

## Runesmith 299

### Chapter 299: Time running out.

“Lord Arthur, how come you've bin ignoring us? a'm sure yer aware o' th' mines in th' dungeon, how come you've bin denying us entrance to it?”

“Ah, was there a mine like that? Think the guild master did say something about it? But shouldn't you visit him first? The Adventurers Guild is responsible for anything that involves the dungeon. Now, I'm kind of busy with work, I'm sure everything will work itself out with time.”

“Wirk itself oot? whit ur ye plannin...”

“The Lord, has another appointment and will be busy for the entire week.”

A maid with cat ears approached an angry-looking dwarf that was trying to hold in his anger. His face was red and not the kind of red that he usually got from drinking. Nevertheless, he was talking with a noble, there was no way for him to raise his voice or complain. His experience was telling him that if he didn't tread carefully that things could turn sour.

“Ah ken whit yer doin' , ah will report this to th' union.”

The maid just smiled while pointing her palm toward the door. The dwarf slowly got of from the chair he was sitting in, took one last glance at both the smiling maid and the man behind the large desk before leaving. A sound of a slammed door was heard by both the people inside the office as well as the three standing outside of it.

“You?”

“...Dunan was it? could you move, you're in my way.”

Not far from the office entrance stood a tall man, his face would be considered handsome and his frame more than athletic. It was the city's only Runesmith and to Dunan it was someone that he didn't get along with. Though, without any retorts in mind he just gave out a snort before charging out through the corridor instead while leaving the three people there wondering what all of this was about.

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‘Why did they have to call me at this moment? Did they want me to bump into one of the union dwarves or something?’

Roland was the man in the corridor and the other two were the usual guards, Sir Gareth and Sir Morien. The two had proven themselves to the city guards in the last monster siege and were on the path of becoming an important element in Arthur's army. They were already teaching the basics to the recruits and more people came to sign up as business was booming, or to be exact it was about to really take off.

“The Lord is waiting for you, Master Wayland.”

“Mhm.”

He just nodded at the two knights that seemed to have changed their view of him. Previously he could see a sort of disdain in their eyes but now it was gone for some reason. Roland wasn't sure what the

reason for this was. Perhaps after killing the Lich he had gained some respect, the two actually knew that he slew it himself without help from any outside sources.

His potential of becoming someone influential and powerful was steadily increasing. It didn't happen often but other people had managed to defeat tier 3 monsters while a tier lower. It wasn't bad to assume that such a person was on the way up and holding someone like that in contempt was never a good idea.

'I guess I'll have to get used to this newfound respect, Master Wayland, huh?'

Naturally, after becoming part of the Valerian noble entourage, people in the city started treating him differently. Even though from the outside he was nothing more than a servant, he was still a servant to someone that carried a noble title. It was even scarier when that title belonged to the Valerian house that ruled this island. They were the law and everyone knew that they took their name very seriously. Even going against a servant wouldn't be taken lightly as from the noble's perspective, it was going against their brand.

"If it isn't Master Wayland, I'm sure you've already seen the angry dwarf from the union when leaving."

"Yes, I did but won't they become even more suspicious of us if they see me?"

"Suspicious? We are past that part."

Arthur shrugged while smiling, Roland wasn't sure how to reply while taking a seat before the large desk. On it he could see various documents and contracts, some new and ready to be signed by some merchants. It was clear to him from glancing that Arthur was busy in preparing his shipping enterprise. He needed to sign contracts with merchants and now while the dungeons' worth was underplayed was the best time to do so.

'Isn't this like playing on the stock market with insider information?'

The dwarves knew that the mine existed there but had no idea of the bigger picture, the dungeon with tier 3 monsters in it. Along with others, they decided to wait while the dungeons was being cleared out, otherwise, they would probably already be preparing for the major influx of business.

When a dungeon with tier 3 monsters and materials was revealed the status of this area would skyrocket. Many people would kill for a chance to have an early start in such a region and Arthur knew this. Before more eyes were placed on Albrook he needed to close all possible deals.

Roland knew by now that Arthur wasn't just interested in managing this city like a normal noble. He could just get the usual taxes and let the place grow by itself while he relaxed. This was however not his main goal, the young man was interested in gaining power and prestige.

For this, he needed more capital than taxing the city and in this case, trading was the way to go. Massive amounts of resources would be moved from the dungeon in the form of monster parts and minerals from the mine. He was the city lord and could make things a lot easier or harder for any merchant company. Roland wasn't sure if he would go with a more symbiotic approach or if he forced bribes from them, either way, had its pros and cons but money would be gained eventually.

What he was more interested in was not how Arthur would be gaining his riches but on what he would be spending them on. To this day he had no idea what the noble was after, it didn't seem that he was that interested in competing with the other heirs to the Valerian household but perhaps with this lucky break he was finally ready to get his hands dirty? For Roland that had signed a contract, this wasn't that welcome of a revelation as he could end up against some influential opponents.

"I see that you have been busy."

"Haha, probably not as busy as you Master Wayland. I've gotten a report from the adventurers but I would also like to hear it from you, how does it look down there?"

Nevertheless, he was only a runesmith and not something like a knight or even a butler. Perhaps those two knights and the maid would be considered problematic by his siblings but he was only a craftsman. At most he could see Arthur getting replaced by someone while he just switched to another boss. However, the further their cooperation continued, the tougher it would be to break those bonds that were forged.

"That dungeon is a lot larger than I've expected, please look at this."

"Is this a map?"

"Yes, they have managed to fully explore three floors for now, and there are more of them but I think you probably received a copy of the map?"

"Indeed but it wasn't as detailed as this one, could you make me a copy?"

"I've already made one, here."

Arthur nodded while smiling as if he expected to receive this parchment. On it were three dungeon levels that the team of five platinum adventurers had explored within a week of being inside of the dungeon. They had decided to retreat afterward as they had not prepared for anything longer.

"So correct me if I'm wrong but it seems that the upper floors contain easier monsters."

"Yes. The monster levels were lower and so were their numbers, each floor had one chest being guarded by a smaller group of them. After exploring two of the upper levels they had attempted the lower floor and found the levels of the monsters going past one hundred sixty."

"Yes, this makes sense..."

Both of the men nodded, this dungeon was structured in a similar fashion as the starting area of the lesser one. The upper levels were easier while the lower a person traveled it became harder. Probably at the end, a boss chamber waited for them and perhaps a path toward a new more difficult section.

"Hm... is it an open dungeon, or ..."

Arthur started pondering this fact while looking at Roland, he had kind of thought through the fact and came to his own conclusion.

"If I may?"

"Please speak out."

“Thank you. First of all, it’s possible that another entrance exists to this dungeon, if we follow the stairs leading up, we might discover a new entrance that had not yet been discovered.”

“A new entrance? That sounds troubling.”

Arthur frowned at the mention of a separate entrance. If such an opening existed there was a high probability that it was outside his area of influence. It would be possible for someone else to claim the rights to this dungeon or at least siphon away a large chunk of its resources that he would not be able to tax.

“However, the entrance might not exist...”

“Do you mean?”

“Yes, if it’s connected to the super dungeon then it would make sense but we won't truly know until we explore everything, that’s why I would propose exploring the upper floors first to see where the dungeon ends.”

“Hm, I’ll consider your words when I talk to the adventurers but perhaps it would be better if the guild master took care of that part...”

Roland raised his eyebrow a bit as he noticed something off in Arthur’s tone. He didn’t seem that cherry when talking about the group. Perhaps they weren’t inclined to follow his orders as he was still a kid with no actual power. It wouldn’t be strange if they refused his proposal and just continued at their own pace. Having a fellow tier 3 class holder talk to them instead was probably a better choice. The guild master was invested in this new venture and would probably do his utmost to make it work. With a staggering amount of money on the line and his propensity for greed, Roland wasn’t worried.

“It seems that everything is progressing well but you must hurry, the dungeon can’t remain closed for too long. I can probably give you another week before we have to open it up.”

“A week?”

“Yes but even if the dungeon is open it doesn’t mean that people will reach that area so you will have some time to explore it. However, I’m sure many eyes will be on you, and sooner or later someone might discover our little secret.”

Roland nodded and was sure that the union dwarves would probably begin their search for the mine that Arthur was trying to deny. It wouldn’t be strange if they acquired some runic devices for this purpose. His involvement was already identified and hidden chambers behind runic doors wasn’t anything new. There were already ways of getting in and hiring another runesmith or rune mage for such a task was costly but not out of the question.

“So, they didn’t lie at least, I’ll have to look through these maps and will inform the guild master about exploring the upper floors first, is there anything more?”

“Yes, I wanted to bring up one more project.”

“A project?”

He nodded while moving a hand into his pocket to take out a round object. It looked like a marble with some faint runic traces and symbols over them.

“This is?”

“I call it a sensor.”

“A sensor? Does it have anything to do with those magical maps?”

“Yes, I was thinking of using them in the dungeon on a larger scale...”

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‘Well, he was at least interested in my idea but first, we have to get the dungeon sorted out.’

Between his thumb and index finger was the same sensor that he showed Arthur. This little device was going to allow him to make some extra money and also make the dungeon a lot safer in the future. It was however only a side project that he thought about while stuck in the dungeon with that group of five and would take some time to come to fruition.

‘First I’ll have to get my workshop up and running, that one in the tower isn’t worth investing into. At least Bernir doesn’t need to come with me anymore so he can take care of that while I’m down there.’

Roland still needed to go down there together with the group of five for at least another week. After that, the dungeon would be opened up and people would probably be following after him. It wouldn’t be strange if the dwarves were already spending money to hire some competent personnel. Luckily they would only spend enough for a mine's worth and not realize that a potential A-rank dungeon was waiting down there.

‘I don’t have much time and nothing else to do down there anyway...’

Soon he arrived at his destroyed home where he was greeted by a loud howl. The place had been worked on by his magic but there was still a lot of work left to do. It was the middle of the day and he could hear some hammering. Bernir along with his own little assistant were busy repairing the shed that used to be a secondary workshop. His home's door had already been replaced but there was still more work to do.

For the time being, he decided to close the shop but this didn’t stop Elodia from showing up and helping them tidy up the place. The sight of her raking the rubble towards another area just brought a little smile on his face. Luckily soon some hired workers would show up to get things done faster. His mind wasn’t on the repairs though as another quick expedition into the dungeon awaited him and this time around his focus would be different.

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“Well then Master Wayland, we will be off.”

“Have a safe trip.”

Roland waited for the group of five to disappear into one of the tunnels before moving toward his own backpack. On the surface, it looked like he was stuck opening the magical corridors for this group but in

reality, he had his own motives. If he wanted it wouldn't be hard to design a device to do it for him but instead he wanted to be here.

'Luckily it wasn't that hard to restore...'

From the large spatial bag, he pulled out two items. One looked like a large cannon with some cables connected to it and the other was a spider drone. He had used his free time to assemble a working model from the parts available at his workshop. His new salvaging skill was actually handy as it would produce working legs and parts from the melted remains of his spider golems.

"Well then, they are far enough, I should get started."

The cables on the cannon were connected to his suit but also to an exterior power source. The mana crystals that were in this mine were a free source of energy that he intended to use up as much as he could. Time was against him and his level needed to rise higher. His plan was quite simple, kill skeletal monsters from a range like before. Only one thing changed from his old approach as this time around, he would have some bait.

"There is one, bring it over here."

The golem reacted by entering the dungeon and going toward the red dot on the map. Soon enough a Skeletal Berserker was rushing after the small spider golem that was enhanced for speed. Just like with the tests after the drone vanished through the door the monster stopped. This was his cue to act, when it turned around the large cannon was used to deliver a devastating blow to the monster's back.

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**Infernal Skeleton Berserker has been slain.**

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**Congratulations you have leveled up!**

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Roland smiled at the prompt but then quickly looked to the map for other red dots. The range of his map had become quite massive, he could see the entire floor and every monster that was on it. With the help of his drone that would lure them here he intended to grind them out for all they were worth. While the group of five were gone he would use his time here well.

**Chapter 300: News Spreading.**

'There they go.'

A large group of people pushed towards the dungeon entrance as if there had never been a tier 3 monster there. Roland was looking at the people pushing each other out of the way in an almost frantic frenzy. Arthur and Aurdhan ran out of excuses to make the people wait. There was also the problem of many adventurers running out of money along with people in the city. No one could afford to let the dungeon sit there without adventurers in it. The whole city depended on the materials coming from it.

'At least they won't allow everyone to enter into the lower levels, for now, this will keep the city afloat and give us more time. But it won't take long for people to find out...'

His gaze was drawn to a dwarf that he remembered. It was Wedamir the party member that he encountered along with Armand during the Lich crisis. He was the one that probably spilled the beans about the hidden mining area. Together with him, he could see many other dwarves, one, in particular, was the Enchantsmith belonging to the union. If he was there, then they were probably attempting to find the hidden entrance. Considering that Roland found the entrance as a Runesmith, bringing an Enchantsmith along wasn't a bad idea.

'I'm not sure about Enchantsmith... he shouldn't be able to get through he runes but the class isn't that much different, if he can actually see the traces of the runes will be enough for them to figure it out.'

While the dwarf there would probably not be able to open up the runic passages, he might be able to pinpoint where they were. Afterward, it would be as simple as bringing a proper runesmith over to do the work for them. It wouldn't be strange for them to have already called for backup from their union headquarters branch. One such existed in the main city on this large volcanic island.

'They might even have other means of getting in there that I'm not aware of... I can't rule out that possibility.'

Roland turned away from the swarm of people entering the dungeon as he had just come out of it a few hours ago. The day that he had to give up the mine was something he had come to terms with. His plan was to turn it over to the authorities after reaching tier 3 but he wasn't that far off now. There was still some time left for his grind, before the announcement was made official he had some more time.

'Things are going to get bothersome from now on but I need to continue, it will become a lot harder after other tier 3 adventurers come to the city.'

At the time the most danger found in the dungeon were the tier 3 skeletons. However, without being able to pass through the opening he created, killing them was rather easy. This would change after people capable of slaying them started arriving in the city. The monsters inside the dungeon were easy to predict, this wasn't the same for actual people who could stab him in the back.

When they formed a group of tier 3 adventurers the danger became very real. At the time being, he was a big fish in a small pond but soon things might change. Before this city was overrun by these powerful individuals he needed to become one of them, it was something required for his own survival. It wasn't strange for people to vanish from dungeons, it was quite common. He had first-hand experience with this as he had left the fencer to be absorbed by the dungeon all those years ago. It was the perfect spot to clear out old grudges.

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**Name :**

**Roland Arden L 169**

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**Classes:**

**T2 Runesmith Lord L 50 [ Secondary ]**

**T2 Runic Engineer L 44 [Primary ]**

**T1 Mage L25 [ Tertiary ]**

**T1 Runic Mana Scribe L 25 [ X ]**

**T1 Runic Blacksmith L 25 [ X ]**

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‘Just six more levels, I really hope that last skill is worth it...’

One of the reasons he was waiting to max out his tier 2 Runic Engineer class was to get the last skill. At the moment he had actually gotten some handy class-specific skills, some were better than others, the region skill, for instance, was quite handy and did point him toward one specific battle path. If he could control multiple machines from a range, he might as well create some minions to aid him in battle.

‘Even the salvage skill isn’t that bad, it even works on rusted and mangled items, just need to level it up to not lose so many materials. If I could get down to the lower levels it would be faster but...’

At this point in time, Roland had a more complete map of the dungeon. There weren’t that many levels to discover when going up. Just like he had theorized there was no connection to the outside world. There were only four floors leading up from the one he started from and the top one was a lot smaller than the rest.

“So this confirms it then?”

“Yes, the dungeon is probably expanding upwards and perhaps with some time will create a pathway but how long that will take is anyone's guess.”

“This is good...”

Roland nodded as he found himself back in Arthur’s office. They were discussing the situation in the dungeon and he was delivering the maps he created to confirm the adventurer’s claim. Thanks to them placing his sensors all over the place he was now able to monitor everything that was happening in there, as long as he was in range. This he hoped to alleviate with time and more sensors.

“That is true, it’s deep underground and is competing with the Albrook dungeon for space but this also means that there is a new possibility to this dungeon equation.”

“Another possibility than it being connected to the super dungeon?”

“Yes.”

Both Roland and Arthur had gone through literature concerning dungeons. Usually, a new baby dungeon just like the Albrook one would connect to the outside before being discovered. It came equipped with pre-built floors and everything but sometimes they could also expand further.

In this case, it seemed that this dungeon was expanding upwards. More floors were being built and if it continued to go up it could have a similar structure to the Albrook one. What they could have



encountered was an incomplete dungeon that was still in the process of growing. The harder monsters were closer to its core and end while the weaker ones would spread to the upper floors.

“In both cases, this isn’t bad news, at least it will take some time until it can expand upwards or it might never actually do it, we need to focus on exploring the lower floors but regretfully our friends need to return.”

“Yes, their weapons weren’t looking that great after two weeks, those monsters at the lower floors aren’t a joke.”

After the party of five reached a dead end on the upper floors they quickly began going down. The monster levels started to increase and more of them began to appear. They could only partially explore the floor below the initial one as the monsters there were close to level hundred seventy. Further down the enemies started traveling in small groups and could probably reach close to level one hundred eighty.

“Yes but, with those levels, we won’t have trouble in attracting aspiring young veterans of the trade!”

“I guess if you look at it that way...”

“That will be all unless you wish to discuss something else?”

“No, I already handed Mary the package, I’m sure your people can handle it.”

“There shouldn’t be a problem with the first ten floors, it might take some more time on the lower one. But be sure to have enough ‘products’ to carry out your little scheme by then. If it works it could earn us quite the sum.”

“Don’t worry, it won’t be a problem.”

“I’ll hold you to your word but don’t forget, I need to make the announcement soon, the city is practically broke even with those skeletal bones.”

Arthur gave out a sigh while glancing at some booklets that probably contained the city finances. Roland wasn’t an expert at managing a city but there were probably various costs involved. A developing city needed a lot of funds and it wouldn’t be strange if Arthur had borrowed some money from outside sources. Getting those things sorted out in time would be paramount.

‘Or he spent it all on bribing merchants to get them all on board.’

While new merchants would probably be arriving after hearing the news, it wouldn’t be that easy for them to establish themselves in this city. Many other smaller companies had already cemented their place here and had figured out their trading routes. Before any more could get here to make business, the ones residing here would be ahead.

“Have a good day, Master Wayland.”

“Mhm.”

After leaving Arthur’s office he was sent off by Mary. He noticed some bags under the young woman’s eyes as well as under her bosses. Both of them were working tirelessly through these weeks. He wasn’t

doing better either as he spent over two weeks down in the dungeon with tiny amounts of sleep just killing monsters.

'Will I be able to do it at this pace?'

Time was running out and his leveling drive was stagnating. This had all to do with the twenty-five levels that he needed to go over. The monsters he was fighting were between levels hundred fifty and hundred sixty. With the ever-increasing demand for more experience points monsters that were more than ten levels below weren't cutting it.

There wasn't an option to change it up though. Building golems of the tier 2 variety wasn't that great for leveling either luckily this also gave him another option. At this point in time, there was no way around it, he needed to suck it up and forgo his basic human needs. If he wanted to achieve his goal before this place was jam-packed with scary platinum adventurers and their unsavory thieves guild counterparts, he needed to turn it up a notch.

'I guess going with no sleep for a few days won't kill me...'

With that thought in mind, he made a detour to the Church of Solaria. They were in possession of various divine elixirs that could aid him in his current endeavor. His body was strong and he was young so in theory, it would be possible to push himself without retaining any bad side effects in the future. Probably the only thing that would suffer in this case, was his social life as he wouldn't be able to visit nor talk to Elodia much during this period.

'I'll just have to explain it to her, I guess it's better to come clean, she will worry either way.'

He had already decided to be more truthful to his partner and not like he was doing anything nefarious, just putting his body at some health risks that he could downplay a little bit to make her worry less. Later on, the decision he made came out to be the right one, as many stamina-boosting delicacies were offered to him to keep him going.

Thus his leveling drive was started. Sleeping was now only an option that was taken when it was necessary. With people still searching for the runic passages he had some time to lure the tier 3 skeletons towards the exit and kill them just like before. More golems were used to lure in the monsters faster and more efficiently.

When the time came to wait for the monsters to respawn, he continued to grind for experience. Inscribing runes on metal pieces only to quickly destroy them and do the process again gave him some side resources for leveling. He engrossed himself in his work, when he was not down in the dungeon he continued with the golem restoration project. With his current stats and resources, it wasn't hard to reproduce them back even doing this chaotic period.

The time of the announcement finally came and the dwarves were finally able to uncover the secret of the hidden chambers. With the knowledge of a potential B-rank dungeon and the hidden passages that were present, people were in a rush to find out if it was true. Rumors started spreading and people started sending out scouting parties to confirm the information which gave Roland the bit of time that he needed.

Luckily for him, people were quite skeptical in this world. Even when the city lord made the announcement about the discovery most people didn't believe it. His brothers would think of it as some kind of trick and would be wary of it. Everyone needed to confirm this claim through their own means before investing. However, some that decided to risk it, would be the ones that were able to profit the most as first adapters always had a leg up.

When going back and forth from the dungeon he could see the increase in people. The discovery of the first hidden chambers didn't take that long after the dwarves activated some of their specialists. Although they used their pickaxes to make the pathways they were probably working on other ways of getting in there.

This was a sign that he should hurry, the more time passed the better they would become at accessing the hidden pathways. For the time being the guild master had ordered to withhold the information about the passage from anyone below the platinum adventurer level. The excuse was that the monsters were far too deadly for anyone below tier 3 to engage.

'It won't take long now but I'm almost there, just a little more and it's all going to be over...'

His head was on fire but after drinking a potion he bought for far too much, the migraine subsided. It had been a week since he had a good night's rest, his eyes were bloodshot but he still continued to push forward. He could already see the light at the end of the tunnel and he could barely contain himself from smiling as the promised next tier was already around the corner.

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"My Lord."

"What is it?"

"The black ravens have sent a report."

"Bring it over."

"As you wish, My Lord."

A nicely dressed old man walked into a room that was dimly illuminated by the light of a fireplace. His gaze landed on a man sitting by a lone lamp that didn't do a good job of showing the content of the papers he was going through. From his hand, a gray envelope appeared donning a black seal with a depiction of a black bird on it.

The man behind the desk looked at the envelope. Before picking it up he stretched his hand out, a matching ring with an identical bird on it was on his middle finger. The moment this accessory came close to the seal both the ring and it began to flash. Within a matter of seconds, the wax melted away to reveal the contents of this message.

"Hm... is this from the Fauland region?... ah right, it was that bastard's territory, almost forgot about it...is this true, a B rank dungeon?"

"The ravens have confirmed it, so the information must be correct."

“Hm... this complicates things but not like that idiot will be able to profit from it... send one of the hunting dogs to check it out, we can't be too careful at a time like this, after dear brother Ivan's demise the path forward had become clear... I bet my dear brothers will send out their dogs as well.”

“As you wish my lord.”

“But this is still only the bastard that we are talking about, don't overdo it, our resources are limited, send one of the puppies, they should be more than enough to handle it.

“Yes, my Lord.”

“Good now go, report to me after it's done.”

The old man quickly left the room while the envelope was disposed of in the fireplace. On the other side, he was greeted by the sound of clunky metal as the two knights saluted him. Soon the man vanished into the corridor illuminated by various torches to carry out the order he was given by his lord. The mission was simple and didn't seem like a problem but it was still up to him to pick the right people for the job.

“That young captain's group should be a good fit...”

With a name on his mind and the details of the mission already laid out, he continued towards his next destination. More and more soldiers in full plate armor appeared before him which signaled that he was closer to his goal. Finally, after a good ten minutes of walking, he arrived at a door with a shiny new plaque on it. It contained the name of a man and his title which the butler was quick to call out after a knock.

“Knight Commander Emmerson, I would like to have a word with you...”