

Runesmith 55

[Chapter 55 Setting out again.](#)

A tall youth with dark hair and a somewhat handsome face was standing at a travel agency. He was looking at a map on which he scribbled some notes. This was Roland that had just gotten the information that he required to reach his next destination. This would be the next place that he would be staying at.

“Third time’s the charm, eh?”

He muttered to himself while walking towards the train station. He would be traveling even longer than he was before and he would even have to take a boat. His destination was the large island in the south of the Caldris Kingdom.

The large mass of land was called the Dragnis Island. It had a large volcano right in the middle of it and a couple of smaller ones sprinkled here and there. The name of the island wasn’t just for show, there apparently was a dragon living there.

It wasn’t roaming the lands and burning the villages though. It was the last boss of the dungeon that resided there. This was the main dungeon of this island and its rating was an S.

There were various other smaller dungeons sprinkled around the entire landmass. Due to the peculiar way that the main dungeon was placed it was said that the smaller ones connected to it. The one he was going towards had formed a couple of months ago and was still getting its rating.

Contrary to popular belief Dragnis Island wasn’t a wasteland. It was true that the center part was mostly uninhabitable and overrun by monsters. The coastline in comparison was covered by lush greenery and the climate was quite warm.

There were also various safety measures that were put in place. One of them was the magus towers. They were five large ones surrounding the main volcano, they formed a magical barrier that kept the monsters at bay. It also protected the rest of the land from volcanic ash and from surprise volcanic discharges.

At least that was what the lady that worked at this world’s version of a traveling agency said. The people in charge there were probably trying to attract more people. It was a land of opportunities for sure but at the same time, it was dangerous.

This whole kingdom was a dangerous place. Even in this large city people that were part of strong factions like the council weren’t safe. There was no guarantee that you wouldn’t be stabbed in the back.

Here we had a feud between two noble sons. The younger one wanted to take over the city’s money-making facilities before his brother returned. If that didn’t work, the deaths of six of the council members would cause this city to turn chaotic. He would be blamed for it as the acting regent but the older brother would also be blamed as he was the true heir.

‘I wonder if those three idiots are going to do similar things when they are older...’

Roland was also from a noble house. One not as established as the Dreux house that had a count as the leader. There would be only one heir to the estate. Would the other two sons just let the oldest get

everything while they went away to be knights for other nobles? Or would the heir bribe them with promises of cushy positions at his estate?

Roland just shrugged, he was glad that he wasn't involved in those power struggles anymore. Even if he told them that he had no interest in the title or land his brothers could still go after him. He really didn't want to get into a war of succession, a Baron title wasn't even worth that much. He could probably even earn more money as a Runesmith.

In this kingdom, there was a strict hierarchy. A knight was the lowest noble ranking, they were more or less just commanders for the army. Following that was the baron title that his father had, just a step up.

This was the true beginning of the noble ladder. A Baron was granted land and subjects to rule but the land they got was mostly smaller villages. After that came the Viscount title, then the Count followed by the Marquess. The higher the title the more land and more subjects the noble was granted.

The highest title a noble not related to the royal family could possess was the Dukal title. Nobles with the title of a Duke were the leaders of the aristocratic faction and there weren't many of them around.

There was also the Archduke title but it was reserved for the royal family. Mostly the brothers or sisters of the current king were allowed to call themselves that. Even with a grand title like that, it didn't mean that they were above the Dukes. It all depended on how they managed their resources or how much the current king was willing to give them.

The structure of the nobles was very archaic and convoluted. There was no trust between houses unless there was some kind of bonding contract like a marriage. Backstabbing each other was seen as a fun pastime in some of their circles.

Roland would rather spend his life as a craftsman than be involved in that masquerade. For this, he needed more power, the power that he could only gain by risking his life. Gaining levels wasn't enough, gaining stats with no practical combat experience made no sense.

This would be similar to doing basic strength and stamina training at a martial arts school. Yet never doing any sparring with other students. A person would get stronger and learn techniques but unless they tested it on a resisting opponent they would get nowhere.

Roland was now back at a familiar place with a ticket in hand. It was time to take the train once more. He had done this before so there was a lack of hesitation in his actions. He was even slightly tingling with anticipation.

'So long Edelgard, next stop, the town of Albrook'

This was his next destination. A rather small town with a rather common uninteresting name. A few months ago a dungeon entrance had opened up and now people were flocking there.

First, a new adventurer's guild was getting built. With the dungeon now appearing there a large revenue stream would be opened. Mana stones were just one of the things that could be harvested. There were apparently mineral deposits there which Roland as a blacksmith was very much interested in.

He wanted to build a new workshop there, one that he could actually open up and sell things in. He wasn't sure when and how he would do that. He would probably require someone else to sell his wares

if he was busy with the dungeon and adventuring. He would also need to trust a person he knew nothing about to just stay in his workshop for days and not steal anything.

It was finally time to leave. The conductor blew his whistle to signal for the people to get on. Roland hesitated slightly but he took the first step forward.

The youth had grown quite a bit in these past years and it looked like he wasn't finished. He was wearing the usual black robe with which he could hide his face.

He decided to now wear any metal armor over his cloth armor just yet. He didn't think the need for it inside the safety of this train and it was too bulky for the ride. He would also stick out like a sore thumb if he went in fully armed.

The armor of choice was the brigandine armor that was now resting in one of his storage bags. He did have some other items to cover some spots.

Both his arms were covered by wrist guards and his legs were protected by greaves that were placed over his leather shoes.

He didn't make these items himself, he just bought them from one of the shops. He did put some runic enchantments on them but he didn't have time to add any slots for mana stones.

Roland deliberated if he should go back to his workshop to enhance his armor but he decided against it. Those people from the abyssal cult had seen his face and could still be in this city.

They were probably enraged that someone like him was the reason for their whole plan failing. This was some bad for the assassins. He needed to flee as he couldn't trust the people from Exeor to protect him. What if those cultist nuts returned with a stronger treasure and he just dies in the illusion?

He was still probably a low priority target, the person who should really watch his back would be the gnome. This was also the reason why he was feeling slightly more relaxed with his journey.

While thinking Roland heard the conductor using his whistle again. The large train shook slightly before moving forward. He found a seat for himself by the window. It was quite crowded today as probably after yesterday's attack other people had decided to also ditch this city.

He wasn't feeling that nostalgic about it as he spent most of his time hidden away in a workshop. The only noticeable people that he met here were Marlo, Helci, and the gnomes elven assistant. There were also three other guys he met but he hasn't seen them ever since that one expedition.

His old fling was planning on going in the opposite direction to another well-established dungeon city. The gnome was heading for the capital city that housed his company's main building.

Roland had become quite the loner after spending over nine years in this world. He still couldn't really see himself as one of the people of these lands. He subconsciously evaded human interaction which was leading him down this introverted path of solitude.

He leaned back in his wooden seat and gave out a sigh. This train would take him through most of the kingdom but then he would need to switch to a caravan. He needed to reach the closest port in the south to get to the volcanic island.

This journey would be a lot longer than the last one. There were no magic trains that could go through water and the ships were just regular sail ships.

At least the one that he would be taking due to not wanting to spend too much money. He didn't see one yet but from the books, he read there were supposed to be ships that looked similar to old steam ships. Instead of steam, they ran on mana, he actually wanted to visit one and see the engine room.

'I have enough money to start over but I should probably do it better this time around...'

Roland took out his adventurer card and to the name that was on it. He was thinking about ditching his old name and starting over.

There were certain ways to alter the status of this card. The one that he wanted to be gone was his name.

There were no computers keeping the exact stats of every adventurer in this world. There were only these adventurer cards that were updated with certain magical tools to show your status.

From what he knew, if someone was searching for him at most they could get information about him if they knew his card id. The guild stored information about which adventurer's passed through the city.

This meant that if someone figured out the city this card was made they could look for him. Someone with enough resources would need to go through the guilds one by one. Sooner or later they would find which cities he visited and could then narrow the search area.

He wasn't worried about his family in this instance. He was worried about the abyssal cult that even had two tier 3 monsters out killing yesterday. They could probably sneak into the guild and steal the records if they really wanted.

He grimaced after making a decision and ripped his adventurer card in half. The rest was tossed out the train window never to be seen again.

He would start over from the beginning. With the level he was at he would be granted the steel adventurer title right from the start. He could also pay slightly extra to get his name on the card changed to a nickname.

There shouldn't be a problem with his plan. Other adventurers did sometimes lose their identification and needed to start over. Most of the time they just returned to the place they received their old card and had it remade.

But other times when the journey would just be too far they would have them remade. People mostly gained their rank by status and not by their track record. A person with a tier 2 class wouldn't need to start over as a bronze adventurer. They just needed to get through a few tests and that was it.

While Roland was on his way towards his new promised land the castle in which the current city lord was living was abuzz.

Louis Dreux and the knight captain were both in his study while the noble in question was looking at some papers.

"They failed..."

“Yes my lord, but they managed to remove six of the council members.”

“What of the other two?”

“The people from Exeor are on their guard, our reports say they are leaving the city together with most of their assets. The other merchant has already fled.”

Louis Dreux rubbed his chin while looking at the papers. A more in-depth report of what happened last night was here. How the people that he hired had murdered most of the council members and even left a calling card.

Louis wasn't worried that others would associate him with the cult. There was no evidence and the messenger that he sent was long dead. The knight captain was the only other person that knew the truth and he knew that the man wouldn't dare to go against him.

Even though not all of the people he wanted gone were dead, he could go through with the next phase of his plan. He didn't fear the survivors as he was a noble with a lot of backing. He didn't think a bunch of commoners would dare to go against a count's son.

There was no proof of his involvement with any of this besides the thief guild incident. Even if that came out to the light, they wouldn't be able to connect it back to the abyssal cult murders.

“Captain, have our people move along with the plan, be persuasive if you have to... Give them the price we agreed upon previously.”

The man in the suit of armor did a salute and then promptly left the room. The count's son was now alone.

He stood up, with short steps he walked over to the window and looked outside. It was already dark and the two bright moons were gently illuminating the darkness.

While looking out into the distance he started murmuring to himself.

“I won't let you have this city, it belongs to me and no one else. If I can't have it then I'd rather burn it to the ground.”

The man smirked while thinking about a certain older brother that would be returning soon. He only had a couple of months left but it should be enough to replace the merchants with his own people.

Controlling the money flow of the city was his way of taking it over. He needed to prepare so that everything was ready for his brother's return. He had suffered unforeseen setbacks through these years but he didn't just spend them doing nothing.

While he couldn't touch the council members for a year there were others that he could affect. The abyssal cult was a small gamble that he was willing to take. With the help of their peculiar brand of magic, he had been slowly taking over this city. Replacing public officials by any means necessary.

“That meathead won't suspect anything, he was always like that, never using his head and thinking that everything will always go his way.”

The man took out a framed picture and looked at it. In it, there were two kids standing next to a man. The children were alike and had similar facial features to the adult.

Louis Dreux looked at this picture in disdain before setting it ablaze with his magical flames. The red embers that he was holding in his hand slowly turned pitch black as they turned the picture to cinders. The sound of cackles filling the emptiness of the room as the night continued.

[Chapter 56 Joining the caravan.](#)

Roland's head hit the uneven window of the train he was riding on. His eyes were hurting as he couldn't sleep well in these kinds of conditions. With the addition of the stress of riding alone to an unfamiliar location, it only added to his sleeplessness. He had also spent three days riding this blasted train without being able to stretch his legs.

The scenery continued changing while they journeyed deeper into the south part of the kingdom. The snow started to vanish with time and it turned to fields of grass.

Roland noticed that this kingdom had strange climate cycles. One part of it could be covered in snow while another would have smoldering hot weather. This was mostly due to the effects of magic that affected the climate in odd ways.

Thanks to this the journey wasn't that chilly. This train didn't have anything like a central heating system. It was more or less just iron and wooden carts, some of the windows let the cold air in if not closed correctly.

Regrettably, this marvel of current engineering couldn't take him to his final destination. The time to depart came as he arrived at the last station.

It was a large trade city similar to Edelgard. The trains like the one he was traveling on only stopped at these types of cities. They transported goods to specific parts of the kingdom where then they would be taken further by merchants in caravans. This was also the next part of his journey, finding a merchant caravan towards the port city.

"If I remember correctly the city I'm supposed to go to is called Luden. I'll have to pay and go as a tourist..."

Roland thought back to the moment he got rid of his adventurer card. If he still had it he could probably just take an escort mission from the guild. Every caravan with merchants placed missions as that and adventurers used them to mitigate travel expenses.

The money they received for the job was slightly reduced. Instead, they got free food and even some carriages to ride in when they got tired.

He didn't worry too much as he did have a hefty sum of money with him. This would even be a better way to travel as no one would expect him to risk his life to defend the caravan.

If something went wrong he could just escape while the adventurers and guards faced off against whatever was attacking them. They would be disposable meat shields that he could use to cover his escape.

Roland hopped down from the train and looked at the surroundings. The train station was kind of similar to the one in Edelgard but it looked to be in worse shape. He didn't see any people from the church of Solaria like last time, so that was a bonus.

Roland weighed the pros and cons of getting a new adventurer card in this city. He decided against it as this train had a direct link to the city he previously lived in. It would be possible to get his new id from here if they followed the path.

He needed to get a new one directly at Dragnis Island, there had to be a guild at Albrook. That would be one of the first things to be built after a new dungeon appeared.

While walking away from the train station he felt something in his abdomen. It was the feeling of hunger. He had only taken simple rations that he didn't like that much. There was food to buy on the train but it wasn't of high quality either.

When he was a few hours away from this city he decided to wait. He would rather not eat for a bit and get some freshly made stew here than eat more dried meat.

'The caravans take some time to gather. I might have to take a break in this town for a few days.'

Roland continued toward the city. It was the middle of the day so the restaurants would still be open. Smaller cities didn't have those around that much as the inns the adventurer's lived in were used for such services.

The quality of the food suffered when the locale was used for everything. After living in this world and having eaten bland food for so long, Roland was slowly getting fed up with it. He was even willing to pay a bit extra if he could get something savory.

The buildings in this city were mostly constructed from red bricks. This was the main theme of the architecture in this kingdom but the warmer the climate became the more log cabins appeared.

After living in this world for so long Roland was able to distinguish between good and bad restaurants. How good the food would be could be mostly spotted by how well kept the building of the establishment was.

Previously he just entered the closest one available and took whatever he could get. Now on the other time, he took some time to examine the outside and inside layouts before choosing.

'This one looks fine, shouldn't be too expensive either...'

He pushed the door open to a middle-sized restaurant building. The moment he entered he could smell the aroma of food which made his mouth water slightly. He could see some people on the inside, most of them looked to be regular commoners as they weren't wearing anything that an adventure would wear.

The biggest telltale sign of a bad restaurant was a large number of drunks. Rowdy adventures also mostly visited the cheaper diners. Most of the hardened men that worked by killing monsters and fighting off bandits didn't care about good food that much. They would rather spend their days drinking and then visiting the red light district where they spent most of their money.

In about half an hour his dishes were ready and he could finally eat. He used this chance to ask the staff about the location of the adventurer guild. Even without his adventurer card that was the place to go if you wanted some information.

People that formed caravans actually wanted more people to join them. They had enough room to transport people that would pay for the carriage. Some of them would even postpone the journey before all the free spots were filled out. This helped with paying for the adventurers that protected the caravan quite a bit. It was also quite cheap as the people mostly rode with the goods.

Roland covered his mouth while burping and left some coins on the table along with a small tip. He wanted to take care of his business as soon as he could. He wouldn't want to be stuck wondering through the night searching for an inn to stay.

Even with the general information where the guild was, it would take him some time to find his way. He didn't really want to spend money on a city map if he was just going to be leaving soon.

Roland decided to use a coach to get around this problem. The streets were crude but the ride didn't hurt his posterior all that much.

When he arrived he was greeted by a plain-looking adventurers guild in a large brick building. There was no dungeon in the immediate area here either so the adventurer levels would probably be low.

On the inside, it had a similar layout to all the guilds that he had seen before. The people who were running things here probably decided on keeping all the buildings the same. Which was smart as some adventurers weren't that intelligent.

Keeping a familiar architecture to all the adventurer guilds probably saved a lot of time. This lowered the possibility of getting the adventurers confused when they traveled to different guilds. They would automatically know where to get everything if it was kept the same.

There was the usual smell of sweat and alcohol and the same similar-looking bar in the back. He could see adventurers talking at the round tables. This brought back some old memories of his adventuring days.

Roland started spacing out, some of his old party member's figures superimposed themselves on similar-looking adventurers. The only thing that snapped him out of it was a person behind him.

"You're blocking the door, move..."

Roland snapped back into reality and looked at a group of men. He didn't answer and just stepped to the side while the person that called him out just cussed at him while walking away.

'Am I missing the good old days?'

Roland asked himself while going towards the notice board. Would he find anyone pleasant to work within the new city? There would probably be new adventurers flocking there to hit it big. He wasn't planning on taking a passive backline position though.

He had seen first hand how limited a mage class actually was. When someone at your level managed to close the distance you were a sitting duck.

He could try coming up with some defensive measures like the runic shield variants. Maybe ones that cause repelling forces or explosions.

Magic's biggest drawback was the time it took to cast. Even with the runic variations, there was a slight delay. People only got faster and faster with each tier, their reaction times became superhuman.

He needed to be able to react to opponents at close range. One way of doing that would be increasing his physical stats by training. He still needed to raise his weapon proficiencies to the max and could pick up some passive skills that gave some bonuses that he hadn't tried before.

Another faster way would be by using his runesmithing class. He now knew how to insert mana stones into slots, these gems would increase his stats by a flat number. He could create an armor for himself that aided him in battle.

He had a large mana pool and a skill that lowered his mana usage when using runic gear. If he added the mana stones on top of it all he felt like he could match higher tier classes in pure stats. He just needed some time to prepare and the right materials. All of this would cost a lot of money, luckily he had a good headstart thanks to the broken contract.

'There is one caravan heading towards the port city, leaving in two days...'

He looked at the notice board and quickly found his next destination. He wouldn't even need to ask the guild receptionist for information. Everything was written down here, he just needed to go to the caravan meeting place and sign up directly with them.

He had two days to rest and think about his next few moves. He also needed to do one thing that he wasn't able to during the train ride.

Roland left the adventurer's guild almost as fast as he came. His next target was an inn, he needed a place to stay.

He managed to find some lodgings before the night took over and was now looking at a certain book.

"Mana reinforcement..."

This was a skill book that he ordered before the unfortunate events took place in Edelgard. This was a special skill used by many classes and quite costly. Just as the name stated it reinforced your mana and increased your mana pool in the process.

Roland got to it and started reading. His high intelligence and advanced reading skill aided him in understanding it fast. There were certain hidden stat requirements for this skill and a special way of actually learning it.

"So that's how it is..."

He sat down on the wooden floor in his room while removing his robe. He needed to expose his skin to the ambient mana in the surrounding for this to work. Even after reading the whole skill book, he wouldn't be able to just get this skill instantly. He needed to correctly perform it and only then would his status window get updated.

His legs were now together and he moved his hands apart while resting them on his knees. This was called the lotus position and was mostly used by monk classes for meditation.

Roland closed his eyes and focused on the invisible energy that was circulating around him. His basic mana sense skill aided him in getting this skill greatly.

The ambient energy in the air started to slowly move towards his body. From the outside, it looked as if Roland's body exuded gentle blue light.

This looked to be a rudimentary process of absorbing mana but was very dangerous in reality. The person needed to absorb the mana energy from the surroundings and inject it directly into their body.

This was different from casting spells as a mage just guided the mana outside after a short period of time.

Here Roland needed to bathe his blood vessels and organs in this energy. If he failed his body could burst from the inside. This was also the reason the previous owner of this body died. The boy absorbed mana too fast without having a strong base to resist it.

With the knowledge from the skill book, it was a trivial task for someone like Roland. Through his crafting profession, he had learned to control his mana quite well.

He took in a large breath and guided most of the mana into his lungs. Through them, he would distribute it to his red blood cells that would carry it through his whole circulatory system.

It felt like he was doing a martial arts breathing exercise. Its purpose to bathe his whole body in mana and make it be more receptive to it. It was similar to how regular iron changed to deep iron when exposed to mana for long periods of time.

You have learned Basic Mana Reinforcement.

After several breathing exercises, he finally heard the system voice speak out. He looked to his status and could see it now being there, at L1.

This skill added a percentage of mana to your base stats. At L1 it only increased it by 1% all the way up to 9% when maxed out at the basic version.

The good thing about this skill was that he didn't need to buy another skill book for the higher tier version. He would be able to automatically rank it up after reaching tier 2. From what he knew the skill at tier 2 would go up to 25% and at tier 3 to 50% which with his already high mana would net him a big chunk of usable mana for crafting.

He didn't have much to do for now so he decided to practice this skill throughout the rest of this and the following day. His stay in this city consisted of going to the restaurant and then practicing his mana reinforcement skill. With his current level and stats, it proved easy and he managed to get it to level 2 before the second day ended.

On the dawn of the next day, he arrived at the place where the caravan would be leaving. He could see a lot of people gathered and over twenty carriages were there.

They looked like long horse-drawn carriages but the animals that were pulling them varied by species and size.

Some had large lizard looking creatures, others had large bulls with three tails and three horns. Some did have horse looking animals but they were much bigger than the ones you would expect to see. These were mostly tamed monsters that had a lot more stamina than regular barnyard animals and could pull a lot more weight.

Roland went over to the person that looked to be in charge. He was easy to spot as he had a clipboard in hand and was taking down notes.

“I’d like to travel with this caravan to the port town.”

The man looked to Roland, he was wearing his dark robe and the man could tell that the person had a robust build and was armored.

“You? You’re not one of the adventurers? We are still missing a few...”

Roland explained that he wasn’t part of them and that he wanted to ride in one of the carriages as just a traveler. The man with the clipboard nodded and then gave him the price for such luxury which Roland paid down to the last copper coin.

The exchange was now finalized and he could pick one of the carriages to travel in. In situations like this, it was mostly expected to just ride with the transported items. People were expected to just find a free spot themselves.

He found himself one that had some space with a lot of wooden crates inside. He was able to lean against one of them with some leftover leg space. Now he just needed to wait for everyone to gather up and his journey would continue. If possible he would continue training his new skill while riding in the cart. The trip would take about a week so he had a lot of free time to practice.