

Runesmith 311

Chapter 311: Tier 3 Trial Part 7.

“Shields up, don’t let the enemy archers hit you!”

“Protect the battering ram with your life, it has to arrive at the enemy walls.”

“Archers, fire!”

A plethora of somewhat generic-sounding voices echoed through a large battlefield. The source was a varied group of puppet soldiers that were wearing more intricate armor than the regular foot soldiers. The former were bunched up in various formations performing the acts that these captains and commanders were ordering.

‘Hm... it looks like I can watch for now, the golems should be enough...’

Their leader was right in the back and the only person on horseback. His body was clad in full body armor that was covered in runic symbols. Some of them were glowing in a pale blue light which easily illuminated the darkness of the night. This was a stark contrast to the wooden animal he was sitting on, just like all the wooden men around it was not made up of flesh and bones but lumber instead.

From behind him around four mechanical contraptions emerged that took on the form of spiders. They were made out of pure metal and were quite eye-catching in this field of battle. Their legs continued to speed through the grassy plain with their cannons pointed upward. Just like their creator, they possessed a plethora of runic symbols on their metallic bodies. Each time they activated their cannons that were attached to their abdomens they would glow in a similar pale blue hue.

These cannons were constantly firing concentrated orbs of mana toward the rocky ramparts of this fort. The archers that were stationed there were unable to do much about it due to being outranged by the mechanical contraptions. Even when an arrow collided with the metallic body it was bounced back by a thin layer of mana that was protecting the golem’s body. There were only four of those spider contraptions on the battlefield but the magical attacks they were capable of were a real game changer.

‘I should be able to get more deep steel to make more spider drones after I capture this fortress. It’s good that I was able to bring my own technology into this place...’

While the siege continued Roland, who was sitting on the strange-looking wooden horse, thought back to the time he drove the Lumberlings back. These were the same ones he was sieging now after he was able to recreate the spider drones that he had grown accustomed to. It took some time but he was able to recreate which might have been the most important component of winning this trial.

...

A month earlier.

“It’s all fine and dandy that I have decided to put more resources into conquering but how will I get an edge against the enemy encampments? Can I really win against someone that was put in a location with a strategic advantage over me just with lousy war tactics?”

A somewhat annoyed Roland was sitting on his throne while looking through all the various window screens. On one he could see his new encampment that had been conquered by his forces. Even though he had gained a new one it came at the price of a few soldiers and the need of leaving a small force behind for its protection.

Currently with himself in this fort he didn't really need protection for it but in the future this would change. His next point of interest was gaining a new safer location to spread his influence on. This main base that was given to him as his first headquarters was probably a dead end. It was open to attacks from all sides, when concentrating on defensive measures it was possible to counter this placement. However, with his past knowledge in his head it was obviously the wrong tactic.

"My lord, the scouts have come back from their mission."

"Good."

His aid was waiting outside and would shout out to him from time to time. The information he relayed would then be presented to him in one of the windows as an update. Normally in real life, a scout would need to give this information to some kind of administrator. They would then either draw up a map with the information or directly give it to the lord. Here on the other hand the process was pushed onto the world map in the system to which he had access.

'This actually looks promising, from all the other forts this one looks the best.'

It had been a few days since he was able to defeat the Lumberlings. The soldiers that had been placed in the dungeon were about to go through the process of conversion which would bolster his forces. This didn't mean that he wasn't turning some of his villagers into new soldiers either. His army was steadily growing each day as he just needed to create new residential buildings to increase the population limit.

His scouting unit had increased and he was able to discover two other forts in the area. Their population wasn't large but not all of them seemed to be as aggressive as the Lumberlings were. Roland theorized that this was part of the test. It simulated different factions with varied abilities and characteristics. Ones would bunker up just like he did before while others would continue to attack until either they were dead or their enemies were.

This had to be taken into consideration as he would know where to allocate his resources to. If for instance the fort that had appeared in the west was primed for defense it could actually act as a buffer zone. Anyone arriving from that side would have to go through them first before arriving in his lands. It might have actually been even better to leave such a faction alone as they would not attack him without a reason.

'I wonder if the winning conditions really need me to conquer everything I see, or if it's something vaguer... Would it be enough if the people in the lands think of me as their lord even if they aren't necessarily part of my faction?'

Roland had not tried it yet but perhaps there was an option of a diplomatic resolution. What if it was possible to create trade routes with other forts and get better deals on things? In real life not every kingdom was the enemy, some even formed pacts to combat dangerous empires that started threatening others on a larger scale. What if this would be his fate if he was too aggressive?

'If that is the case, then if I start threatening everyone they might attack me together... but that won't be a problem if my forces are just stronger or if I could get them to be a vassal.'

Creating vassal states might have been a possibility. There were many types and it depended on the one in power on the exact rules. Most of the time a vassal in this sense would offer some kind of tribute in the form of some resources. For that, they would be exempt from getting raided by the ones in power and even helped by them if they were being attacked by an outside kingdom. There were pros and cons to these relationships but they could be positive for both sides in some cases.

'Hm... should I sacrifice a scout to figure it out?'

This was still in the beginning stages of the trial and he didn't have all the information. The hole in his memory had expanded as he had no idea what had happened before. In his mind, he could only see a few blurs and then the last enemy boss smacking his head with a giant mace. If it was truly possible to do business and ally himself with other factions then he needed to give it a try.

"Aid."

"Yes, my lord?"

"The small settlement to the southwest, have one of the scouts go there and offer them a treaty."

"A treaty? What will the details of the treaty entail?"

"The details? Hm... They were around a lot of pastures... have them donate their grain to us and also meat."

The wooden aid started nodding his head while Roland listed down some terms of the accord. If he could get a settlement with fertile land to take care of the food side then he would be able to develop his armies more. It was normal in a kingdom to shift production to better-suited regions. If he were to conquer these lands and become their king, then that area would be part of his kingdom and run by another noble. They would supply them with food and he would give them some soldiers which would allow him to specialize more in warfare.

'Good, now I need to think about the runsmith part of this test, what can I create to give my troops an edge?'

Roland was still mostly a crafter, even if this new class would give him some better warfare and leading options he still wasn't there. Getting political with other forts would not be possible if he didn't have any leverage. It wouldn't be strange if there was some kind of hidden notoriety value hidden somewhere. If he continued to capture settlements and win battles others might surrender to him without the need for him to lose more forces.

To get a better grasp on the situation he headed outside. Sitting on the cramped throne with nothing but a large empty space around him wasn't good for his mind. Roland had grown accustomed to working but this didn't mean that getting a breath of fresh air wouldn't help him get a good idea. When outside in the distance he could see a windmill being assembled by the wooden puppets.

It was very reminiscent of old video games as the wooden craftsmen would not perform all the actions of their human counterparts. Instead, they would hammer away at the walls that for some reason

started expanding up. From time to time they would stop to grab some materials from the side and then continue while the pile of resources vanished into thin air.

While this phenomenon was interesting he wasn't really looking at it. Instead, he was focusing on the large blades meant to be pushed by wind. The main source of food in this place was grain that was made into flour and then bread. To make flour people needed to grind the grain and that was done by large windmills. The models that he was using were wind ones but it was also possible to create them next to running water and use that to turn the wheel.

'Huh, why didn't I think of that yet? I must have been too busy thinking about the tactics.'

Wind power was his bread and butter but for some reason, this left his mind as he was focused on battle tactics and expanding his fort. Now that he had some time it was obvious to him what he should build next. What he was missing was the energy required to run his creations. Normally other craftsmen would need to use mana fluid as fuel. This was a resource also found in this world but for that, he would either need to get lucky, spend a lot of money to import it, or capture a place that had it as a resource.

Roland didn't really need that, everything that was here would be enough to generate power. It wouldn't be hard to create a generator inside of the windmill that was only using its huge wings to grind down grains for flour. It was also possible to use them to pump water or even cut wood after probably advancing further with his progression tree.

'I need to make a generator and runic batteries, with those around I'll be able to power golems.'

This old hack that he created still didn't truly make sense to him. For some reason this world identified electricity as a higher type of mana with the lightning attribute. It was something that only people of tier 2 and up could produce. With a full blown wind turbine it had enough charge to support multiple defensive turrets. The excess could also be stored in batteries that were cheap to manufacture.

'Did the trial block out this idea because I used it in the old defensive strategy? Or was I too focused on the army side of things this time?'

Roland asked himself this question as he found it hard to believe that he would forget about his wind generators. They had helped him through most of his struggles and were probably something he would reach to for help. It wouldn't be strange that during his first trial attempt, he created the generators to power all the runic torrents. It was also possible that the trial imposed amnesia had interfered in some way.

'Could this be a side effect of remembering some other parts? Maybe it balances out the test by making people forget some things when they focus on others?'

This was a nice theory but he didn't have time to confirm any of this. Instead, he needed to head to the already-created windmills to get some measurements. In short, a windmill's blades pushed something similar to a large cog-wheel that then transferred the rotation force to more moving parts. He would just need to produce something to catch all that force with a gearbox and then let it move the generator.

'A bit loud in here...'

When he got inside and climbed up he could see a large cog wheel turning and transferring power to a vertical axis in the middle of the mill. When looking at this huge spinning log in the middle he knew that

attaching another large wooden wheel to power a generator would be possible without interrupting the flour-making process. Generating electricity would be more of a side effect that he could use to protect this city from invaders.

'Now will I have to make these separately each time or is there a way to create a modified building instead?'

Making even one generator and then magical turrets would take some time. This trial was still a war against time, the more he focused on one thing too much the more likely he would be deficient in another. First, he needed to try, if some luck was on his side then he would be able to automate some of the processes. After going back to an older generator design he had everything ready. Attaching it to the windmill went smoothly and to his joy there was a possibility of modifying the whole building setup.

'It can copy the schematic but it still can't copy the runes, either I need to upgrade the blacksmith building into a runesmith's building or the trial wants me to make everything that concerns runes myself.'

Perhaps just like it went with classes there were some hidden options when it came to research. The moment he created the generator at the smithy it was possible for the wooden blacksmith there to create it himself. Then he was able to create an updated version of the windmill with the generator in it.

After bumbling around some more he realized that he could introduce schematics into the system where buildings were concerned. What he needed to do was to have his aid bring him the original plan that he could then copy and add changes to. This was not something that was specific to his class but after working with Bernir on his house he had taken some lessons related to carpentry and architecture.

'Is this really something that a Lord should do?'

He wasn't sure if becoming an Overlord had anything to do with being a good architect but it probably didn't hurt for the leader to be aware of the stronghold's layout. To him, it might have been a shortcut to victory as he only needed to inscribe runes on the runic generators while his wooden puppets created the parts for him instead. Just like before making the original was the only thing he needed to worry about.

Thus after allocating some time to the runic generators he was able to create some batteries. These made their way into four new golemic units that would later be used for siege purposes. They came equipped with the usual runic cannons and focused on only ranged spells.

While his plans to take over the Lumberling territory were being created he also made sure to prepare some defensive turrets. With the windmill generators in his main city, they would bolster his defensive capabilities by quite a bit. This would give him some wiggle room with the troops that needed to stay at his main base during his first major attack that came after preparing.

Within a month's time, he had a small force of around hundred and fifty men at his disposal. Together with them, they had managed to scrounge for some siege machines like the large battering ram that was with them. To his surprise, the Lumberling fortress was not in possession of a moat, instead, all they did was focus on maintaining a larger army and soldier production. This would allow them to push in even through the side walls where the defenses were thin and the archers were far away.

“Everyone, move out.”

“Yes, my lord!”

After giving his order his first major battle would be underway. Even though this was just a test with something that looked like crash test dummies on his side, it was still nerve-racking. This was all not in his comfort zone, usually defense and running away were his main two tactics. Going for the first strike where he wasn't sure if any traps awaited him wasn't his thing but he needed to push through this part of himself if he ever hoped to become a Lord that towered over the other Lords.

Chapter 312: Tier 3 Trial Part 8.

Name:

Wooden Lord Commander L 140

Classes

Wooden Warrior L 25

Wooden Soldier L 25

Wooden Soldier Captain L50

Wooden Lord Commander L 40

‘So this is their leader... doesn't look too tough.’

“Do you dare accept my...”

“Yeah, let us get this over with, get into the glowy circle Pinocchio, I don't have the whole day.”

Roland was the one to initiate the challenge this time around in a similar fashion as the wooden commander he faced during his first trial attempt. This time around he was challenging the lord of this fort that he had bashed through the side wall. Even though this place looked a bit closer to a stone keep, it wasn't finished. It was easy to move from one side that didn't have as many towers and archers protecting it.

To do this he used an old siege ram design. It was a mobile frame with a reinforced wooden roof made of several layers of planks. The iron arrows were not able to pierce through it and after coating it with some special concoction, it wouldn't catch on fire. It had three large wheels on each side and on the inside, there were several wooden soldiers pushing it. In the middle was the main piece which was a huge log with a large metallic ram head at the end.

Normally he would have given it a more basic shape but this item could be bought from the market to hasten the process of his first siege. Thanks to this faction not having a moat he could use this old tool to bust down their wall. Soon after his soldiers with him in the front were able to just push inside. He made sure to give them the order to leave the civilians alone and not chase after other soldiers that decided to flee.

This was about to become his new base of operations so he needed to keep the damages to a minimum, challenging the enemy leader to single combat was a bit part of this plan. The man in question was a

high-level tier 2 wooden puppet made of pale wood. It had a special class that might have been similar to his Runesmith Lord one. This could indicate the same multiplier of two instead of the regular one that tier 2 classes had. Nevertheless, he wasn't that fearful, he was still thirty levels over this wooden man and also had all his magical runes to help him win this.

The Lord Commander puppet was using an arming sword and shield combination. His body was covered by full-plate armor and he even had a helmet on. The only reason Roland could tell that he was a man made of wood was that his face was peeking through that helmet that lacked a visor that could be closed for some reason. It was a big weak point but with the shield in his hand, it wouldn't be that easily pierced.

This wooden Lord Commander would have probably been able to defeat any normal tier 2 person but he was going up against a very unique opponent. Roland's biggest strength came from his ability to make magical armor, it gave him the spells of an experienced mage that didn't require any in-battle preparation. Within a second he could call upon blasts of fire that could take a flame mage even ten seconds to cast.

A mage's biggest weakness was a close-range battle and this weakness was not something he had. The moment the armored puppet charged in for a shield bash his footing was broken by muddled water that then quickly turned into sharp spikes. Even though he was able to react in time to not sink in, even though the sharp spikes were deflected by the shield, the third attack that was composed of burning flames could not be evaded or protected against.

The huge ball of flames was already forming when the Lord Commander was trying to not slip into the mud. It connected with the wooden man to generate a massive explosion. Though these wooden men were not composed of blood and flesh they reacted in similar ways to heat as humans did. The metal armor that he was wearing turned red with the increase in the temperature and started cooking the owner alive. The simulated screams were quite realistic but instead of flinching Roland just increased the heat by ejecting a torrent of flames from his palm.

"Your Lord has fallen, throw away your weapons and surrender and none of you or the residents in the city will be harmed!"

As his opponent was dying he already started shouting to break up the fight. The more men he could keep alive from the opposition and his own army the better for his future plans. With the lord defeated, even the wooden captains started buckling under pressure. Just as he expected, whenever the lord of the faction was suffering a defeat the debuff taken to the morale of the troops was increased.

"What are you waiting for, surrender!"

"This place belongs to us now! Long live the Lord of the Timberlings!"

While he was making his speech one of his own commander units also started shouting out. It was his old first captain that had managed to reach level one hundred. The more the leader units leveled up the better their speech became. At the level that the commander was on now, he could articulate like a normal person. He immediately started shouting at the other soldiers while waving the flag from his side.

This was a faction banner that he actually had to unlock and design himself. Just by having them around his troops, it was possible to raise their morale further. The more of these symbols he put on their belongings the more it worked. It really showed him that belonging to a side made a big difference. Now that his enemies had nowhere that they belonged to their fate was to either fight until they all died or to become slaves.

‘What will they do? Probably depending on their loyalty to their old leader this could go both ways.’

He tried thinking back to some real-life examples of taking over strongholds and other kingdoms. If an area had a grand leader that they were all behind it was always hard to integrate such lands. The people living there would give up on the surface but behind the kingdom’s backs, they would start plotting. If a chance arose that they could take back the power, then they would. On the other hand, if the leader was a tyrant then the people living there would welcome them with open arms.

‘Hm... this one might have actually been the latter...’

“The tyrant is dead!”

“Thank the gods...”

Soon the soldiers threw away their weapons and the civilians started cheering. They repeated the same two sentences over and over again but he got the picture. When investigating this place he figured out that the leader wasn’t properly managing the region. There were a lot of residential buildings but not enough farms to produce food.

Most of the populace was also conscripted instantly and sent out to attack nearby settlements. This was a good example of someone that was too focused on the offensive and not on the defensive aspects of their army. Their main fort didn’t even have a moat and the walls weren’t in good shape either.

Congratulations on capturing a stronghold and defeating the Lumberling faction.

Roland almost flinched as the message popped out in front of his face and was accompanied by a victory tune. The moment it, all the flags and banners that belonged to the Lumberlings started changing into his own. He had not been able to design the crest for his forces, instead, it was a premade image of a bundle of logs next to a fireplace. In comparison, the Lumberlings had logs stacked next to what looked like a sawmill.

‘Maybe I should cut down the forest around my home after this...’

The more he stayed in this place the more he started to dislike anything related to wood. This was to the point of him wanting to reconstruct his entire home into one made from stone and metal. While these thoughts flooded his mind he walked over to the new throne room. Compared to his old one this had a lot more things going for them. It was still made from wood but at least had a large pillow where he could sit.

‘Let’s see... this isn’t the only place I was able to get, if you defeat the lord and the main fortress you get all of their lands... oh there is a condition it seems...’

This Lord Commander managed to capture a port city and a few smaller settlements that weren’t all that great. From how things looked they had been raided by bandits. This simulation didn’t only give him

other faction leaders and armies to worry about. There was random monster spawning and sometimes they attacked the villages. To combat this he could establish an adventurer guild that also required a tavern to lure in the sell swords.

Things like dungeons also existed but it was impossible to get into them. Some things could only be executed by simulation. The adventurers would leave the city and vanish into the dungeons. They would have a hidden chance of coming out alive and bringing back materials that could be sold. Their main purpose was to keep monsters away from smaller villages and to generate tax revenue.

Over a month had passed since he arrived in this trial and now he had won his first siege. During this time he had done his utmost to organize his 'kingdom' in a proper fashion. It wasn't that easy but he was managing to keep the populace happy while still being able to contend with unwanted advances from enemy encampments. After capturing this stone keep he had become the most significant force in the area and it wouldn't take much longer to make all the settlements his.

'The more my fame grows the more likely it is for the small outpost to surrender without fighting. I just wanted to conserve the life of my soldiers and other potential soldiers but it had a nice side effect.'

Due to his propensity to spare enemy combatants and civilians, he became famous as a benevolent and just leader. This title he could see in the system window or confirm with one of his aids that had multiplied since his first appearance here. There wasn't a proper explanation but he theorized that this gave him a hidden buff to negotiating after a battle was won and even before it.

It made sense, knowing the opposing leaders were more likely to join up if they knew that they wouldn't be slaughtered. Perhaps if he was more forceful he would be given a different hidden buff. It wouldn't be strange if fear was also an option here. The leaders would abandon their posts and flee instead of joining his forces or instead crumble on the battlefield.

'Has its pros and cons, if they flee I can't integrate them into my forces but also don't need to spend money on schools, churches, and indoctrination programs.'

Roland could see both processes being similar in the long run. If he had to choose he would rather walk the path of someone benevolent. The people on the other side were usually in cahoots with forces that he had butted heads with. Becoming more aggressive and downright evil would be more aligned with something like the abyssal cult he had a falling out with. This didn't mean that he would be soft on his enemies, just that he wasn't really interested in performing vile acts or slaughtering people to get his way.

'I guess as a benevolent leader I need to get this shit taken care of, this guy really didn't put any effort into managing his food. Luckily the farms that I have at the old place will be enough to cover it all... that is if they won't get captured, I need to start covering the borders with my troops.'

It seemed that the first part of this trial was coming to an end. He had captured one of the largest regions and driven his rivals out. With them gone he would have time to take over all the smaller settlements that weren't too far from his main cities. This one he was in would become his new capital city while the old fort would become the secondary stronghold. It was already equipped with some runic turrets and wind generators.

While it would be nowhere near as potent as the old defensive structure he had, it didn't have to. His enemies would most likely focus their actions on his current position. The way to win this game was by defeating all the lords on the battle map. From the way, it looked there were still four other large domains that were still taking form. Thanks to his fast push he was able to keep himself half a step in front of his enemies.

'First of all, I need to build a moat around this keep and finish those towers, a few archers and turrets should do the trick. I need to check out that port town but considering the map range, naval battles won't be possible in this trial.'

It was possible to trade with others through the port. After taking it he had been given access to a lot of exotic resources, some were better metals that he would use to create a new runic armor that could carry him through the rest of this trial. Just like with the dungeons, trading with ships was a simulated process that was on a timer. After going through the console he became aware that he couldn't build any warships. This meant that while he wouldn't be attacked by a naval force from outside, he could not transport his troops to a more favorable location either.

'Should I try forming a diplomatic agreement with one of the weaker sides?'

At the moment he had some general idea of who he was dealing with. The biggest problem and perhaps his last opponent would be the Woodlanders. They seemed to possess one of the best territories with a plethora of natural resources. Their borders were also surrounded by a natural barrier made up of mountains. To attack them he would first need to scout out the area for any hidden passages as going through the middle where a fortress was being built was not an option.

'Maybe if I had an overwhelming supply of forces then I could get in but they will probably conquer the nation right next to them and make it more difficult.'

The Woodlanders were to the northeast while he was across from them to the southwest. Between them were two other nations that were slowly being created. Then to his east side was another one and the last one was to the west of the Woodlanders. There were things outside of these five locations but it was also outside the boundaries of this trial. He had confirmed this by trying to send his scouts in the other direction but he was unable to cross through some mountains before coming back.

His foes would probably take over the developing nation that was to their west side before moving down south towards the other regions. He wasn't sure if they would be the final opponent but thanks to the natural defenses they would at least be hard to conquer. Perhaps luring their leader out of their zone would be the appropriate tactic instead of forcing it through the mountain range.

'I don't think they would give me a trial that I can't pass, there might be some kind of passage through there that could work and if there isn't one... then perhaps I could make one for myself.'

After clicking through the console and giving out various orders Roland decided to walk out to his new stronghold. This one had a large mountain range from one side that wouldn't allow anyone to attack him from the other factions. They would need to go around and then go through the border region where he was already sending out troops and resources to reinforce. Things were moving along but he had already spent over a month here, even though he could fast forward through a lot of events, if he did then he would lose precious time.

Due to his first failure with his class ascension, he had become even more paranoid about the future. Each time when going to bed he could only think about that large mace coming for his face. Sleeping more than two or three hours per day was already a miracle only thanks to his zombie-like fortitude was he able to keep his facilities together.

“Uh... this might take a while... half a year at least... maybe even more...”

His sigh was heard by one of the guards next to him. The wooden man didn't move nor did he have a facial expression he could relate to. Roland could see the walls already being worked on by his men, not to lose out; he decided to head to the city smithy to see how far this blacksmith was compared to the one he started with. Before his enemies could arrive he needed to create more golems and perhaps other types of weapons that with the dawn of the wind generators were a valid choice...