing, during a direct confrontation it would be practically impossible to affect another set of mana patterns without fumbling the technique.

His opponent wasn't quite human though, perhaps it operated on a different set of rules and could perform this deed as easily as people breathed. This little theory of his could be tested out now as if the monster could just bounce this magical cannon ray away, then running was the only option left. With how the monster was already coming closer that would become quite difficult even for Roland.

For this to work, he would need to change his mana pattern. Something like this was easier said than done, a magic user could not just change his natural mana signature that easily. Luckily Roland was not a mage, he was a Runesmith. Runes were able to change everything within a spell if the crafter knew the components.

After so many years of testing, Roland had become quite the expert. Recently he had started tapping into holy runes and was also attempting to change the mana wavelengths. This research brought in a few new discoveries through which he was now able to scramble his own mana fingerprint.

Everything was ready and he injected all that he had into the weapon that he was holding over his shoulder. The runic machine that looked like a tank cannon started releasing sparks of mana. His whole silvery armor was doing the same, arcs of blue light flew everywhere as he dumped copious amounts of his mp into this attack.

While he did not have time to connect this weapon to any batteries he could still use them. A handful of fresh Elokin's crystals made their way into his palm and were used to boost the power of this cannon to its maximum. These crystals liked to heat up when used, his first golemic creation had blown up due to

this fact. Yet now even when the crystals were starting to glow red in his gauntlet he continued to use them.

Finally, the Lich was out and its gaze was instantly drawn to the sparkling runesmith. The empty eye sockets exploded with green energy as it started approaching. The monster was like a moth being drawn to a flame. It was probably sure that the energy blast could not damage it as all the previous ones had failed before it. A staff made of bones floated before it as the counter-attack was already being prepared.

Roland was not sure why the Lich was acting this way. For some reason it was attracted to his mana and wasn't acting as the Lich variants he read in books. Those undead monsters would usually avoid any direct confrontation and use their minions instead. If the caster died then all of the undead around it would instantly stop working. If this monster acted as it was supposed to it would have created a lair where it surrounded itself with its skeletal minions.

This one on the other hand was truly broken or crazy. Even after the beam of drilling blue mana flew forward it continued to float towards it. It was as if it wanted something from it, was it actually trying to absorb this blast of energy? This thought made Roland sweat, if his enemy had absorbing properties then after the beam was taken in he would be open to a counterattack.

Luckily this wasn't the case, after inserting a mana pattern disruptor into the runic system, the shot actually connected. A light show of sapphire energy against emerald green set the entire underground dungeon ablaze. This intensive clash of magical energies made a lot of heads turn and everyone could see it, the Lich's shield was breaking apart.

It was quite a strange sight to behold even for them. The Lich that was surrounding itself with green flames flew directly into the path of the spinning beam of mana. It was as if it was not even seeing it as an obstacle that it needed to worry about. To the simple miners on the other hand the high concentration of mana made their beards tingle. They knew in their very being that if they were anywhere near that blasting zone they would be turned to ash.

For a moment it actually looked like the being made of bones would break through. The beam collided with the shield of green flames but the monster continued to fly forward. Only after moving several meters did it stop. It finally realized that something was wrong but at that point, it was too late.

Roland's sweaty face could not be seen nor could his shouting be heard as he gave it all. The spinning drill finally penetrated through the shield and collided with the monster inside. It was practically cleaved in two as it impacted the monster's chest area where presumably the core should be. This amount of damage could not be ignored even by this creature and it lost control of its mana shield and levitation spell, it was falling down into the lava below.

"Hah, he got it!"

Armand shouted out while holding his fist high up. Everyone that was fleeing halted in their tracks as they saw the light show coming to an end. It looked like the Lich was going to fall into the lava and even it without the protection of its shield would suffer a devastating blow if it was directly submerged under lava.

'Did that do it?'

While the monster was falling down his armor was on fire. Various skills like rune overload and empower rune were used to boost the spell past its limits. The smoke that was produced from his machinery was due to the runes burning through the metal. Even though his equipment had been damaged if the monster fell into the lake of lava now it would have all been worth it.

'I didn't get its core which is a shame but that doesn't matter, please just fall in.'

His reserves were drained so he didn't have anything left for a follow-up attack. If only the monster fell into the lake then this all could be over. Yet it wouldn't be so, suddenly something burst forth from the middle of the lake. It was a skeletal monster just like the rest but it was much bigger and of coal black coloring.

Before the Lich fell into the pool the monster produced a set of wings that propelled it towards its master. Within a few moments, the skeletal mage was being carried to the other side of this lake to safety. Everyone looked in horror as the one responsible for this predicament had not been killed. Instead, it would be safe on the other side to recover and return to haunting this dungeon again.

Roland was stunned and shocked just like the others. The arrival of this creature was something that he didn't factor into. After a quick scan with his analyzing skill, he was even more perturbed. This creature was one of the Lich's minions and it was also a tier 3 being.

#### **Obsidian Skeleton Gargoyle [ Summoned ] L 150**

'Shit, could there be more of those around...'

This was no time to take a rest, while he had gone through most of his mana they still needed to evacuate. The skeletal soldiers continued to arrive and they were not alone. From the corner of his eye, he noticed the appearance of another one, another large skeletal monster made from black bones.