

Runesmith 301

Chapter 301: Dungeon Grind Ends.

"This wall, it opens up tae, use th' device!"

Click

"Tis opening up... This smell, it mist be th' mines, we did it!"

A wall was slowly sliding open to reveal a large cavern. There was no sun above them as they were deep underground but the place was brightly illuminated by various sources. One was the lava pit in the middle while many other glowing crystals in the walls added the rest. The group of seven dwarven adventurers started rushing through, their eyes almost turning into golden coins as they gacked at everything in there.

"Greetings, Took you long enough to get here."

Suddenly their bright grins started turning sour as they saw that there was already a person inside. It was just one person wearing silvery armor covered in various runic inscriptions that were glowing. At the moment he was walking through a passage and dragging something behind him. This caused everyone to pay attention and go for their weapons as the thing being dragged looked to be a skeletal monster.

"Don't worry it's dead but if I were you, I wouldn't set foot in that dungeon, the monsters inside it aren't a joke, with your levels you'll not be able to last a minute in there."

"Ey, isn't that th' human Runesmith?"

"Ay, that's him..."

"Whit's in that bag, urr ye mining th' resources 'ere? Do ye kno that they belong to th' union?"

"Oh, they do now? Regretfully news doesn't reach all the way down here plus, I think you are lying so... finders keepers?"

Six of the seven dwarves raised their weapons while looking at the armored man that was in the process of putting the skeletal remains into a large backpack. He was alone here and there were seven of them, in their eyes, they could beat him. While he was a high-level runesmith it didn't mean that he was a capable fighter. They were all warriors hired by the union, if they managed to get the human runesmith that their bosses disliked then they would surely be given a reward.

"Oh, are you sure about this? I'm a bit tired so I'm not sure I'll be able to pull my punches if you continue..."

The runes on Wayland's armor started glowing brighter which made these men curious. They knew that he was wearing some type of magical armor but surely it wouldn't pose a problem for them. In a flash, they could surround him and beat him down.

"Whit urr ye idiots daein', pat doon yer weapons if yi'll want to live."

"Wedamir?"

“Do it now 'n' step to th' side, let him thro'.”

“But...”

“Shut yer trap.”

“You’re the dwarf from that time... you’ve made a wise decision.”

The man in armor commented while the brightness of the runes subsided. The dwarves that had been gathered here were quick to notice that their comrade was sweating. It was instantly clear to them that he was afraid of the human runesmith and that perhaps the rumors about him lying about his level weren’t exaggerated. They had also seen him drag away a tier 3 monster from a hidden chamber, everything added up and suddenly they all started to back away.

...

‘I guess that’s it for my monster farm, they took some time to get here. Soon this place will be crowded, might as well finish up away from all this trouble.’

Roland peeked behind his shoulder as he looked at the panicked dwarves. They were all high-level tier 2 class holders. For a moment he thought that he would have more blood on his hands but luckily one of the people here was an acquaintance. Wedamir was the dwarf that he rescued from the Lich and during the escape, he had seen him perform some feats.

Thanks to this he was able to avoid a struggle with the seven individuals that he wasn’t actually sure if he would win that easily. While his level had gone over one hundred seventy, he had spent a lot of time here without sleeping or resting. His mana reserves were low and his armor had thinned out. It was better to not push his luck, even though his opponents were far below his level it wasn’t worth risking his life over nothing.

‘I thought the union didn’t do things like this but perhaps the dwarven adventurers aren’t really part of it, they are just hired swords, maybe they thought they would get a raise if they dealt with the human runesmith?’

While speculating he increased his pace and continued to look at his runic map. He had already seen the dwarves approach this location several hours ago. The dead tier 3 skeletal berserker was left there on standby. He wanted to use it as a deterrent but his little bluff didn’t seem to work, luckily Wedamir was there to pick up the slack.

Roland could already see multiple green dots outside of the secret chamber before they arrived and prepared accordingly. His range extended further away so he also noticed other details that pushed him into not engaging with the dwarven adventurers. Thus he picked up the pace and continued walking through the now emptied-out corridors.

He quickly arrived at the lava lake where the exit was. The dwarves had constructed a magical device to get through which meant that the chamber didn’t become flooded by lava. However, it looked a bit different which made him come to the conclusion that they attempted that approach.

His assumption was that they probably placed some explosives in the area the entrance was. Perhaps they even rushed inside and had run away from the lava that flooded in. Probably in time, this lava would be removed by the dungeon itself and give them some time to examine the magical door.

'I wonder if anyone died here...'

He could not spot any bones or remains of dead dwarves or any other people but it wouldn't be strange that someone had to pay the ultimate price. The union was dead set on getting to the secret mining spot before anyone else. Roland wouldn't be surprised if they tried going in through the chasm in some way.

Perhaps it would be possible to build some kind of platform that worked like an elevator there. It was possible to go straight down and arrive at the other entrance where he caught Armand and his party. Maybe a pulley system could work there but the problem of getting attacked by worms was still there. They wouldn't be able to put enough workers there along with guards to make such a construction possible. However, in the future, if they spend enough time and money, it could become a reality.

'I don't think I can sneak past them anymore...'

"Hey, I see movement, are they coming out? No... there was no one wearing armor like that with them..."

"Who is it? Could it be a monster?"

After the lake started parting Roland decided to pop his head out. This time around there were a lot of people gathered here. He could even see flame-resistant tents set up close to the lake on both sides. The seven dwarves that went in were just the first but more adventurers were waiting here. They weren't only of the dwarven variety either.

'So did they send the dwarven unit that is on the union's side first while these guys keep anyone from going in?'

Both sides of the lake had people guarding it. They were probably keeping all the other adventurers away from snooping on their expedition. Nothing out of the ordinary but now he was placed in another situation. What if they thought that he had killed their comrades and started attacking?

"Hey, that's no monster, that's just Wayland."

"The Runesmith? Now that you mention it... I can see some runes on that armor."

Luck was on his side today as his favorite martial artist was in the small crowd of people. He was on the side of the lake that he was going towards and continued to wave at him as he was getting out of the hidden chamber. Now that he got a better look at the people there, they were all various adventurers that he had seen before. Some of them were even using weapons from his store.

"But what happened to the dwarves? We were supposed to wait for them?"

Asked one of the adventurers in the group as Roland arrived at the shore.

"Why don't we just ask Wayland here? Use your brain for once."

Armand laughed at another adventurer that Roland wasn't that familiar with. The man looked to be in his early thirties and was around level hundred. All of the people here were around the same number and were gold-rank adventurers. They weren't a tight-knit group though so escaping them wouldn't be a problem if he had to.

"Those seven are fine, they arrived at the mine."

"Wait seven? I'm sure there were eight of them."

"One of them died in the boss chamber."

Roland had seen eight dots approach the room with the dinosaur boss but only seven left it. The monster was still over level hundred twenty and powerful, even eight people had some trouble with it. The lack of information was also part of the untimely demise and during the escape, the boss room had been already cleared out so Wedamir had no information on it either.

"Hey, are we going to believe him? What if he killed all of them?"

"So?"

"Huh?"

As one of the adventurers commented about the possibility of murder, a familiar woman's voice emerged from behind a large rock. Soon a silhouette of an elven adventurer he knew appeared.

"What if he killed them? Do you want us to go against someone that could kill those eight and walk out without any injuries?"

It was the second person from the duo, Lobelia. It seemed that she and Armand were here to pick up some easy change. This was just the job they loved to take, flexing their muscles and scaring off other adventurers was easier than battling monsters. The other people that were here were similar and started backing away at the thought of having to fight someone that strong.

There were around ten of them here but there was also a possibility of sides being switched. Lobelia and Armand were known to have ties with the city runesmith and would surely take his side if something transpired. Even now the two were slowly placing themselves behind Roland as if they were trying to protect his flanks.

"Is that so..."

"It is what it is."

"Then you leave me no choice..."

The other adventurers started preparing for the worst as they were listening to the conversation. Some already had their weapons raised and were probably thinking if it was wise to attack or flee instead. Before anything could happen, however, the man Lobelia was conversing with stepped to the side while laughing.

"Haha, put them down, who in their right mind would go against the city runesmith, do you want to get hanged by those Valerian bastards together with your families?"

“I knew you were a man of wisdom.”

“Screw you.”

Lobelia grinned toward the gold-rank adventurer that looked as if he wasn't sure if he was doing the right thing. To Roland this was a nice way of resolving the situation, having a reputation wasn't bad and with Arthur backing him up, unless it was a noble no one could really seek trouble with him or anyone related to his camp.

“So one of those idiots died? Was it that one with the earring in his nostril perhaps?”

“I don't know, didn't really check.”

“A shame.”

Armand burst out laughing while going back to his post. He gave Roland a smack to his shoulder which was followed up by another smack from Lobelia. The girl aimed it a lot lower and got his shiny behind. While he wanted to deck both of them for it he decided to just move along, the faster he got out of this dungeon the faster he could get to the more important issue.

After nodding at the two he left the lava lake and continued on his journey back up. The dungeon had gone through a change as it was close to a month since the Lich incident had ended. He spent the entirety of it trying to frantically level up and still came up a bit short. This didn't mean that needed to return down here again, his plan was to only do this after achieving his tier 3 class change. Time had run out for him as he didn't think that it was safe to continue with this approach anymore.

When looking around people had come back in full swing. There were even more adventurers here now than before and his contacts at the adventurer guild had informed him about a wave that was coming soon. This dungeon was a great chance for early platinum-rank adventurers to shine. They would be appearing here soon and after the run-ins with others he had today, it was better to stay away from this place for a while.

The city would be going through a shift. The power base had been established after the initial settlers and adventurers arrived. Now on the other hand more powerful people would be trying to sink their claws into this location. It wouldn't be strange for a lot of turmoil to transpire within the next few months.

‘I don't think the veterans will make a move, this is still only a B-ranked dungeon for now. They will remain at the S-ranked dungeon as it still will offer better rewards.’

Roland believed that only upstart tier 3 adventurers would make the move here and there shouldn't be that many at first. This place was still a backwater city that lacked any facilities that platinum-rank adventurers liked. The stores needed to be updated with better weapons and materials for them to use. As it stood the city wasn't equipped to support a higher-level dungeon.

Just like the party that was mapping out the new dungeon, they would be forced to travel to another location to repair their gear. What was important for him was to quickly reach tier 3 and prepare his own shop for the influx in the future. Things like this did take time but sooner or later the union would move some of their assets here and before that happened he needed to expand his repertoire,

'Now that they confirmed the mine and the skeletal monsters they will finally start making their move. Though convincing high-level smiths to change locations won't be that easy so it will give me some time.'

The tunnel that he made to sneak into the dungeon was not discovered but the chamber it led into was. For the time being he wouldn't be able to use it as anyone that entered it would be able to see the path leading to his workshop. Without any magical signs on the walls it had not been discovered and the lack of anything worthwhile inside didn't really make it worthwhile to use the pricey magical items required to enter it. This didn't stop him from filling out the passage with rocks to keep people from discovering the pathway if they decided to dig into the walls even more.

Soon he made his way back to his home which was quite busy. Some people lowered their heads at him as he was a known magical craftsman. In their hands, he spotted some runic items and even bags that had his little copyrighted symbol. Business was booming and he was quickly making back the money that he had lost from his home being destroyed by the Lich.

Bernir and his little assistant had managed to repair the walls as well as the structures inside the compound. All the wind generators had been destroyed and everything had been patched out within the month of the Lich's demise. Life returned to normal but this was no time to rest. Even when Elodia and Bernir were urging him to take sleep he could not stop yet.

"Go to bed."

"I will, soon... did anything arrive for me?"

"I don't believe you... here, one of those green birds left it."

"Thank you."

Elodia grumbled after handing Roland a tiny piece of parchment that was attached to a magical bird's leg. This he did not open until he found himself back in his office. His clothes were changed into something more casual and less metallic. While his eyes were quite bloodshot he decided to infuse his mana into the tiny scroll to unveil his next plan.

The moment the blue energy from his finger connected with the magical paper, it started to grow. From a little scroll, it turned into something that was larger than an encyclopedia tome. When opening up the seal he could see various runic structures.

'Good, he sent them over, if I can debug these faulty runes into something workable I'll be able to level up without fighting those monsters.'

It was the last part of his plan, runic scrolls containing various runic spells. He had practically begged the cat to send them over as with his debugging skill he would be able to fix the faulty designs. Perhaps some of them would repeat themselves but he didn't need that much just enough to give him a level and a half as that was what he was missing until he hit level one hundred seventy-five.

Chapter 302: An Unforeseen Choice.

Congratulations you have leveled up!

Congratulations you have gained a new Skill!

Rapid Machine Reassembly L1

Skill Active

An almost instantaneous reassembly of destroyed, broken, or damaged machinery.

“Finally...”

Roland gave out a sigh of relief while also putting down the pencil in his hand. When looking around his office area he could see parchments and papers everywhere. He had spent the last two weeks scribbling down tier 3 schematics without really knowing what he was doing. Greater runes that were produced by tier 3 runesmiths were still above him, the only thing he was capable of was correcting already existing patterns.

A problem arose after just a few days as he had gone through the entirety of the material that he was given by the professor. To alleviate this problem he started assembling more golems while also trying to construct brand new tier 3 schematics without really working out the language yet. It felt like he was back to ten years ago when he was stuck in a small room discovering tier 1 runes.

Back then he also needed to section off the runic components into larger parts and assemble them together to get something that worked. Luckily he had already worked on such designs before so even the faulty schematics added some ammunition to his research. Finally, his relentlessness paid off and the level-up message appeared before him, he was now level hundred seventy-five.

Name:

Roland Arden L 175

Classes:

T2 Runesmith Lord L50 [Secondary]

T2 Runic Engineer L50 [Primary]

T1 Mage L25 [Tertiary]

T1 Runic Mana Scribe L 25 [X]

T1 Runic Blacksmith L 25 [X]

Strength

227

Agility

183

Dexterity

271

Vitality

239

Endurance

269

Intelligence

320

Willpower

309

Charisma

18

Luck

11

While glancing over the new numbers he recalled getting a new skill. His eyes were already almost ready to close as all adrenalin was draining from his system. At this point in time, he hadn't slept in five days and the backlash from drinking potions was starting to affect his body. His mind was willing but his body wasn't as his vision became blurry and the only thing that he was capable of doing was to drag his tired body to his bed to finally pass out in his clothes.

"Huh? I guess I must have passed out... what time is it?"

When he achieved his level up it was about five in the morning and the sun was still down. Now the moon was high up which was an indication that it was close to midnight. When he put things together, he must have been out for close to twenty hours. When looking at this world's system windows it was always strange for him that it didn't have a clock anywhere. It seemed it wouldn't be hard to have a tab somewhere to show him the month and hour.

This he could only attribute to time being a more arbitrary number as well as the months having different names in different cultures. Even here there was no month of January or December and the year was divided into thirteen months instead of twelve like in his old world. However, this was no time to think about the time he needed to get his act together.

"What's this?"

As he was about to look over the new skill he received he spotted a piece of paper on the side. The handwriting was quite nice and telling of the person who left this small letter behind.

'I left some food behind in the ice box.'

A smile crept onto his face as his stomach started rumbling. Quickly he decided to go to the kitchen while almost tripping over Agni that had decided to sleep beside his bed. After letting him out of the house he was back at the kitchen table and eating a prepared meal. The moment of rest and silence was quite refreshing and also gave him time to finally go over his new skill.

'Rapid Machine Reassembly? It's probably different than the rune-mending skill.'

The description was short but it gave him an idea about what he was working with. It wouldn't be hard to test it out, thus with a piece of bread in his mouth he headed down into his workshop that he was intending to go to anyway. There he picked up a hammer along with a golem that he had assembled during the level rush.

Previously he would not dare to damage pricy equipment like this but now he had gotten the hang of assembling these. His mana reserves and skills allowed him to breeze through the runecrafting process as well. With that in mind the large hammer connected with the metallic body and produced a nasty dent. The blows started raining down on his creation until at least a few legs were broken. Some were hanging off on a piece of metal while others were cleanly broken off at the joints.

"This should do it."

Before him was a destroyed golem that would normally sell for a large number of golden coins. Now it was nothing more than a mangled mess of parts and even the runic traces to its runic brain had been cut off. It was the perfect test for this new skill that would probably come in handy if it did what he thought it was doing.

"Oh... it's taking quite a bit, but this isn't bad."

Roland had a lot of mending skills already but they were all focused on repairing runes that had been overloaded or deteriorated. This skill on the other hand seemed to work on a wider scale as it was able to restore this destroyed golem. What he only needed to do was activate the skill and point at the golem with his hand. A circle appeared around the object in question before it started to be mended.

The process was rather quick, he could see in real time as the dents he just created to be leveled out. The broken joints were assembling themselves back into place and even the legs that were broken were on the move. It slowly slid back into the socket it was pulled out from and by magical means, it seemed as if time was reversed.

'Is it actually rewinding the damage caused to the material or does it work in some other way?'

At first, it did look like time was winding back but when thinking about the spots he first destroyed the sequence wasn't in order. One thing was clear, this skill was quite the mana hog as after a good night's rest he was back to having a hundred percent of his energy. Now it had almost been halved and went below it when finally the drone had been restored.

Rapid Machine Reassembly Leveled up!

"Hm...? That was fast, maybe because it's a complicated piece of equipment?"

Usually, skills took a bit of time to level up but this one went up after the first attempt. There were always some hidden bonuses to leveling and this was probably the case here as well. The Runic Engineer class was still a tier 2 class that started out at level fifty. Though in this case, it was impossible to get this one without previously gaining the runesmith class.

Nevertheless, a person at level fifty would not have enough mana to actually use this skill on something like this spider golem. Perhaps the world's system took this into account and rewarded him with a lot of experience for this fact. This actually informed him that it wouldn't take that long to level up this skill.

Having the skill level up by only this one attempt indicated the difficulty for the future, the only real roadblock would be the staggering mana requirement. This could be alleviated by mana potions but as it stood now he didn't really want to get near those anymore. After his recent leveling drive, he had been drinking more potions than he did water. If he didn't get the recent rest he would probably not have enough energy to activate this skill at its full capacity.

'I can decide if it's worth leveling up this skill after I see the classes'

The most important fact was that his Runic Eye of Truth skill had reached level nine. It was probably the most important skill that he had and perhaps would help him unlock the tier 3 version of his Runesmith Lord class. This was what he was going for, a prestigious version of this class. The stat multiplier it gave him put him in a league above regular people and if he could achieve the same for tier 3 then he would be set for life.

'The regular multiplier is three, perhaps I could get a four-time multiplier this time around...'

This was his main wish but he wouldn't really know if it was possible until he received his new class. The world only gave him hints in the class names or in the tiny sprites on the PC screen he could see. This would be a decision that he couldn't go back on. A tier 3 class went up to one hundred levels and couldn't be changed until a person gained fifty levels in it.

Leveling past this point would become even harder than before and would either require risking his life or spending time working on runic equipment for more than ten hours each day. A blunder here would set him back for years and would severely impact his future prospect. However he still had some time to think things over, there was no rush when it came to money but for some reason, he had a bad premonition.

Things were progressing fast and with the arrival of various other players in the city his standing was shaky. While Arthur Valerian's name offered him a semblance of protection it wouldn't protect him from his siblings. Now that the word of the B rank dungeon was out, they would certainly start making moves. He was one of his people and would be an easy target to send a message.

'That one brother is the closest so he might try something first...'

Roland had done his homework on the other brothers before and was sure that they would at least try to make Arthur part of their retainers. He didn't actually care which brother became the next Duke nor was he interested in gaining more prestige or money. If there was a peaceful resolution to their fight then he would urge Arthur to take it. He could only hope that the young man would know his place and made a deal instead of trying to fight.

'Well... I'll worry about that when the time arrives, I can only get this out of the way and prepare as much as I can.'

Before anything happened spies and scouts would probably be sent to prod for all possibilities. Then some time would be wasted trying to make some kind of deal. Perhaps Arthur already had the plan to

be taken under the wing of one of his brothers and this was just something to make himself worthy of their help.

‘They still are brothers, maybe their relations aren’t all that bad.’

The face of his own ‘older’ brother popped into his head. While their relationship when they were younger was bumpy they had managed to squash it. Now he could even contact his brother from time to time and have him fill him in on his father’s whereabouts. Due to some tensions at the borders, he was usually forced to be stationed there, and this was perhaps part of the reason that he wasn’t found yet. Though at this point Roland was convinced that he was nothing more than an afterthought in his family's mind.

“Hm, it functions but some of the parts weren’t fully restored.”

The spider drone was ordered to perform a few movements. It could move and operate at about eighty percent capacity. The dents that looked to be smoothed out weren’t quite as smooth as previously. There were some cracks here and there which indicated that the skill needed more levels. After performing a few more tests he came to another conclusion, he could not activate this skill on multiple targets at once.

‘This would be a lot more useful if it had a wider range but it did increase after the level up.’

In his mind, he could see this skill being quite handy in a pinch. The scenario he was thinking about involved multiple battle golems. When one went down he could just restore them without even having to be involved in the battle. With this skill involved, he could see a change to his battle repertoire that could change him into a one-man army. That is if he could ever get the mana usage down. As it stood now, he would pass out after restoring two tier 2 spider drones.

“I guess this is it.”

Finally, after the testing of the new skill was done he decided to give the ascension ritual a go. The previous ones he had stored for this occasion had been destroyed during the Lich incident so he had to go get some new ones from the church. Luckily they had a few lying around that he could procure but he also needed to pay a little extra.

With the crystal in his hand, he decided to sit down near his workbench. There was no need to go up into his office or check up on Agni. Even when he spent months in the previous trial only a few seconds passed in the real world. Thus finally after all these years, the journey he set on was coming to an end. He had left on a mission to join the upper echelons of power and with this step, he would finally have his foot past the door.

There he was again, in his old apartment. At the time he was looking in the mirror that was in his old toilet. Even some of the dust was there that he was either too tired or too lazy to clean up in his previous life. After looking at his face he was having a hard time remembering the one that he used to wear. While his intelligence rating should have given him impeccable memory, for some reason he was slowly forgetting his previous life and the people he left behind.

“It would be funny if this is all some kind of dream and I’ll just eventually wake up from a coma after being hit by that truck... but anyway...”

He slapped his face with both his hands and the pain was very real. This strange place lowered his stats as he felt more like a regular human here than a superhuman runesmith in the real world. Soon enough he was sitting at the screen and going over the sprites and possible classes. To no surprise of his, there were actually more options than the last time he came here. Twenty-five levels ago when he hit level hundred fifty he glanced over all the options and now there was a lot more to go through.

“Let’s see... Master Runic Engineer, that one is new... and what is this one, Runic Machinist?”

A strange class appeared on his screen which was closely related to the Master Runic Engineer. While the Engineer one was easy to decipher, this one was a bit more unique. He noticed that the 2D sprite was holding something that looked like a handgun in one hand while a wrench in the other. Perhaps blasting all those tier 3 monsters with ranged weaponry was some kind of way of unlocking this class as he had never heard of it before.

“Interesting...”

Judging by the name he expected it to be something that helped construct machineries like golems or flying ships. On the other hand, the gun on the sprite indicated that it would get some perks with ranged weaponry. Perhaps it would give his cannons, even the one he mounted on his armor’s shoulder, more perks. It could increase their damage and perhaps even allow him to auto-aim with them through the use of skills. There existed ones that archers used that allowed their projectiles to always hit a target.

“Where is the runesmith tree, it should be somewhere there.”

While the class was intriguing it wasn’t really something that he was interested in at the moment. Maybe it would be a good secondary choice in the future if he decided to focus on the power of cannon fire. Next in line were the runesmith variants, Advanced Runesmith, followed by Master Runesmith, and then something that he was looking for.

“Master Runesmith High-Lord huh?”

There it was, an advanced version of the Runesmith Lord class, a High-Lord variant. It was probably what he was looking for and almost had him clicking the sprite instantly. However, he managed to stop himself as there was something else there. A class on the same side of the tree but one that was slightly ahead of the High-Lord one.

“Huh, what is this one... Runesmith Overlord?”