

## Runesmith 345

### Chapter 345: Power Leveling.

\*Click\*

"It was really there... How did you know?"

"There was a pattern in the dungeon."

"A pattern? I've never heard of such a thing before."

"Most people don't do things like me so they wouldn't be able to find it."

Roland replied to Mary who was astonished by the opening secret door before them. Inside was a small room of around twenty square meters. Right at the end was a lone chest with unknown contents. It was a secret room just like the ones sprinkled in the other dungeon and the entrance was quite similar.

'These dungeons aren't connected to each other but they are very similar. I've heard a theory about it and this might confirm it...'

Back in his youth, Roland made an effort to go through all the books on this world that he could get his hands on. Someone once said that knowledge was power and he took the advice seriously. His arrival here was abrupt and he needed all the information that he could get his hands on. Thus even before becoming an adventurer, he made sure to study dungeons and what made them tick.

After starting his new profession he continued to gather more information. Now it allowed him to put a few things together to find this hidden chamber that opened through another runic lock. It was similar to the ones in the original Albrook dungeon but getting in would have been impossible without his new tier 3 class. The runes had increased in difficulty and now required more involvement from his skills.

Usually finding a room like this would have been impossible through normal means. It was behind some bones in what looked to be a burial chamber. Roland had an ace up his sleeve which was his mapping system. Through it, he was able to previously discover a pattern in the secret chamber location when he was going through the upper levels of the old dungeon. This same pattern in dungeon room creation existed here as well and somewhat confirmed the theory others before him came up with.

This theory stated that when two dungeons existed close to each other, the one with the lesser dungeon core would get affected by the other one. If it was true then the Albrook dungeon could have been affected by this one. The similar layout of the rooms and secret chambers locked behind runic symbols was the similarity. The undead flaming skeletons on the upper levels could have also been affected by this undead crypt.

'I need to visit the lower and upper levels before anyone else can discover these areas...'

The hidden rooms and chambers usually had some bonus rewards for anyone that found them first. Other Times it would require a long waiting period for things like special bosses and chests to reappear again. Now was the best time to go through all the levels and grab all the loot before the other adventurers made their way here.

While the runic symbols could be only activated by people that could affect greater runes, this didn't mean that there weren't other ways of getting in. He was able to drill passages through walls, it wouldn't be strange if someone could blast their way through if they knew that something existed on the other side.

'High-level adventurers usually have some items that detect hidden treasure chambers, eventually, they will find them and after the cat is out of the bag, others will begin scavenging for more.'

He could already imagine word getting out and Platinum adventurers pushing through to get the hidden loot. Perhaps he could spoil their fun, if he managed to discover the hidden rooms and take everything for himself, they would arrive at empty chambers. If the consensus arises that no items were to be found in these hidden rooms, then perhaps he could push others away from wasting time on entering them.

"Hey, is it safe?"

"Hm... it doesn't seem to be a mimic... but I'm not sure my skills are high enough for a higher tier mimic..."

While he was having a look at the minimap, Armand asked Lobelia a question. For a moment he expected the meat head to just go for the chest. At least when it came to adventuring he had enough experience to know better. Chests could be monsters or boobytrapped, even the areas around them like walls or ceilings could hold hidden traps.

"I don't see any traps or mechanisms, no weighted panels either, it should be safe... what do you think?"

Lobelia made her assessment and soon looked over to Mary. Both had classes that were good at discovering things and a lot of their skills overlapped. The maid dressed in dark leather nodded and performed a search herself before finally speaking out.

"It seems that it should be safe but I think it would be better if Sir Wayland opened it."

"You heard that Sir Wayland? Go ahead."

"..."

Roland just grumbled while the three of them cleared out. He intended to do it himself from the start but Armand made it sound like it would have been better if the chest blew up in his face than in theirs. His armor was equipped with a few discovery spells that could detect magical traps and the sorts. This was uncharted ground though and he needed to prepare for every possibility.

When it came to B-ranked dungeons and above he didn't have that much hands-on experience. Reading through books and old adventurer stories gave him an idea of what to expect but safety was first. Thus the best way of tackling this matter was through ranged spells. Even if it was a higher-level mimic or a magical bomb, it wouldn't get to him if he was out of range.

While his three party members stepped to the side he took a step forward. He didn't enter the room but remained at the edge of the entrance. Sometimes entire rooms like this could be affected by things like teleportation traps or pitfalls. The safest way to go around this was using his mage hand to reach for the chest.

Before producing this newly favorite spell, he activated his floating cubes to move forward. They were floating around in the chamber in the event of a monster being unleashed inside. Soon the chest was floating into his hands and it seemed that the safety measures weren't needed.

"Hm..."

"Is something wrong?"

"It's locked..."

"Locked? Can you bring it over here?"

"It's not a mimic at least, I think it should be fine..."

After exchanging a few words with Lobelia he decided to use his mage hand spell to pull the chest out of the hidden chamber. Everything seemed to be clear and when it was outside they just needed to open it. Smashing a chest was always an option for getting items out yet it could damage the items inside. Not everything was resistant to shocks from the outside and this chest here was quite robust.

"Can you open it? This is a B-rank dungeon."

"Who do you think I am? No problem!"

Lobelia seemed confident and there weren't any obvious traps on this chest. Smashing it open was an option but he would have rather not damage potential rare materials. The rewards that could be found in B-rank dungeons and above were exceptional. It was possible for one of these to contain something special.

\*Click\*

"Haha, I knew I could do it!"

The lock popped open and he could see the lid opening up. Lobelia didn't just remain in that spot but instead jumped right behind Roland's large frame. Yet no explosion came of it and finally, the item that was hiding away was revealed inside.

"Eh? What is this slab of metal?"

"Ugh this thing is heavy, don't just stand there and help me out."

"Leave this to a real man! ... What the... is this made of star metal or something? Why is it so heavy..."

Armand's muscles bulged as he needed to use both of his hands to yank the object out of the large box. When it came out into the open Roland realized what it was. The shape was similar to a coffin but it was clearly a tower shield. After looking at the identification screen he understood why even someone as strong as Armand was having trouble with the weight.

**Name:**

**Enchanted Black Mithril Tower Shield**

**Classification:**

**Rare.**

**Durability:**

**90/90**

**Armor Rating**

**B+**

“It’s not Star Iron but close, it’s made from Black Mithril.”

Lobelia whistled after hearing Roland’s response. There were various elemental variations of mithril and the armor he was wearing was made from such a variation. This one was a little bit different, usually the element they were aligned with just increased the resistance values against it. Black mithril was created by absorbing dark energy which could be produced in a crypt like this. It was usually secondary to the unholy undead energies but didn’t trail far behind.

After the metal absorbed the dark energy it didn’t become more resistant to it. Instead, it became a lot heavier and had its defensive capabilities enhanced. When it came to raw armor black mithril was up there even with higher-tier metals. A whole shield made from something like it would be able to defend even against the highest-tier opponents and was quite the lucky find.

“Bwahaha, Hey look at that, Wayland can hold it with one hand, maybe if you didn’t spend so much time fooling around then you’d be able to do it too!”

“Shut up, he is a tier 3! Once I ascend I’ll be able to do it too!”

Lobelia pointed out with her finger at Roland who took the shield from Armand. With his current stats, he would be able to use this thing without suffering any penalties. Besides being shaped like a coffin it had a large skull on the other side. It didn’t take him long to figure out the enchantment that made Mary flinch a bit when activated.

“The skull eyes are glowing? Woah, it’s turning green.”

Lobelia voiced her concerns but Roland was quick to calm the group down.

“Don’t worry, it has a protective spell on it, I guess someone thought it would be funny to make the eyes glow.”

From his point of view, there was no reason for the visual cue with the glowing eyes. The spell was a reflection enchantment that would rebound physical damage when hit. From a style perspective, the whole motif went well together and was something that Roland usually ignored during his crafts.

‘It does look a bit cool... When I get back home I should remake this into a runic structure, the spell in itself isn’t bad but it can be enhanced.’

“I don’t think those two fit together.”

“They don’t fit?”

“Yeah, maybe if you put some skulls on your armor and get a darker sword it could work. You should probably ditch it but don’t worry, I have a friend that could use something like that, how about I take it off you...”

“...”

Armand commented on the look of the items Roland was carrying. The shield belonged more in the hands of a dark knight while the sword he took from Emmerson was too gallant. Then combined with his crimson armor that looked more streamlined, it just didn’t mesh well together.

“I’m still taking it, you’d just sell it.”

“Damn, he saw through it... Can I at least...”

“No, now get into the chamber, we already wasted enough time on this...”

Roland shook his head in disgust at the muscle-bound idiot. Even though he was letting him tag along to help them power level, he still wanted some extra cash. Lobelia wasn’t much different as she had a somewhat longing gaze when looking at the black shield. The only person that looked normal was Mary who probably just wanted to train.

“Okay, I’ll stay here with you for today but in the future, you’ll have to do it by yourself.”

Everyone nodded without voicing any complaints. While it was safer for Roland to remain with them, he would get sidetracked and gain nothing in return. During this small window he had before the dungeon became infested with other adventurers he had to dive deeper into it.

“Mary, you’re acquainted with the map the most so I’ll leave most of it to you. Can you place the device down here?”

The ninja maid nodded while all of them started placing down their belongings. Soon all of them were looking at the dots on the screen while Roland tried to explain everything. While perhaps he was worried about Armand, with Mary around they should be able to succeed.

“So you want us to focus on the Berserker variants?”

“Yes, they are the easiest to read and defeat, as long as you fight one at a time everything should be fine.”

The plan was simple. Using this chamber as a safe zone they would target the nearby Infernal Skeleton Berserker that he just cleared out. After going through the dungeon map back to his place this was the best tactic he could think of. While it was safer to remain in the mining area, there were too many eyes on them and the grinding trick would surely become known to everyone. If they stayed here, they could casually hide away if any Platinum adventurer arrived. Without the proper tools, they would be unable to open this hidden room where their group could hide until he returned.

“This sounds simple enough and could actually work... If the scrolls do the job.”

“That’s why I’m going to stay here for now. The next Berserker should appear in around twenty minutes to go over your equipment.”

The biggest help was actually the mapping device and not the divine runes. Weapons were easily made and even something like his big mana cannon could be used instead. Yet knowing when the monsters would respawn and which paths they took was the biggest advantage a person could gain over them.

He wasn't sure if people were actually aware of these paths as they were hard to confirm. The monsters would move away from them whenever they encountered a living person and sometimes some random factors were introduced. Without something measuring the repeating paths on a daily basis, it would have been hard to confirm for regular adventurers that just wanted to make a living.

"What are you doing?"

"Just giving the device the correct code, you'll be able to open the chamber with this when I'm not here."

The item in his hand looked like an id card. It was similar to the one people used to enter the hidden chamber under the lava lake. The hardest part was finding these rooms and then cracking the code, creating a key to get in was rather easy and didn't require that many materials.

"But what if it doesn't work and we can't get out?"

"In that case, you'll just have to wait for me to come pick you up."

"But what if something happens to you?"

"Then you'll have to dig yourselves out."

Roland pointed to the backpack that he had Armand wear throughout the trip. It wasn't just a runic flamethrower but also had other items inside. If for some reason he wasn't able to make it back to their location and the key was damaged, they would have to get out of here the old fashion way.

"The walls aren't that thick, it shouldn't take you more than an hour to get out of here. Now get ready, the monster is about to spawn, this is the best time to attack it."

After explaining everything he pulled all of them back into the room where he defeated the two berserkers. There he was able to catch the moment of recreation, it was a phenomenon where a monster spawned back in the dungeon.

It was a strange magical phenomenon that not many people understood and it was taking place before them. First, a strange substance that looked like water rose up from the ground. It soon split and turned into a floating orb that turned from being translucent into a black color. This orb then started expanding into the shape of the skeletal monster that inhabited the dungeon.

"This is the best time to attack, they won't be able to move for a second or two after respawning, use your scrolls on it."

Roland called out to Mary and the others that pointed the large pages with runes at the monster. If aimed correctly they would be able to deliver a devastating critical blow without even having to endanger their own lives. Three bolts of divine energy flew at the skeletal being and connected right as it was about to move. The glowing eyes activated just at the right time to see the spells coming their way.

“We got it!”

“It’s burning up... h-hey, I leveled up!”

“Me too! What is this experience?”

“... It actually worked...”

Lobelia and Armand were ecstatic while Mary was more baffled by the fact that this whole process succeeded. Now it was up to them to continue their work while Roland prepared for some spelunking.

### **Chapter 346: Levels Rising.**

‘They got the hang of it rather fast... I might be able to move along to schedule for once...’

Roland was leaning against the corner while watching Armand use the divine spell scroll he created. The spell was constructed in a way to guide itself toward undead creatures. Even if they aimed it at the ceiling the bolt would bend and fly at the giant spawning skeleton in the middle of the room.

The area he found for the three to go through had two respawning monsters with one more traveling through it. After killing the initial two monsters it was quite easy to exterminate them on a timer as they always returned within the same amount of time to the second. Even the moving creature was easily dispatched if all of them activated their weapons as he walked through the corner.

‘The perfect room for grinding, those berserkers always stop for a moment to activate their rage skill which makes it easy to kill them.’

The tactic seemed rather easy and made something difficult look rather trivial. This wasn’t the case as without the divine spell all three of them would be devastated by this monster. While they could quickly dispatch it, the same could be done by this creature that was above their tier.

“Woof!”

“Are you getting impatient? Don’t worry Agni, your time will come.”

Agni whimpered a bit while watching the trio dispatching the respawning monsters. His wolf companion hadn’t really had anything to do since getting here. He was unable to use divine spells and sticking magical scrolls into his muzzle to do the same would be sub-optimal. Luckily there were other ways that he could help his canine companion level up faster.

Their connection as master owners was somehow created by this world. The experience between the two was shared to a degree as long as they remained in close proximity. This was also why Agni was behind as Roland didn’t bring him to the dungeon during his grinding sessions. Then there was also the issue that the shared experience had begun declining as if the system didn’t want Agni to progress too hastily.

Yet this issue could be alleviated with a set of wolver armor. Agni was still in possession of his old armor that wasn’t that hard to modify with some leftover mithril. Just like the trio here, he would be able to produce the same divine spell. The spell manifestation rune was close to his horn which would allow him to aim it in a more natural fashion.

'That about wraps out the test run, they should be fine for half a day. While they are here, I can start exploring the dungeon.'

"Think you three can handle yourselves?"

"Are you getting bored?"

Asked Armand while smiling slightly and Lobelia chimed in from the side.

"What will we do without our knight in shining armor?"

"I'll take that as a yes, I'll be gone for a few hours so just stick to the safe room when you see other adventurers coming."

"Yes, mom."

Nodded Lobelia while shrugging, it didn't seem that the two were too concerned about the situation. It seemed that they were too enamored with their fast pace of leveling to care about their safety. Luckily they had one more mature member in their midst. Roland looked headed over to Mary that was in the process of dislodging one of the throwing knives he gave her.

"Can you watch over those two? Even though the monster paths are set in stone, it's possible for some to come when lured by other adventurers."

"I can't promise that I won't prioritize my own safety over theirs but if they won't get in my way, then yes."

Mary nodded at the request but Roland wasn't sure how he should feel about the response. He had been on the fence about this girl for a while. The only reason he was helping her out was so his workload was decreased. If she was a tier 3 class holder then at least he wouldn't need to constantly watch Arthur's back. Without him around any semi-competent tier 3 assassin would probably be able to sneak into the villa. Even if there were some magical defenses planted there, it might not be enough.

"Well, at least you are being truthful about it but I hope that you at least realize that you owe me."

"Of course, I will never forget what you have done for Lord Arthur's sake but I must prioritize him and his mission over others."

"Is that so? I hope you understand that I'll cut my ties with your lord if anything happens to those two then."

Mary was taken aback by the response. It was one thing to save herself to remain at Arthur's side but it was another to lose an asset like Roland. Without him, the city would quickly go under and she understood what he was implying. If those two died then their relationship would sour and at least for the time being, she could not let that happen.

"I understand, I'll prioritize their safety."

"Good that we could come to an agreement."

Now that he had said his piece to both parties he hoped that they would at least watch each other's backs. While he didn't trust Mary too much he believed that she would at least prioritize keeping him

happy. She knew about the plan to implement runic equipment into the city along with creating a better way of getting to this place. Only with the help of his mapping system would they know how to create the correct path.

“Let’s go Agni but remember to stay behind me.”

“Awoo!”

Finally, he disappeared behind one of the passages. The dots representing Armand, Lobelia, and Mary began to vanish on his zoomed map that only showed the immediate surroundings. Now that he was alone and with no distractions he had some time to take in the scenery. The area that he arrived in looked quite spacious and was covered by columns and arches. Right at the end, he also spotted one new enemy.

### **Infernal Skeleton Champion**

#### **L154**

This Infernal Skeleton variant was smaller than the Berserker. His frame was more similar to a regular human's with a few differences. Some of the skeletal features were out on display as the armor it was wearing had some holes in it. Those glowing eyes that lacked any emotions were also peeking from under the helmet and they quickly focused in on the target.

“What are you looking at?”

“...”

The monster didn’t reply as he slammed his new tower shield with the large greatsword. This produced a loud banging noise which focused all the attention on him. For Roland taking care of this monster wouldn’t be hard but today he did not come here for leveling. His role was as a support for others.

After releasing a strange shriek the creature charged forward. For a fraction of a second, he felt like something was trying to enter his mind but was unable to pierce through it. More than likely the scream was an attack aimed at stunning. It wasn’t very effective on someone like him that possessed high willpower yet Agni on the other hand, was frozen in place.

‘Screams and shouts can be skills too. I’ll need to upgrade Agni’s armor to take care of the debuff, he can’t handle it at his current level.’

Roland’s armor was actually capable of guarding him against such attacks. Many magical shields existed and they weren’t only limited to blocking elemental effects. There were ones that increase willpower or could even block out adverse effects. Yet having them up on a constant basis would be quite troublesome, triggering the effect instantly after the attack came made things more manageable.

The monster charged forth, in its right hand it had a large mace, and in the other a moderately sized oval shield. Roland instructed the bits to float to the side and remain on standby while he casually walked forward with his new shield in hand. The monster started swinging and by the glow of the mace, it was clear that it was some sort of skill.

This attack connected with the darkened coffin-shaped shield. Instantly he could feel the weight behind this hit, even though the monster was below his level and stats his feet were pushed down into the

floor. Cracks formed where he was standing and they continued to spread in all directions. Yet he didn't back down and instead decided to give this skeletal fiend a push with the shield he was holding.

With the added weight of his armor and his superior stats, the monster was forced back. The momentum it gained only caused damage to the arm that was holding the mace. It stumbled for a moment but soon was at it again, another hit from it was coming and Roland wasn't really doing much to stop the monster.

This time around it was different, instead of just taking the attack to the shield he activated the enchantment on it. The skull on the front side started glowing while the coffin was covered by a green glow. The attack flew in just to be reflected by the enchantment. Part of the force was sent back to the enemy due to the recoil causing some damage.

'I'd say, around forty percent reflection value... I could probably make it better.'

The monster's right hand didn't look good, the bones that were sticking out started crumbling and probably with the next attack, it would lose its weapon. If this was a Berserker variant it would have just continued with the attack. The Champion on the other hand was somewhat more intelligent. Instead of continuing with the attacks, it started to back away.

"Trying to turtle up now? It won't work, Agni."

Roland wasn't alone here, while he was testing his new shield Agni's stun effect wore off. During the second hit, the wolf circled around and got behind the enemy to now be able to activate his own armor's effect. Using the fact that Roland was playing tank allowed for a nice shot from the back.

A bolt of divine energy shot forward and connected with the creature's back. Normally the skeletal champion would be able to evade such a sluggish attack but it was being held back by a quick binding spell. It wouldn't last for more than a second or two but this would be enough for his companion. Agni's attack connected nicely with the backplate of the monster and the divine flames seeped into the boney insides.

'It's a bit less effective on armored enemies.'

"Agni, do it again."

"Woof!"

While the monster was hit the holy flames were having trouble seeping in through the armor. Luckily the plate this champion was wearing had many holes and looked rather old. This allowed for the magical energies to seep in and apply the debuff against undead creatures without much of an issue. After the monster was weakened it was easy for Agni to take over and soon the battle was over.

"Good job Agni."

"Woof!"

After a pat on the wolf's head, he noticed that his level had gone up by one. From a hundred thirty-eight to thirty-nine. Agni didn't suffer from taking one more tier 1 class like he did so after only eleven more levels he would arrive at his tier 3 evolution. What Agni would turn into was something that he was

looking forward to. He would also become quite the asset as there weren't that many tamed beasts of the tier 3 variety.

'Registering him will be a lot easier now that I'm the Head-Knight. Maybe I should also go and get my adventurer rank increased to Platinum.'

Now that he was slightly famous and had more to say it would be easy to pass the Platinum exam just like the others. He expected the guild master to welcome him with open arms after what he did to Emmerson. A nice change compared to his old life of having to keep his head down.

'He can't ask me for my status screen either, I can veto that decision as a Knight...'

While thinking about his newly gained perks of being a knight he plucked out the monster's core. Agni instantly perked up at the round object but after giving it a few sniffs he wasn't too interested. Mana stones were part of his diet but these undead cores weren't apparently as interesting.

"So the armor remains and I can even take it now... It doesn't look too good though, should I just melt it down?"

**Name:**

**Resistium Chestpiece**

**Classification:**

**Uncommon**

**Durability:**

**34/72**

**Armor Rating**

**C**

**Name:**

**Resistium Mace**

**Classification:**

**Uncommon**

**Durability:**

**44/64**

**Attack Rating**

**C**

These skeletons were using damaged weapons but they weren't that shabby. They were a notch above what he was able to make when he was a tier 2 craftsman and they were made from better materials as

well. The storage space that was inside his backplate wasn't super spacious but he could at least fit a few weapons and armor pieces inside. Later he could decide on what to do with these things.

"Perhaps Bernir could restore them, with a few enchantments and the Platinum adventurers around it should fetch a good price..."

The influx of potential customers was upon him but he didn't really have the time to manage everything in his shop. These weapons the skeletal fiends dropped could be refurbished and restored for a hefty profit. Their worth was below a mithril weapon but above a durasteel one. For people that were just looking for something cheap that worked, these would offer the perfect balance.

After packing up he started delving deeper into the dungeon. The first thing that he noticed was that this space was a lot more spacious than he anticipated. It was one thing to look at a representation of reality on a map and another to actually be there. Luckily this level didn't pose that many obstacles as it had been already fully explored by the platinum adventurer party.

"Woah, one of them actually appeared."

While most of the creatures here were humanoid skeletons there were other variants. One of them gave him a little scare as it instantly zoomed in his direction from the other side of the chamber as he approached. It was a flaming skull that continued to release a scream while flying forward. This time around Agni was surrounded by a specialized shield and didn't suffer the stunning effect.

'It's fast but...'

Before the monster could approach him, all of his floating cubes started firing bolts of mana to intercept this strange being. The moment one of the attacks collided with it, an explosion rocketed the whole large crypt he entered.

### **Infernal Flaming Skull has been slain.**

This creature was more like a homing missile than an actual monster. The moment it was touched by anything it exploded. It was important to quickly kill this thing with ranged attacks before it reached anyone or it could potentially wipe out an entire party of adventurers in one go. His map only showed him some dots so he wasn't expecting the skull missile to fly his way but luckily his flying automatons were programmed to intercept such things instantly.

"This is troublesome... Agni, step back and only use your ranged spells and equipment to attack."

"Woof?"

While informing his wolf of the danger he activated his armor's magical systems. A lone flaming skull wasn't that dangerous but it posed a big problem. When it screamed or exploded, other monsters that were close became alert. When looking at his map he could see multiple dots moving his way. Some were quite fast and were probably other flaming skulls.

'There is only one place they can come through...'

Thanks to his map he was given a tactical advantage. An easy decision was made to focus on the lone corridor that connected to three others further in. All the monsters would charge through it to get to

where he was. Without even thinking about it that much he started casting one of the premier cleric spells.

The runic traces started traveling from his chest down to his feet as he took a step forward to perform a stomp. Almost instantly a radiant glow escaped from his sole and traveled in a straight path forward. The ground that was filled with undead energies was becoming cleansed as the hallowed ground spell effect took shape.

Soon enough the first skull appeared and was swallowed up by the divine zone. While this spell didn't produce direct damage, it produced the same long-lasting debuff. Each and every one of the undead that appeared through the corridor would become sluggish.

"I guess it's time for some target practice."

Roland started blasting, each and every undead monster that appeared was quickly dispatched by his beams. Even Agni that was standing to the side was able to put in some work and deliver doom to a few monsters that would normally kill him with one swing of their claws.

'Hm... This might be a good tactic for leveling...'

He looked at the pile of destroyed bones before him and smiled. While his level did not increase, Agni's jumped by another two. At this pace, the ruby wolf would quickly achieve his next evolution.