

Runesmith 61

[Chapter 61 Impromptu Party 2](#)

On the way, the new party visited the crash site, or what remained from it. Roland was hoping that they might find some provisions.

To his dismay the only thing he found there was scrap metal and wood, along with more goblins that they luckily cleared out without that much of a problem.

While here, Roland looked up to the mountain above them. He could not see the path from which they fell down. There was also a thick fog right in the middle of the mountain range that limited his vision.

His new party members explained that they were the only survivors that remained. They had buried some of the other slaves that didn't survive the fall along with some dead guards.

Roland could still see some blood and gory bits scattered around. Most of it was gone, probably down in the goblin bellies. There was nothing else to do here so they continued on their merry way.

The place where they were in was deep down inside a gorge. The rocky walls were quite smooth and would be hard to climb. The further up you went the more you had to contend with that blasted fog. Going up was out of the question.

Luckily there was a path next to a river down here that they could follow. The biggest downside of this path was that there were a lot of monsters living here. It was also a path that stretched around the mountain and would take them a lot more time to cross.

This was also the reason why the caravan owners decided on going over the mountain as it cut the travel time down by a couple of days.

The scenery down here was composed mostly of trees and bushes. It was over a kilometer in width and the river in the middle was the cause of many monsters living here. Just like any other animals, monsters flocked to areas with a water source. The humanoid mountain goat-like monsters were just one of the many types that roamed this landscape.

The hastily put together quartet of people had now traversed a couple of kilometers through this monster-filled land. Roland was now looking at one of his wands that had run out of charges after a couple of encounters.

He looked at the male moon elf swordsman examining the lady elf. The man was like a nanny that somehow wasn't able to take more than one step away from her. He was like a tick that wouldn't go away.

The other major fighting force that was the half-orc always ran into battle with a smile on his face. He constantly broke formation and caused Roland to overuse his spells. He was running on a limited budget of charges and was afraid that he would run out of juice soon.

He didn't say anything at first, thinking that they would get a grip on the situation. Instead, they just continued with this strategy, maybe they thought that he would pick up the slack with his spell-slinging. They might have not realized that his mana pool and gear usage were limited.

“Hey... are you being serious now?”

Roland’s face twitched as he looked at Logon examining Aredhel for the hundredth time. Golgrim was right next to them getting healed by the acolyte. He had, even more bite and claw marks on his body than usual.

“What do you mean?”

Logon replied while Aredhel scooted to the side, the woman looked a bit fed up with how he was treating her as well.

“Do you two want to get us all killed or something?”

Roland crossed his arms over one another while glaring at the moon elf and green skin.

“Will she go up in flames if you leave her alone for a second?”

Logon turned around to face Roland, the youth was squinting his eyes in his direction and certainly looked annoyed.

“With all due respect Mr. Carmine. I am thankful for your help but I can not abandon lady Aredhel. What if some creature sneaks up on the defenseless lady! I could not live with myself if anything happened to her! I promised to protect her with my life! I need to return her safely to her family!”

Roland flinched slightly as the man started unloading a monologue towards him. His eyes were bloodshot and it looked like he was close to blowing a fuse. Maybe the shock of not being able to protect this elven lady had been too much for this guy. It looked like he was getting paranoid.

“Oh, will you be quiet!”

Before Roland could think about a good retort to stop this babbling idiot of a swordsman. Aredhel moved in from behind and gave Logon an open hand smack to the back of the head.

“M...M’lady?”

The man was stunned while also stopping with his rambling shouts. He slowly turned around to see Aredhel with both her hands on her hips. She had her face slightly raised and her eyebrows were furrowed.

“Stop causing trouble for Mr. Carmine. He was caring enough to rid us of those slave collars and even saved us twice!”

Roland just took a step back while the silver-haired elven woman was now the one shouting. She started reprimanding her bodyguard while mostly bringing up Roland’s previous deeds. Mostly implying that the three of them would be already dead if he didn’t intervene.

The first time being where he threw mana shields out when he was falling. The other one when he took care of the hobgoblin when Logon got wounded.

“I... I’m sorry... This was a severe and continuous lapse in my judgment. Please accept my sincere apology, Mr. Carmine.”

The man did a quick 180 and started to apologize. He took his lady's words to heart almost instantly. Roland realized that it would probably be better to just talk to Aredhel instead if he wanted to get things done. The woman apparently had this man wrapped around her finger, she was even the one that could control that half-orc.

Roland wasn't sure but he had an idea why this was the case. When he was removing the slave collar he did analyze Aredhel's stats. She had a high charisma stat above twenty points.

Charisma was counted differently than other stats. It didn't reach that high of a number compared to it. Ten to fourteen was the average number a person's charisma would reach. Anything above that indicated someone with some type of charm. This woman's Charisma rating was 24 and even he noticed its effects.

It might have been some kind of trait but he found the elven lady quite bewitching. Luckily Roland had a high willpower stat to counteract this. He had read up that a person with really high charisma could affect people in strange ways. It was as if they were casting a mind control spell, if the person was susceptible to it they would perform tasks that they wouldn't normally do.

There were also some classes that used this to their advantage. Bards were one type of class that relied on it, some could even enchant people with their voices. There were also monsters like an Incubus or a Succubus that led adventurers astray. Someone with a high enough charm could topple kingdoms and empires. They could affect people in power to the point of mad devotion.

The girl here wasn't quite at that level though, at most she could slightly affect these two.

"It's fine if you understand but I'll need you to take a more active part in the coming fights. You don't need to stick to your friend so closely. I'll protect her if something happens, that's why I'm back here."

Roland was mostly ticked off by Logon letting too many monsters into the party formation. Aredhel could easily back away on her own while he contended with the monsters in battle. He would then support him from the back with some magical attacks.

He was a person with a lot of firepower but his fighting style was limited to his magical items. Without them, he would be weaker than a regular mage or a regular warrior. The only thing above those was his high mana pool. He also suffered from a limited array of spells.

The regular mana versions of spells showed a decline against tier 2 monsters. They also traveled at a slower speed than the more advanced spells and were easier to doge by enemies with high agility.

"But how can I trust..."

Before Logon could pose that question he received another smack to the back of his head. While Roland looked at this comedic routine Golgrim was to the side just sniggering. The half-orc apparently thought that it was funny to see a grown man be abused by a smaller woman.

"Little Logon did bad not like Golgrim!"

Roland eyed the smirking green skin, he just wanted to go over there and give the big idiot a smack of his own.

“Golgrim, you’re not doing any better than him. How about you stop running after every monster you see?”

He proclaimed while looking at the half-orc sternly. He felt like he was a teacher in kindergarten and Aredhel was his assistant. The moment he reprimanded the half-orc he began to sulk. He sat down on the ground and started poking one of the dead monster bodies with a stick.

“C-could you...”

Roland turned to the elven woman who in turn walked over to the large male.

“It’s okay Golgrim, Mr. Carmine didn’t mean it. He just needs you to listen to him from now on...”

Aredhel tried to calm the large beast of a half-orc down. Even though physically he outranked everyone here his mind was of a child’s. Luckily the female moon elf was good at talking to kids so she somehow managed to get him to co-operate. Maybe from now on, they could move along more proficiently.

“Okay, let’s try this again...Golgrim and Logon you two stay side by side and try not to break formation from now on... Me and Aredhel will stay in the back and support you with spells...”

The two knuckleheads nodded at the plan of action but if they would follow the instructions remained to be seen. For now, the party removed the mana stones from the monster corpses and tredded forward. They needed to find shelter in the next couple of hours before nightfall.

The moment of truth came quite fast as after an hour of walking they met another type of monster. It was only two this time around and they looked like a giant praying mantis.

Greater Mantodea [L 57]

Roland’s identification skill was finally at a level that he could use it for fights. These monsters were of the tier 2 variety. They were above human-sized and quite long. Their raptorial forelegs were their calling card, the razor-sharp blades those had could even cut through metal. Luckily insectoid monsters were susceptible to fire type magic.

“Golgrim, Logon. Please distract them but don’t break formation, I’ll finish them off with a fire spell.”

He gave out the order while preparing for the right moment to strike. He could see the half-orc moving forward while holding his club.

“Golgrim understand!”

This time instead of charging forward like a bull he started smacking the club on a nearby boulder. The monster’s attention was brought to the commotion and to the person that was responsible.

The two insectoid monsters charged forward, their blade appendages raised high in the air.

The moon elf glanced back for a moment and noticed that Aredhel was chanting a spell.

“Holy light of the moon, which gently illuminates the night, let all things be filled with your pure essence...”

Logon's body shone in a dark color as he felt his speed being increased. If he looked at his status screen he would notice an increase in his agility by some points. Roland had seen her cast this buffing spell before but not on him. He was curious if such a buffing spell increased your stats by a flat number or by a percentage.

Logon took the chance that Golgrim gave him and attempted a flanking maneuver while the two insect monsters concentrated on another target.

Even though these two were slightly more coordinated it didn't mean that this would be an easy fight. Golgrim swung his large wooden club at the monster which received the attack with its razor-sharp appendage.

It was debatable which of these two had more raw power but one thing was certain. A sharp weapon as the mantis scythes far outperformed a simple wooden club. It got sliced in half just in one swing and caused the half-orc to lose balance.

He was lucky that there was enough force in the clash to cause the monster's attack to slow down immensely. It couldn't benefit from the exchange but its ally was not far behind. A bolt of energy traveled towards it to give Golgrim enough time to counterattack.

While the half-orc engaged his enemy in hand to hand combat, Logon used the chance to strike the beast's side. He managed to swiftly slice off two legs from the side before dodging a sickle-blade that was aiming for his neck.

Roland gave the two some range support with his regular mage spells. He was rusty with his incantations a bit but he wasn't aiming for a kill on the second creature, just to stall it.

He saved his tier 2 spell for when the monster was immobile. Logon continued to remove more of the insect's legs until it was stationary enough to deliver a finishing blow. A condensed ball of flame energy slammed into the monster setting it ablaze. The heat was enough to cause critical damage and almost finish it off in one hit.

The finishing touch on the huge mantis looking monster would be Golgrim's large fists. The second monster wouldn't just wait there for the party of people to kill him. He noticed the two spell slingers in the back and charged at them with its sickle arms raised.

At least that is what it was trying to do, instead, it received a mana arrow to the face. The monster was fast enough to dodge to the side but killing it with that spell wasn't the thing Roland was aiming at.

The remaining Mantodea got one of its legs sliced off by Logon that quickly returned to keep the backline safe. With him bothering it from close range it was only a matter of time till the beast was also killed.

At the end of the battle, Roland was rewarded with two common grade mana stones. They had a nice green tint to it and could even be mistaken for emeralds.

One of his party members was also quite happy about the spoils. Roland saw Golgrim leaning down and after some crunching sounds, he removed one of the large sickle appendages.

In his hand, the insect's appendage looked like a large machete. He started swinging it around, he even chopped up the monster's body with it. "Golgrim now even stronger!"

He cheered while removing the other weapon appendage. Roland now had a dual-wielding half-orc on his team, though the brute certainly had zero finesse with how he was swinging those around. Roland took a mental note to not get too close to the half-orc when he was swinging those around. There was no option to turn off friendly fire in this world.

"Well, that wasn't that bad, this time around..."

Roland commented while Aredhel smiled at him. Logon wasn't far behind as after defeating the monster he swooped in to see if his mistress was okay. It was a bit funny to look at him searching for wounds, he was really acting like the girl's nanny.

"I think we should move, the blood will only attract more monsters."

"I agree, we should also find shelter for the night."

Roland and Aredhel exchanged some words. The sun was starting to go down and they probably had about two hours till sundown. They needed to either find a cave to rest at or build a fire and camp out in the open.

The first option would be the safer one but in caves, some monsters lurked. They might have to clear out any previous tenants before resting.

The first day out in the gorge was drawing to an end. After some bumps along the road, the party was slowly shaping up. Roland could already see them actually making it to the village in one piece, that is if nothing out of the ordinary happened along the way...

[Chapter 62 Arriving at the village?](#)

The party of four set up camp by a shallow cave. They were lucky enough that it was only occupied by one giant spider type monster. It didn't even have any babies and was easily dispatched by Roland who tossed a fire blast spell in there.

The monster went up in flames nicely and had been almost instantly cooked in the process. No one was actually willing to eat the thing, not even the half-orc companion who didn't look like a picky eater.

They made a fireplace to ward off some of the night stalking monsters. There were variants with night vision and specialized skills to wander through the dark areas. Most of the time a simple bright burning fireplace would keep those types of beings away. Traits and skills that worked in darkness were quite susceptible to light.

Roland was a bit deeper in the cave, next to a monstrous-looking spider that had long lost its life. He was using his runecrafting hammer to repair his magical wands that were used during the day.

There were a lot more monsters than he anticipated in this gorge. The decision to free the slaves and have them in his party was the right one. If he was alone, it would have been many times harder to survive and he would have probably burned through his rune scroll reserves as well.

He was managing with his runecrafting magical wands for the time being. When a monster got too close he could also use his enchanted sword. The charges on it were also limited but the mana warrior skills were suited for middle and close-range combat.

While tinkering with his gear Roland took some time to examine his status and skills. Not much time had gone by since leaving Edelgard but he had managed to level up once.

Name :

Roland Arden L 70

Classes:

T1 Mage L25 [Secondary]

T1 Runic Mana Scribe L 25 [X]

T1 Runic Blacksmith L 20 [Main]

HP

713/713

MP

2099/2599

SP

526/1019

Strength

54

Agility

38

Dexterity

81

Vitality

53

Endurance

61

Intelligence

114

Willpower

101

Charisma

16

Luck

8

Debugger L 6, Circuitry L 7, Tinkerer L 8, Identify L 8, Basic Mana Shaping L 9, Basic Mana Regulation L 9, Mana Sense L 9, Basic Rune Mastery L 9, Basic Rune Scribing L 9, Basic Smithing Mastery L 8, Basic Runecraft L 7, Runic Blacksmith's Eyes L 5, Blacksmith's Heat Sense L 6, Basic Rune Compression L 3, Ethereal Pathways L 6, Basic Mana Reinforcement L3, One-handed Swordsmanship L 4, Hand to hand combat L 1, Spearmanship L1, Blunt Weapon Proficiency L1

Roland paid attention to his combat-related skills. They had moved above basic ones but they were still only in the beginning stages. During his stay at the Arden estate, he was forced to raise them to L9 of their basic versions but since then they had been stagnating.

He focused on increasing his crafting professions and then his mana related skills. That left less time for combat practice. He did use the sword from time to time which increased this skill the most but he wasn't sure that it was the right choice to only focus on that one.

He was going to be a runesmith and would be able to produce various weapons and tools. Swords were nice against other people but against monsters, something like a spear might have been better. Increased reach and thrusting attacks could win out over sword slices.

Then if a person was up against a heavily armored monster, or maybe one with a hard shell a blunt weapon would be a better choice. Even an ax or a war hammer that had a more concentrated point of impact would be better than a sword in that situation.

There were just too many skills to focus on though but he did have time till he maxed out his current class. He could both fight monsters during the day and then craft during the night and constantly receive experience.

Even now while he was fixing his magic wands he was gaining small amounts of experience. With time this would certainly stack and let him increase his levels fast. First, he would need to escape this foreign canyon and get to that next settlement.

'I hope they have carriages going through that village, I might have to go to a larger one on foot if they don't...'

Roland grumbled as he knew that small villages were rarely visited by outsiders. Mostly some merchants came once a month or every other month to sell and buy some items. Then maybe the tax collectors would show up, or the governing lord would send people to pick up grain.

If he arrived there just after the merchants visited it he might have to wait over a month for another one to arrive. There was also the problem with his three new companions. They stood out too much, two beautiful elves and one huge mountain of muscles.

People would probably start asking questions about them. If it came to light that they were escaped slaves then he might get in trouble for setting them free. Even though he knew they were innocent and were not criminals, he had no proof.

This slave ring was probably something run by a shadowy organization. If he got involved with it at this point in his life he might end up as a slave too.

‘Well, they didn’t seem like they would be going towards the port town though. The border to their country is to the west.’

They agreed to split up after reaching the village. It was only a place to get some better clothes and food. He would be repaid for everything with mana stones. These he wanted to keep for now as he had many new items to produce. That is if he actually managed to get a new workshop out there in the sticks.

The city he wanted to go to was a frontier town, just an old village before people took notice. With the arrival of the dungeon things would be taking off but how far it had advanced was still unknown. He only wished that he wasn’t too late and he would manage to get himself a house of his own.

With one last hit, the wand that produced the fire arrows was finally repaired. He looked over the runic structures. He could see the metal shape deforming a bit and the runes started to erode into the hard steel. The more he used and repaired it the less steel there would be until finally, it would be unusable.

“Should last me through more repairs... I wish I could smelt those collars down and use deep steel instead...”

He was already thinking about improving his sword but it wasn’t that easy. The better the metal the harder it was to place runes on it. The reason deep iron or deep steel could hold more charges was that it was somewhat resistant to mana. The runic structures burned up at a much slower rate but were also harder to inscribe.

Roland finally decided to stand up and join the others at the campfire. They had managed to get some fish from the nearby river. There was a shallow spot through which a lot of them were passing. Logon was surprisingly good at catching them with a sharpened stick. With a few thrusts, he impaled some which were now being roasted on the fire.

“Here you go, Mr. Carmine.”

“You can stop calling me Mr, I’m younger than you...”

“Oh really? You seemed older... I just assumed...”

Roland and Aredhel exchanged some words. There were a lot of magical races in this world and also vitality increased even human longevity. It wouldn’t be much of a stretch to believe that Roland here was much older than he looked.

“You don’t conduct yourself like a child, you remind me of my uncle.”

“I’ll take that as a compliment...”

“Hah.”

Logon was also here, he was responsible for making the dishes today. He was surprisingly good with these sorts of things. Apparently, his father had been your typical elven hunter that taught him to scour the woods. Too bad that his son ended up receiving a warrior class instead of an archer one.

Golgrim peeked in as well, he was a bit in the distance as he was shooed away by Aredhel. He already devoured some of the fish before they could even be cooked. This left the rest of the party maddened and they all agreed to give him guard duty. He was now leaning up against one of the trees while looking for possible monsters.

“Growl...”

A strange sound entered the party’s ears which made them all jump up to their feet. Roland pulled out his sword along with the wand he had repaired. Logon leaped in front of Aredhel while looking in the direction of the strange rumbling noise.

“Grrrrr....”

What they saw was not a monster or a beast, no it was Golgrim holding his stomach and trying to keep it from rumbling. The trio of baffled individuals narrowed their eyes at the half-orc while he twiddled his thumbs and turned around. Soon the feast started and everyone got their share of the fish, the hungry green-skin included.

Nothing out of the ordinary had happened that night but there were some lurking friends watching them. The party took turns on guard duty through the night, they made it till the next day without any major problems.

They continued their journey towards their destination. Sometimes they stopped to get some fruit or get more fish. Once in a while, they would be attacked by stray monsters, some in smaller and ones in larger groups.

What they all noticed that the closer to the village they got that the weaker the monsters became. At the start of their trek, they were running into tier 2 monstrosities but now they were left with easy tier 1 mobs. Some of them would be easily dispatchable by the acolyte in their team.

Soon they were right next to their destination. The large mountain was getting left behind and they were even able to get out of the gorge. They just needed to follow the river to arrive at the village.

They finally saw some signs of civilization as a dirt road appeared. They could even see some cart marks here and it seemed like one had recently gone by. At least that was what Logon was claiming from the way the tracks marks appeared.

“It Looks like more than one carriage passed this way...”

The moon elf tracked with his eyes from where this dirt road appeared. He could see it going all the way to the mountain range they just passed.

“It could be the slavers...”

He mentioned while frowning slightly. This threw a wrench into their plan. If they met up with the slave traders they would probably not react kindly to three of their own wandering unchecked. Depending on how many of them were left alive they could even attack.

“Don’t worry Golgrim will cut puny enemies.”

The half-orc started flailing his hands around while holding onto the appendages of the monster mantis they had slain. He changed his catchphrase a bit after exchanging his club with those.

“Well, isn’t that reassuring!”

Aredhel clapped her hands and smiled. She looked like a gentle mother just going along with her hyperactive child.

Roland on the other hand was worried, he didn’t want to be labeled as a criminal. For freeing criminal slaves you would most likely be also sentenced to be one. He also wasn’t interested in fighting the people from the caravan as that would also give a similar result.

“I think you should wait outside the village. I can see that there is a forest area around it, how about you lay low there while I scope out the situation?”

He didn’t owe this group of three anything by this point. He still wanted to keep his end of the bargain. He promised to help them get food and a set of clothes if it was possible.

If the caravan survivors were in the village it would actually be a good thing for him. He would be able to continue the journey with them, he did pay for the trip already.

“Mr. Carmine... You’ve already done so much for us. I’m not sure that we should inconvenience you with our problems anymore.”

Surprisingly Aredhel spoke up against his plan. Though Logon on the other hand was quick to jump in with a counterargument.

“My lady! We will need those clothes and provisions. If any traveling soldiers spot us we will be done for.”

He saw the bigger picture and knew that they still required help. When someone saw two beautiful elves and a large half-orc in a loincloth they would surely approach them. With a high enough identification skill or a body search their true identity would be revealed. Then running or battle would be the only option.

Roland was fine either way, but if he was in their shoes he would probably take him up on the offer. The only reason he would turn the favor away would be if he suspected foul play.

Even though these four spend some time together battling monsters and watching each other’s backs, they were still strangers. They couldn’t be 100% sure if Roland wouldn’t double-cross them.

He could very well go to the village where the survivors from the caravan were and come back along with some soldiers. The only reason they trusted him was because he removed their slave collars, but he could have done that just to survive.

“You are right... but we shouldn’t rely on Mr. Carmine’s goodwill so much... but it would be reassuring if he continued to aid us...”

Logon managed to convince Aredhel to go along with the previous plan.

'These two sure don't seem to be doubting my motives though and the third one...'

He looked over to Golgrim who had stopped swinging his weapons around and was now picking his nose. Roland was just in time to see the mass of muscles swallow a booger which made him cringe.

'Yeah, that one is a lost cause. Hope I'm not being paranoid here but I should probably think about some contingencies...'

Roland had his own reservations about these three, they two could still try to double-cross him after he gave them the food and clothes, along with some money for the mana stones.

"I also think we should visit the village first, you can decide after I return. Think if we stick to the trees we all can get closer."

The party decided to journey forward. Just as Roland proposed they strayed from the main dirt road and kept to the forest while being vigilant. There were no dangerous monsters in this forest, only some animals. In a couple of hours, they arrived at the town outskirts with luck on their side.

They had a safe spot to examine the situation before they entered. Logon took it upon himself to climb a tree. What he saw out in the distance wasn't anything good though.

"What do you see?"

"I can see some carriages, the people from the caravan are there but..."

"But?"

"There are others... it looks suspicious, I can't see any farmers or villagers. They are also wearing armor."

Roland and Logon exchanged some information before he himself decided to climb up a tree. He was quite good at this thanks to doing a lot of tree climbing in his youth. He noticed what the elf meant when he saw the situation.

What he saw was armed men walking around the village. He could somehow distinguish their armor from this distance. Thanks to his good memory he was also able to recognize similarities that this gear possessed.

He had seen similar looking leather armor that was unkempt on a certain group of people before. If he got closer he might have even been able to recognize some faces as he did get a look during the fighting.

"It's those bandits, they have taken over the village."

He could see some of the carriages and wagons from the caravan there. The robbers must have followed them here or this town already was part of their territory.

The problematic part in all of this was that he now couldn't approach the village to get provisions. The next settlement was over a week away if they traveled on foot while fighting monsters on the way. That would still probably be a safer option than attacking the bandits here.

While deliberating about the next move he heard a scream coming from the village. Both he and the elf looked to the source only to see a person running. It was a woman that didn't get far as soon enough

she was tumbling on the ground with an arrow stuck in her shin. They looked as she was dragged back by a bandit into one of the shabby huts before silence took over.

'They have hostages...'

It was now clear that this wasn't a bandit hideout. They had clearly taken over it and the villagers were still there. Now a decision needed to be made, either help them or escape. The second option would probably be the easier one...