

Runesmith 31

[Chapter 31.2 Fighting monsters in a mine part 2.](#)

“How does it look?”

“Nae guid, laddie.”

(Not good, boy)

Dalrak answered Roland while hitting the collapsed passageway with a pickaxe that he grabbed from the ground. He was a dwarf so he knew a bit about living underground and in caves.

“It’s gonnae tak’ us at leest a day tae clear thes it ur moor.”

(It’s going to take us at least a day to clear this, or more)

The tunnel that they came from was in shambles. Dalrak also mentioned that he was unsure how deep it had collapsed in there, they could very well have to spend days digging themselves out. This wasn’t the biggest issue though as the real problem were the ant monsters that could come from any of the other tunnels that connected to this larger cavern.

The area they were staying in had about fifty meters in diameter and three meters in height. There were four tunnels connecting to it and they branched out into more. Some were dead ends and some led to places like this one. They had two options, either digging themselves out in hopes that the passage that they previously took didn’t collapse in any other section. The other one was going through the tunnels that connected to another exit.

“I don’t like this, they never mentioned that this place suffered from earthquakes.”

Roland voiced his opinion while the rest of the party gathered. Everyone was on high alert the elf was standing closer to one of the corridors and was listening for any approaching monsters.

“You think it was something else?”

Orson asked while kicking a rock that tumbled down the rocky cavern. It produced a small echo that traveled through the large open space.

“Not sure, could have been one of the other teams fighting the ant monsters under or above that corridor.”

He gave his opinion. Maybe the other teams were fighting strong foes and used some explosive magic to get away. Things like spell scrolls were common enough and the party with tier 2 adventurers could have had some tier 3 ones with them.

“Aren’t ants good at digging? Maybe they just dug under that tunnel?”

The half-gnome girl chimed in, this was also a possibility. That didn’t explain the loud sound before the tunnel collapsed though.

“Either way, we need to get out of this shit hole.”

Orson proclaimed while removing some blood from his large sword. He was finally able to swing it around in this larger cave.

“No use staying here, as the mage said, we just need to follow the map to the exit.”

“Hey! His name isn’t mage, it’s Roland!”

Helci shouted out at Orson who flinched a bit, but he quickly recovered while looking maddened. Roland was surprised by the girl’s short outburst but he just nodded at her as a thank you. The half gnome was bashful about the gesture as she turned her head to the side while blushing slightly.

“Whatever...”

“The ants aren’t posing a problem yet, we could try moving forward. There is also the possibility of them swarming us from all those tunnels if we wait here.”

Said Roland while the party continued to discuss the situation. Finally, they all agreed that waiting here and digging would probably not be the best option. The ants could endlessly continue swarming them from all directions if they stayed too long in one spot. They could also dig more tunnels and come from below or from above.

Roland placed the map on the ground and looked at it along with Selanar and Helci. The girl was eager to learn some map reading and she was also interested in the conversation the two were having.

“We are here, the collapsed tunnel that we came from is here.”

He had something akin to red crayon with him as well as a pencil to scribble on the map.

“The closest exit should be here...”

He marked their destination on the map, by the length of the tunnels he could tell that it would probably take some time to get there.

“We could probably take a break here at this junction that connects to more tunnels, it’s about the same size as this cavern...”

The two warriors from the group didn’t care much about what Roland and the two trackers were discussing. They stood to the side while keeping watch over them, Selanar nodded while looking at the path they were going to take. Helci just scratched her head a bit as she wasn’t really knowledgeable with reading maps or measuring the distance. This would be something she wanted to look up when she got back to the city. After witnessing these two she was slowly realizing what a good scout should be able to do.

There wasn’t much to pack up beside the ant antenna and the larger mana stones that the evolved version of the worker ants had. A monster that had gone through at least one evolution in their life would always possess a monster core. The more evolutions the larger and denser they got. The size wasn’t always an indicator of quality as the mana stones could be rated similar to the runes, from lesser all the way to legendary.

The mana orbs of light floated forward right above Dalrak's head as he entered the new corridor. The whole party ventured forward but now they had to account for attacks from the back. This made Orson move to the backline to protect his squishy party members.

They journeyed forward, slowly into the unknown. They didn't know if the other parties were okay but the basic worker ants didn't pose much of a threat to any of them. The problems started when the acid-spitting ones came into play.

It took about another half an hour for them to encounter another group. This one was also mixed, having the advanced variants sprinkled into the mix. Dalrak received a couple of acid shots with his shield while Roland cast a defensive barrier around the party with an actual incantation this time.

He had given up on grinding his skill at this point. He needed to save the one time use scrolls for later. It was unknown how many of the ants there would be and even having one more scroll could turn the tide towards their favor.

The biggest downside in this strategy was that his party members had to contribute a lot more now. He had blasted through the ants with runic spell scrolls but now he was conserving them by casting regular incantation based spells that needed time to prepare.

"Dalrak, duck to the side!"

"Aye laddie!"

"Mana Blast!"

A large concentrated orb of mana traveled past the dwarf and connected with two acid spitting ants. There was a small explosion that caused the two monsters to lose parts of their thorax. This left them incapacitated but not dead, this was enough for the party's tank to plunge his halberd onto their heads.

Mana Blast was the most powerful spell a newbie tier 1 mage could muster up. It would be later replaced by the commonly used fire blast spell that packed quite a bit more punch while causing a massive explosion. If he was able to use that, he could probably have been able to kill those two in one shot.

After clearing out about ten of those ant-like monsters they heard Orson's shouts from behind them.

"There are some fuckers behind us!"

Everyone besides Dalrak turned around, the dwarf was still keeping the front protected. He couldn't let the party be overrun from both sides. Luckily it was only a couple of the normal ones so even Orson was able to take them out with the help of his sidearm. He had placed his two-handed sword onto his back for the time being as it wasn't optimal for fighting in these tight corridors.

"Fuck, I'm never taking another mission in a blasted mine or caves!"

"You know that most adventurer jobs are in dungeons, right?"

Helci quickly replied while sighing.

"Shut up!"

While Orson was complaining and spitting on the ant corpses the Sun elf from the party did something peculiar. He pulled out a bottle of some sort and started pouring its contents onto the dead ants that were behind them. The party looked with interest but their silent party member didn't look like he felt to explain his actions. The most interested person was Helci that in turn looked to Roland wondering if he knew something.

Before Roland answered a peculiar smell invaded his nostrils, it was the smell of peppermint. It was severally times more intense than regular peppermint which caused him to back away. He remembered something from his old life, which prompted him to voice himself out.

"Think he is trying to cut off the monster ants chemical trail. If it works the ants that come here won't be able to follow after us."

Roland looked to Selanar who nodded, he probably didn't have much of that oil and used it only now after ants were appearing from behind.

They continued while stopping with the dissecting of the monster corpses, they did nab the mana stones that Roland was able to pick out though. This saved them some time while also allowing them to get something for their troubles. The elf continued to spill the strong-smelling oil here and there in the hopes of masking their smell from the monsters. It seemed to be working as no more ants appeared from the rear.

They managed to get to a junction with more tunnels going in various directions. It looked to be clear on the inside so they ventured forward while keeping vigilant of their surroundings. The time they had spent in this mine was reaching five hours.

"Do you think they will send a rescue party?"

Helci asked while looking at the magically lit cavern and the scattered minecarts.

"Probably not, unless one of you is some kind of noble or rich merchant's son that is."

Roland commented while the guys laughed. To the half-gnome girl, this was new, she thought adventurers were a tight-knit group of excitement seekers. In reality, they were more or less mercenaries that wouldn't move unless a lot of money was on the line. Unless someone made a request to save them, no one would be coming.

"If we hurry we can reach the next exit in two or three hours."

Helci was a bit saddened by the realization that no one gave a mole-rat's ass about them. She could only steel her resolve and move forward at least the guys that she was together with felt more genuine than her last party.

Roland looked around, he could see that his team was getting tired. The tunnels were stuffy and they had been wandering through them while fighting monsters. Still, it would be better to continue towards the exit as soon as possible, resting in this cavern could be a death sentence if more ants appeared.

"We need to follow that corridor."

Roland pointed at the next one that they needed to use, they continued forward while Selanar used up his oil behind them. If the adventurers knew beforehand what they were going against ant monsters, they could have brought more of that oil that the elf was using now.

They arrived at another larger cavern, this time around they were greeted to a gruesome scene.

“What is this?”

“Hey, isn’t that one of ours?”

Orson called out while looking around. Here they saw many large ant monster bodies dead on the ground. There were a lot more than what they encountered and besides them, there were also other bodies, the dead remains of two adventurers.

They quickly assessed the situation, the other team must have gotten into a big scuffle and suffered casualties. All teams had at least five people with them, so the rest must have escaped.

“Shit...”

Roland looked at the map and then at where the corridor that led to the other exit was. It had collapsed and was blocked off, it was probably safe to assume that the other adventurers set off some kind of explosion while running away. Roland was beginning to think that he made a mistake in coming here, his skills were leveling up already but things were also looking grim.

The only thing good in this situation was the sheer amount of mana stones remaining in those insect corpses. There were even some of the larger looking acid ants sprinkled into the mix. Maybe digging back that tunnel when they had the chance would have been the better option.

“What are you doing?”

Roland asked as he spotted Orson going through the dead adventurer’s belongings. He even saw him nab his storage bag and attach it to his belt.

“What? Not like a dead man needs this.”

The dead person looked like some kind of archer or scout by the light armor he was wearing. The other was a warrior, his long sword was to the side embedded in an ant’s body.

‘Strange that those ants didn’t drag those bodies away, they must have killed them all before escaping back and setting off the detonation...which would mean...Shit...’

Just as he expected something showed up. The sound this creature was making was different from the other ants. Soon it appeared out of one of the corridors, its large head barely fit through it.

This ant was larger than a horse. Its head was something that stood out the most as it was quite gigantic. The mandibles were really big and they looked like they could split an adult human in half in one bite.

Roland could somehow use his identification skill to see the monster’s name and HP counter. The moment he saw the numbers he frowned even more. There was a threshold monsters reached just like the other races.

A monster would evolve just like a person. The first evolution was past the 25th level and then the second past the 50th which was similar to going through your first tier 1 class. This monster was something that was on the level of a tier 2, its lower HP count indicated that it had suffered some damage before but it looked that it regenerated most of it now.

“Watch out!”

Everyone took up a fighting position, two fighters in the front with the range attackers in the back. The elf was the first one to give of a shot and his arrow traveled through the dimly lit cavern hitting the monster on the head. To everyone’s shock, the arrow just bounced away without leaving more than a scratch on the monster’s hard exoskeleton.

After the hit, the monster was alert to their position and it gave out a high pitched scream before charging forward. It was surprisingly fast for its size and Dalrak would probably have a tough time blocking its approach. The robust dwarf wasn’t willing to dodge though, he lowered his center of gravity and grabbed his shield with both hands. He put himself between his party and the monster like a proper defender.

“Come tae daddy ye hackit bugger.”

(Come to daddy you ugly bugger)

The monster’s large head slammed into Dalrak’s heater shield. The shield buckled under the pressure and the muscular dwarf was pushed back, his feet made a streak in the rocky ground below. The monster started biting with those large mandibles, the thick shield was unable to stop the massive pressure as it started giving out.

Orson didn’t wait for his party member to just die there, no he mustered up all of his strength and brought his large two-handed sword down on the monster. It was a clean hit to one of its legs which flew right off. He was sure to aim for the weak spot in the joints and his aim was true. He tried swinging further aiming at the more armored parts. The second swing was blocked by the exoskeleton that only showed a slight scratch.

The monster abandoned the shield, Dalrak used this chance to back off. His hands and legs were shaking as he was barely able to take this evolved monster’s charge head-on.

The ant turned its head towards the other warrior, maddened after losing one of its legs. It was still able to keep its balance thanks to the remaining five. Its mandibles opened up again as it tried to bisect the attacker. Orson was too slow to react; he thought that he could at least topple the monster after taking out its leg. Luckily a red bolt of fire magic landed on the ant monster’s head before it could go in for the kill.

The monster screamed in agony after receiving Roland’s Fire Bolt spell to the face. This was a common grade spell which was in the tier 2 ranking of spells. The monster’s antenna along with its eyes started to melt. This was enough to cripple the monster’s senses and making it more or less blind.

It didn’t stop there, Roland used another fire arrow spell and aimed for the head yet again, this finally made the monster drop down. Dalrak went back into action and used this chance to swing his halberd down on the twitching monster. Orson followed right after as he brought his two-handed sword down in

a similar fashion. The two continued and Helci along with the elf also joined in. All of them finally stopped after the monster's legs finally stopped twitching.

Everyone was sweating and panting after defeating the tier 2 monster. They looked to their mage that surprisingly could use an advanced spell type.

"I brought some spell scrolls..."

He explained himself while the others nodded, their conversation ended prematurely when they heard the ominous sound of insect feet coming their way.

"Ah hawp ye brought mair o' they, we ur aff tae need thaim..."

(I hope you brought more of those, we are going to need them...)

A drop of sweat ran down Roland's forehead. He did indeed bring more of those scrolls with him, but if he had enough of them to last through this entire mine expedition wasn't something he was willing to bet his life on. For now, he gathered more mana into his hand while reciting an incantation. A blue sphere of mana formed in front of his right hand while in his left he was holding his binder like magic book, this fight was only beginning.

[Chapter 32.3 Fighting monsters in a mine part 3.](#)

The party was in a large open cavern. After defeating the Myrmeke Soldier they got quickly swarmed by multiple monster ants. There were all the three variations of the Myrmeke monster ant that they already came across. The most dangerous were the soldiers that appeared, luckily the party had someone with enough firepower to keep them busy.

Multiple large balls of water splashed onto the approaching ant monsters. Following them were similar spheres, they radiated a slightly different kind of elemental energy. A ball of frost flew towards one of those large Myrmeke Soldier's. The ant reacted by dodging to the side but part of its large abdomen got hit. Instantly the ant's body started freezing, the frost traveled upwards and caused the large monster to stop in its tracks.

These monsters were insects and were also cold-blooded. They couldn't regulate their internal heat and relied on the environment. Some species developed specialized organs to combat this but this monster ant certainly didn't. The moment its temperature dropped below a certain point it would start acting sluggish and finally, it would start to hibernate.

Roland's party members watched as their mage used some kind of flimsy booklet. Each time a frost and water-related spell flew a page would disintegrate into nothingness. After the initial frost appeared Roland activated a wind elemental spell scroll which caused the area in front of him to become even colder. He had successfully simulated a sort of blizzard spell which was causing the monsters to become sluggish.

"Now, while they can't move, attack!"

They noticed that the active ants had become quite slow after the area was covered in frost and ice. They were also feeling cold but the adrenaline and their clothes kept them awake enough for them to continue with the fight.

Orson and Dalrak engaged the monster in close quarters melee. They found it surprisingly easy to finish off the lethargic ants, even Helci moved in with her dagger. Her weapon was continuously stabbed into one of the monster ant's head causing it to promptly bleed out and die.

Roland concentrated on the most powerful monsters from the group which were the two Soldier variants. The other spell that he used in combination with the ice ball spell was the whirlwind spell. It kicked up a storm and together with the already chilly air caused the monsters to halt in their tracks.

For the finishing touches, he used gale arrows as well as rock arrows and focused them on the Myrmeke Soldier's joints. Their exoskeleton was quite hard to crack even in their weakened state. When the monsters were damaged enough, the two warriors from the party could finish them off with their physical attacks.

The battle continued and Roland started going through his spell scrolls, his Rune Mastery skill started leveling up at a rapid pace. The monsters they were fighting were also tier 2 which caused everyone to level up quickly, Helci had already gained five whole levels since coming to this mine and this battle was still ongoing.

The battle didn't end quickly. The ant monsters kept coming and coming. It was as if there wasn't anyone besides this party left for the Myrmeke to hunt. All of their focus was pulled here but when they entered the freezing cavern only death awaited them on the inside.

While the party was continuing with their death bout, something else was happening outside the mine they were trapped in. Two people were seen arguing with one a lot angrier than the other.

"You gave us a false report, admit it!"

A man with a beard was holding a chubby man by the neck with one hand while shaking him about.

"Nonsense, how could I have known that it was a Myrmeke infestation?"

The man being held up was the supervisor of this mine. The person holding him up was Wells, the man responsible for this expedition. His party was lucky enough to not have any tunnels collapse on them. They had ventured inside just like Roland did, after a couple of fights with the ant monsters they also came across a soldier variant which they dispatched. After that point they had retreated, the probability of them dying multiplied and they weren't willing to test their luck.

"We need to report this to the guild, this isn't a mission suited for steel grade adventurers!"

He looked to the teams that had made it out. Three from the four teams had returned but one of them was missing two members while the fourth didn't come back at all. This was Roland's party that was still the only one remaining trapped inside.

"We need reinforcements from silver and gold ranks, maybe even a platinum. We have no idea if a Queen is with them, those are tier 3 monsters. We have no chance against that and they become agitated if too many of her hatchlings die."

Wells' finally moved his hand away from the man's thick throat. The old man landed on his posterior before getting pulled away by some of his own bodyguards. Those couldn't really do anything as the person in front of them was a gold rank adventurer.

“Wells, those low ranks haven’t come back and it’s already been several hours, we have to presume that they are dead.”

The party leader looked to the woman that came over, this was a silver ranked adventurer that was his teammate. He gave a nod, the tunnels needed to be collapsed further as they couldn’t let the ant monster infestation spread outside.

“Fine, do it. We will wait for reinforcements before finishing this mission, the guild shouldn’t fine us anything for this.”

The woman nodded and went away, after a while an explosion was heard. Wells just looked with a frown on his face as this was supposed to have been an easy mission. With maybe a few deaths from the more inexperienced adventurers.

The explosions that just occurred were deliberate. The miners placed explosives further inside the mine shafts and blew them up. Everyone knew that the ants were able to burrow through hard rocks but they still needed time to do it. After the reinforcements arrived they could clear out the rubble and try again, this time with reinforcements.

While this was happening the team of five that was presumed dead was sitting down and resting. They had vanquished a large surge of monster ants, now tired and depleted they were resting and eating. The area around them was covered in frost but thanks to some coal and magic they had managed to make a fire. Morale was low but everyone was still alive, to the side, multiple dead cadavers of large ants were scattered everywhere.

‘I’ve gone through more than half of my scrolls. Most of the spells I have left are the fire ones..’

Roland thought while biting into some bread and jerky that he had pulled out from his storage bag. Everyone besides Helci that lacked a spatial bag had brought over some provisions with them. The half-gnome didn’t go hungry, food and water were shared with everyone.

“W-will they leave us in here to die?”

The girl asked while slightly shivering. She was covered with scratches and dead ant blood, like everyone here she was tired and stressed. The others looked at her with a solemn expression on their faces.

“Aye lassie, very likely.”

The girl just like the rest of the party had trouble understanding this dwarf but they got the gist of it. They were on their own here. Roland already looked at the map and knew where the closest exit was but his thoughts were interrupted by another tremor. This one was a bit larger than the rest as the whole cavern shook for a moment.

“That came from...”

Roland looked at the map again, those sounds were coming from the direction of where the exit should be. Before he could voice his concerns the sun elf spoke up.

“Cave in the tunnels, standard procedure, seal of the nest, wait for specialized adventurers.”

“Shitty fuckers, they couldn’t have!”

Orson added while scrunching his forehead and kicking a dead ant body.

“We can’t know for sure before we check the exit first...”

Roland said while scratching the back of his neck, his eyes glued to the map as he looked for other exits. He quickly marked spots that couldn’t be reached anymore. He also placed an X mark on the tunnels from where most of the ants were coming out this gave him the idea where the original breach should be.

“I think the ant’s nest should be around this spot.”

He made sure to draw a big red circle around it. It would be better to avoid these parts of the cavern. The soldier ants could only be brought down by his spells scrolls but if anything stronger showed up they would be in deep trouble.

“Hope all these explosions won’t flood the tunnels.”

Helci murmured to herself while trying to eat. This halted Roland’s thinking process as he recalled that this mine was close to a large river. He recalled that the mining company sealed off the original entrance to the grotto that this mine was named after.

“Helci, you are a genius!”

“I am?”

The girl was surprised at Roland’s outburst. Everyone was being quiet while they rested and recovered their stamina.

“Yes, listen up.”

The other three male members moved their heads towards the young mage. They had already accepted that he wasn’t your regular magic caster. If he wasn’t here they would have probably been killed by that giant soldier ant. They had even managed to get rid of multiple ones thanks to all of his spell-slinging capabilities.

“Remember how this mine is close by the river?”

Everyone nodded. Unsure where he was going with it.

“The mine originally had its entrance through the grotto but they sealed it off as it kept flooding the tunnels inside.”

He continued, the elf was the first one to realize what Roland had in mind, the other three were lagging a bit behind.

“How does that help us?”

Orson asked, his strengths laid in fighting and not really in making plans.

“Och richt ah git it noo” (Oh right, I get it now.)

Dalrak slapped his thigh as he finally realized what Roland meant. Helci and Orson strained their brain power but none of them could figure it out by themselves. They looked at Roland to enlighten them.

“We just need to go to where the old tunnels were and blow them up. Those tunnels were just sealed off to keep the water out so the walls shouldn’t be too thick.”

“Aye, they likely plastered it up a wee bit”

Dalrak agreed with the youth. The old tunnels were probably just patched up, the water didn’t even reach that far so they didn’t even need to fully fill it up. There was also another thing, ant monsters were known to stay clear of the water. The probability of them tunneling there was also lower.

“That’s fine and all, but they are still sealed off, are we going to use these mining tools to get through?”

“The monsters might fin’ us thru the vibrations in the soil.”

Dalrak nodded bringing up that issue. If they started hitting the walls the vibrations and loud noises could alert the monsters to their presence. Even though the tunnels were probably sealed lightly they still would need a lot of time to get through them.

“We won’t need to use them, leave that to me. We will blow the wall up.”

Roland smirked a bit while thinking of a certain scroll that he made. It wasn’t really good as an attacking spell but could be used as a bomb or explosive.

“You sure came prepared...”

Helci looked at the youth feeling somewhat glad that he was here while also being dejected that she was so useless. If she ever got out of this place she would probably take a safer approach to this adventure lifestyle and prepare more beforehand.

“Heh, thought all mages were only good at talking big, this shrimp isn’t half bad.”

Orson nodded while giving Roland a smack on the shoulder that sent the youth stumbling forward. He had been more or less accepted as the temporary team leader. The others didn’t really mind that he was the youngest from them as ability overwrote age.

“I’ve recovered some mana, we should go. If what Selanar said was true, there won’t be a rescue party appearing any time soon.”

The travel time here was about two days from Edelgard. If they blew up the entrance area just now and considered the time of gathering adventurers. No help would be arriving sooner than three days but a more realistic time frame was probably a week.

Everyone here was already tired and Roland’s spell scrolls were reaching depletion. If another large swarm of ant monsters appeared they would be in danger of getting wiped out. Heading towards the water was the best option as it cut off the ants chemical trails that they used to communicate with each other.

They planned out their route and finally departed. Everyone was on edge as they had spent quite a bit of time in these dark corridors. The only light came from Roland’s spell which sometimes flickered on and off.

Everything was silent, they weren't coming across any other ants after having dealt with the large onslaught before. They didn't know if they just annihilated most of them and there wouldn't be any more coming or if they were still getting chased. They increased their pace going faster and faster as they tried to reach the sealed off tunnels as fast as possible.

They finally arrived, the area was another juncture with a wider open space. Abandoned minecarts and mining equipment was left everywhere and even some ant tracks could be seen. Still, there were no monsters to be seen, they had somehow arrived here safely.

"Good, it should be around here..."

Roland looked to the elf and the dwarf. They would probably be better fitted to find the spot where the tunnels were sealed off. The two nodded and it didn't take the duo long to find the unnaturally looking wall. Dalrak gave the rock a hit with his polearm and nodded.

"Aye, tis 'ere"

Orson looked at Helci who also nodded, the two stood on guard while Roland prepared the explosives. The item that he pulled out didn't look anything like explosives though, it was a larger-looking scroll with a lot of runic symbols on them.

"Don't worry, it packs a punch."

Roland moved over to the wall and looked at it, not really sure where to place this scroll. He asked Dalrak for some help. They took a thick nail from the ground and attached the scroll to the wall by hammering it in tightly.

"We should bring some of those mine carts over, when I activate it'll blow within five seconds..."

The others could hide behind something, but he had to activate the scroll and then bolt to safety. The party set up some minecarts closer to the explosion area so that Roland could activate it and then run.

"Okay... here goes nothing..."

"If this works... I'm not going to leave the whorehouse for at least a week..."

Orson mumbled while going behind the mine cart, his words bringing a frown on Helci's face.

"How bout ye give the dwarven girls a try? "

Dalrak laughed while thinking about the outside and the fresh air. Selanar just ignored the others as always and just continued to look at the surroundings with his bow out. His arrows were mostly depleted but he still had a couple of shots left.

Roland placed his hand on the larger scroll and activated it. He pumped some more of his mana into it and then bolted for the minecarts. The spell scroll lit up and the others could see the runic symbols glowing blue. The color then shifted to red before the whole parchment shone in a bright red light. Just as Roland vaulted over a cart it exploded, luckily he got pulled down by his robe by Orson the moment the explosion occurred.

The loud boom could be heard everywhere even by the people outside. The party remained behind their hastily set up barrier and waited for the dust to settle before going out. To their dismay, the wall didn't fully go down and the path was still blocked.

"Is that water?"

Helci commented while Dalrak grabbed one of the pickaxes from the ground and quickly ran up to the blasted wall. He smacked it with the ax a couple of times and moved his head over.

"Ah can cop a breeze, we are almost thro'."

Roland pulled out another one of those scrolls and everyone was excited. Judging by this spell scroll's previous display of power it should be able to blast through this already loose wall. They set it up again and quickly got back into position, the thought of safety on their minds.

They all watched as Roland moved back to the scroll and activated it again. They smiled a bit as they saw the kid hastily run back behind cover while his spell scroll activated. This time around he managed to get behind the carts in time before the explosion occurred. Another loud thump made the whole mine shake.

"Aye, we did it!"

"Good work!"

"Let's get the fuck out of here!"

"Mmh."

Everyone rejoiced as the opening now looked large enough for them to fit through. Some water started pouring in but it was at most up to their waist they should be able to get through this. Before they could get up another tremor made the whole mine quake. They all looked behind them and spotted a strange occurrence.

The ground started rising upwards and a huge ant head emerged from underneath. A monster that was several times bigger than a Myrmeke Soldier started crawling out from the hard rocky ground. It was still an ant but its abdomen was a lot longer than what you'd see on a normal ant. The monster-filled out quite a bit of the cavern and its head even hit the ceiling. It gave out a screeching scream the moment it spotted Roland's party that was still behind the mine carts.

"Fucking hell..."

"Quickly, run!"

They all bolted for the exit, there was no way that they were going to defeat that thing here. Roland brought out his binder with the rest of his spells and started pelting the monster with fire arrows. To no surprise the fire spells didn't even leave a dent, he couldn't even burn off its antennae as he did with the soldier variant before.

"It's a Tier 3 monster..."

He fired off a smoke arrow that caused some confusion before quickly turning around. He headed towards the created exit, the huge monster close in pursuit. He dived in while everyone else was already a bit further, his team members frantically pulled him inside. Everyone started running without looking back, the monster dived right in after them by slamming its giant head inside the tight corridor.

It started gnashing with its huge mandibles at the adventurers while slowly forcing its large body inside. The whole corridor shook while they backed off with haste, the water inside slowed them down while the beast continued with its chase.

“Fuck, it’s coming!”

Roland dove his hand into his spatial bag and pulled out something. It didn’t look like a scroll; it seemed to be a hairless pelt with a lot of runes drawn on it. The monster was moving towards them faster than they were escaping, he decided to use his last lifeline even though he knew the consequences.

“What are you doing?”

Helci shouted while looking back. She saw her mage team member hold a large pelt with one hand while placing his other in the middle. The moment he did the center part started lighting up. She could see mana traveling in six directions from the middle part and traveling in symmetrical directions upwards. It connected with some other runes and then it traveled through even more glistening pathways.

A bright flash of red light was created and a massive amount of fire arrows shot out from the other end of the large piece of monster skin. Roland had scribed multiple fire arrow spells onto a monster pelt that was used as the main resource for scrolls.

The multiple fire arrows combined mid-air and connected with the monster queen’s large opened mouth. The huge ant received a mouth full of fire energy and quickly backed off while giving off an incomprehensible wail of pain.

Roland flew backward into the arms of his dwarven party member. The hand that he used to power his spell was all mangled and charred. All of his fingers were broken and the burn marks reached past his forearm. His vision was hazy and he passed out soon afterward, the shouts of his party members weren’t reaching his ears as everything faded to black.