

Runesmith 63

[Chapter 63 Village rumble.](#)

Two men dressed in shabby clothes were walking through the night. The visibility was bad but the two just couldn't hold it in anymore, nature was calling. After drinking deluded alcohol for most of the day, the two needed to empty themselves.

Their buddies were still being loud while having fun. They had hit it off big this time around, they had managed to take over a caravan filled with riches. They had suffered a small setback but after taking out a certain mage, the defenses of their prey crumbled.

They were staying in this village for the time being. Soon they would need to move but before that, they needed to go through all the loot.

This was a group of bandits that roamed the lands. They preyed on wandering merchants or adventurers. They would find certain ambush locations and stay there, waiting for the right time to strike.

Information traveled slowly in this world, before anyone sent a subjugation force after them they would be long gone. If they found a good hiding place they could even lay low for a few weeks until the coast was clear.

They had been doing this for years, sometimes they lost some people but they could always pick up new recruits. They just needed to dangle rewards in front of poor commoners like farmers and old adventurers. Some of them would take the bait and join their bandit group. After someone became a member there was no escape, murder and pillaging was now part of their lives.

These two were part of that group. Both of them were just farmers that were shoved towards this path because of a bad harvest. After years there was no more humanity left in them, it was kill or be killed.

"Why does the boss always keep the girls for himself, he could toss us a bone once in a while!"

One of the bandits said while pulling down his pants behind a tree.

"You should be quiet, remember what happened to old George? The boss chopped it right off!"

The other man was by another tree also taking care of his business. Normally one of them would be looking around if no enemies were around. But this was an uncultured and untrained bunch of ruffians, they didn't really care about proper procedures. Even less when they were drunk.

"Yeah, yeah I remember. The Boss really likes to play with them though, wish he didn't break them so easily. Remember that redhead? Don't think she even lasted through the night and she had the greatest pair of..."

The man stopped with his monologue and looked down.

"Huh!?"

He was flabbergasted by the thing he was seeing. A sharp metallic blade was sticking out from his chest. Before he could scream out a hand covered his mouth and the blade was shoved in further. His vision blurred, his hands and legs felt heavy and he couldn't help but close his eyes.

The other man whistled to himself as he wasn't finished with his deed either.

"The redhead?"

He asked but didn't hear the other man reply, only the howling of wind and trees rustling.

"Hey, are you there? Stop bullshitting around!"

The man finished up and pulled his pants up. The two didn't go far away from the village and didn't bring a torch. The bandit moved his hands to the side where he had a dagger but before he could pull it out something connected with the back of his head.

There was a muffled explosion, the bandit's head exploded like an overripe tomato. Behind him stood a silver-haired elf, in his hand a heavy rapier. This was Roland's old weapon that didn't see much use.

The explosion was controlled, silent but quite messy. Logon was smart enough to quickly duck behind one of the trees to not get the man's brain all over his clothes.

"That takes care of two of them... should we wait for more to arrive?"

Logon stepped out from the shadows while looking down at the two bodies. Golgrim and Aredhel were here as well but the one that had stabbed the first person was Roland.

He was wearing goggles, these were enchanted with a simple night vision spell. The two moon elves were beings of the night so they had something similar as a racial trait. The same was with their half-orc friend.

"Don't think we can take that gamble, it could be hours before any of them decide to come here. Everyone might be sober by that time..."

Roland commented while the group gathered. Golgrim used those large arms of his to grab the bodies of the two bandits and toss them further into the forest.

Their group had arrived here half a day ago. They hid in the nearby forest, luckily the bandits were preoccupied with their pillaging to notice them camping out and watching them from afar.

The village was a small one, there were only about ten houses and there wasn't even a wall surrounding it. The people living here were mostly farming families along with some hunters. Only weak monsters came around this place so this was probably enough for protection.

There was also nothing here that would incite robbers or bandits to attack. The farmers had almost no money and mostly ate what they cultivated themselves.

They were quite unfortunate that day. The remnants of the caravan that made it past the forced landslide had escaped here. The bandits pursued and ended up in this place. From what Logon and Roland counted there were between fifteen to twenty enemies here. They had quickly dispatched two of them which brought down the number.

Roland had deliberated if he should help the villagers or just ignore it. The only reason for helping these people would be his conscience and maybe the loot that could be taken after the victory. They took their time in inspecting the village from afar, the enemies didn't look that powerful and there weren't any tier 3 class holders around. He would have had to give up on the plan if even one person like that was here. After some deliberation, his conscience got the better of him and the decision to intervene was made.

"Everyone remember the plan?"

The three nodded but the question was mostly targeted at Golgrim who looked ready to massacre some bandits.

"Remember, only charge in after you see the signal."

Logon looked to Golgrim who in turn lowered his head in disappointment.

"Take care you two."

Aredhel would also be staying here as she wasn't much of a fighter herself. She gave both Logon and Roland a little boost with some basic buffing spells that raised their agility and endurance.

"Don't worry Lady Aredhel, we will return victorious!"

Logon declared while Roland watched from the side but his gaze was mostly on the village. There were still a couple of bandits wandering around but most of them were dozing off.

"Glad that these idiots have zero awareness..."

Logon nodded at Roland's words while the two sneaked away.

"Remember we only have ten minutes before the spell effect wears off, I'll take care of the east side."

Logon nodded at Roland's words as their bodies blended into the shadows. Roland had activated the same spell scroll that he used against the thieves he encountered back in Edelgard.

With quiet steps and a cloak of shadow the two approached the occupied village. This place was further away from civilization, things like street lamps didn't exist. The only light was the one inside of the buildings, which allowed these two to easily sneak up on their unsuspecting targets.

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"Hey! Why are those two idiots not back yet? Did they fall asleep outside?"

A rough-looking bandit with a bushy unkempt beard asked.

"Heh, maybe they are having some fun with each other?"

Another one answered while making an obscene gesture with two of his fingers. A large frown appeared on the man's face that asked the question. Two other men that were with him in the room started laughing out loud while drinking more cheap booze.

"Be quiet you idiots, someone needs to check up on those retards."

The man with the unkempt beard continued with his train of thought. He was a bit less drunk than the other bandits and knew that there could be danger lurking outside. What if the two run into some monsters and are now dead?

“Yes and that someone is you!”

He got a quick reply from one of the drunkards that continued to drink and laugh around. While his bandit companions ignored him the man with the bushy beard decided to stand up.

He knew that he wouldn't be able to get through to these idiots, he would need to check up on the two men himself. If something happened to them and the boss found out that they were slacking, they could get punished.

He grabbed a crude lantern from the side that ran on oil. This was a cheap alternative to a magical lamp. Oil wasn't a widely used resource as most people invested more in magical technology.

This man had no night vision-related skills and even with this item, it would be hard to see anything outside. He grabbed his coat and was about to go outside but the moment he grabbed the door handle an explosion occurred.

'BAM'

The door exploded into many wood chunks the moment he tried opening it. He was unprepared, his hand was mangled as it received the brunt of the force. The bandit's body got tossed back into the home the group was occupying.

The man hit a nearby table where the rest of his comrades were. He was bleeding from various orifices and his whole face was filled with wooden splinters. The man screamed out in pain while convulsing violently. His health was going down at a dramatic pace as he was bleeding out.

“What the?”

The other men screamed out in shock as they heard the explosion. Even more, after they realized that one of their bandit buddies was almost dead.

“Enemy attack? Monsters!?”

The rough-looking men shot up to their feet, even though they were still drunk the adrenaline in their system made them sober up fast. They all quickly went for their weapons while also hearing similar sounding explosions and shouts outside the house. They were clearly getting attacked by someone or something.

“Is it a mage? Do they have firebombs?”

Some of them recalled the man that they fought with during the initial ambush. He had some strange explosive bombs with him and was also using magic. The last time they saw him was after they pushed large boulders down the slope.

He was supposed to have been long dead but maybe he had somehow miraculously crawled out of there.

“We can’t stay here if they have bombs! Quickly go outside!”

One of the men shouted while remembering the grenades. If one of them was tossed inside this building, they would look even worse than this injured bandit here.

The bandit that shouted grabbed a large wooden shield from the side. He then positioned it in front and charged forward. His logic being that if any arrows came flying he would be well protected. He managed to go outside but no arrows came, instead he saw some orange light shining from below.

The two men that were behind him heard another loud bang that was followed by a magical discharge. Their companion was engulfed in a ball of fire and quickly succumbed to his fate while screaming.

The entrance became even more damaged after the second explosion, now even the building was starting to catch fire. The two men with weapons and shields in hand looked to the sides. There were side windows in this house, which they now planned to use for their escape.

The two weren’t quite sure what happened but there was someone outside flinging magic. Maybe if they climbed through a side window they would be safe. The windows didn’t have any glass in them, they just had some wooden panels sealing them up with a latch.

They two were quite drunk and panicking, escaping through this new way seemed like a plausible thing to do. They could also hear explosions occurring outside, maybe the person that was casting spells was busy. If that someone decided to throw a fireball into this house they would be done for anyway.

Each one took a window for themselves hopping over it in hopes of finding out what was happening. The moment they did though a strange piece of paper was discovered. It was attached to the side of the wall right next to the windows. The moment they crossed the threshold outside it began to shine in a blue light that quickly turned red.

Two new fireballs filled the area that was already cracking with detonation sounds. Everywhere screams of pain and agony could be heard. Soon a monstrous roar resounded through the surroundings and the surviving bandits saw some kind of large humanoid beasts with sickles for hands charging from the forest.

The bandits were injured and in disarray. The charging monster was coming for them and in this dark night, it was hard to make out this creature’s true form.

More screams and shouts, more explosions, and even more chaos spread throughout the whole small village. Finally, the doors to the largest home opened out to reveal a two-meter tall man with an eyepatch.

He wasn’t fully dressed and even his pants were put on haphazardly. He was holding a large two-handed ax in one of his hands while looking out into the distance. What he saw was total chaos.

The buildings were on fire and the loud moans of his men could be heard everywhere. He could see them crawling around with burn marks, some of them had their feet and legs removed. It was as if something tore them off right off.

In the middle of the small village, he could see some kind of humanoid monster. It was slaughtering his men that were uncoordinated and drunk. After he got a better look he identified the assailant to be either an orc or something close to it.

“What the hell is this?”

He was about to head into the fray to help his men. For now they were confused but if their commander joined the battle they could still turn this around.

“Everyone back away, leave that monster to m...”

While taking he noticed something and quickly put up his guard. A pointy blade approached his face from the side as an assailant emerged from the shadows.

“Tch...”

It was a dark-skinned moon elf with silver hair. He didn’t just back away but continued with his attack. Many quick thrusts were deployed against this large bandit but he was skilled enough to block them with his large ax. The man wasn’t the leader for nothing and wouldn’t be brought down with just this.

“Fucking knife ears!”

The Axe that he was holding started glowing in a green color after the flurry of sword strikes didn’t go anywhere. He swung it in a wide arc while wind elemental energies pushed the elven assassin away.

“Die you little shit!”

The man roared out loud while his weapon glowed once more. The muscles on his body expanded in thickness while he swung it down. He combined two skills to produce a torrent of wind that could bisect anything in its way.

The elven assailant was nimble though and managed to dodge the deathly magical blow to the side. The mass of green energy traveled further and crashed into one of the village buildings. The home was mostly made from wood with some rocks piled up as walls. When the magic strike collided with it, the whole structure crumbled along with the wall.

The bandit knew that his opponent was close to his level but he had the advantage of having a magical weapon. He needed to end this fight fast and help his comrades in arms. He gathered even more energies into his weapon, this time the area of effect would be large enough to hit his opponent.

He went for it, a massive surge in mana could be felt as he almost went all out for this one attack. But just before swinging down his danger sense went off, instead of going through with the attack he put up the large ax and used it as a shield. He was quick enough to intercept a magical spell with it, that looked like an arrow made from stone.

“Fuc...”

“Pay attention!”

The bandit boss then felt the presence of the elven fighter. This time around there would be no escape. The elf had used some kind of special move to close the distance instantly and the blade was upon him. Before he could react the sword tip was already going through his neck.

The man's head explodes almost instantly after the activation of the runic rapier. He fell down to his knees, his large chest then slammed to the rough ground below. The bandit boss was slain and now only his uncoordinated gang of robbers remained.

After some time the night of slaughter came to an end with a clear victor. The remaining men didn't stand a chance after their commander was done in. Some of them fled while most met their demise by the half-orc's hand. Their bloodied bodies were quickly washed away by the rainfall that ensued at the end. It was as if the sky was trying to wash away the blood that was spilled today.

[Chapter 64 Solo once more.](#)

Roland was sitting on a tree stump that was meant for chopping wood. He had some red beans in a wooden bowl that he was munching on. This was the morning of the next day after the fight with the bandits.

It had rained for a couple of hours during the night but soon afterward the clouds had cleared up. The next day was quite sunny and thanks to the rain the stench of blood wasn't as bad.

While eating he looked at the pile of corpses in the middle of the village that was more of a small encampment of farmers. Golgrim was just pulling the last dead bandit towards this pile.

Roland was a bit surprised about himself and how he was taking this in. He was staring at a large number of deceased but he was fine with it. He was even enjoying a meal and not once did he feel like vomiting. He could only attribute this to his new mental fortitude that came with his heightened willpower stat.

He could also see the bandit leader's large two-handed ax strapped to Golgrim's back. The half-orc requested it as a reward and the party obliged. It was a nice weapon made from deep steel that would probably last for a while.

Roland didn't just hand over the loot to his three temporary partners. He mostly agreed to it as there were more weapons made from deep steel stashed away. The bandits had placed all of their earnings in one of the wagons that had remained.

The party of four wouldn't be taking all of that though, it didn't belong to them. There were also survivors from the caravan that were the true owners. The rescue party would be getting something in return, they were free to take things that had no owners. Even though there were survivors, not everyone had made it out alive.

He glanced at his status screen to see that he had leveled up once from this fight. It might have seemed that they defeated a lot of high level foes but that wasn't the case. Roland's level was above 70 with all his classes combined. That meant that anyone that was below this level wouldn't give him that much experience.

He would start leveling up well only after defeating people or monsters above his base level. Most of these bandits were between 40 and 60, while the bandit leader was around 80. It was enough to get him one level but he still had 4 levels to go. Only then could he begin his life as a tier 2.

While finishing up with his food Roland thought back to the previous night and how it went.

They had made a fast plan of action before heading into the occupied village. He used the shadow veil spell scroll that he had. It gave him invisibility in shadows and in dark places, thus making him and Logon practically invisible.

It pained him but he had to use up most of his mine rune scrolls and his detonation ones. Both he and his elven helper planted those mine runes in front of the village house entrances. Others were stuck to doors directly so that when a bandit opened them up, they would detonate. Windows and back entrances were also booby-trapped.

Everything worked out better than expected. The bandits panicked and went right for the openings, if they barricaded themselves inside he just threw in a bomb or two to flush them out. The ones that managed to get outside were dispatched by his half-orc companion. The drunk ruffians were no match for him.

He remained hidden while using some ranged magic spells to help out Golgrim. Aredhel remained on the sidelines buffing him and the half-orc when she could. They had managed to clear out the village of bandits quite fast, after the boss was slain they all crumbled.

Defeating the bandits didn't mean that the work was over. There were many injured people hidden away in the houses. Some of them were villagers while others were from the caravan. Most of the survivors were women and children as the bandits probably didn't see them as threats. In all likelihood, they wanted to use them as playthings or maybe sell them off as slaves later on.

Luckily Aredhel was here and she was able to heal most of the physical wounds. At her level, she couldn't restore severed limbs. Besides those with enough time, any internal or external injury that wasn't too deep was healed. She wouldn't be able to do anything about the psychological wounds though.

That being said not all the men perished, most of the farmers from this village survived and just got beat up. They were lucky that Roland and his party arrived on the exact day that the village was taken over. It was quite a speedy rescue still, there were casualties.

Roland didn't see the family of three anywhere here that he met during the caravan ride.

'This sure isn't the old world that I lived in, huh?'

There was no police or army coming. No one would scour the mountains to look for survival. This would only happen if an outsider came to the adventurer's guild with a job offer. At most, there would be some kind of formal letter to go take out the bandits if news arrived that they were roaming the lands. By then everyone would be dead and the bandits would have probably moved on if they were smart.

Many people were sobbing while putting a cloth over their deceased loved one's faces. He could only look from afar while thinking about his own future. Even more than before he was contemplating on

getting stronger. If he wanted to evade something like this happening to him in the future he needed power.

“We’ll be moving soon, what are you going to do?”

Roland placed the finished bowl of beans to the side and looked up. Logon had arrived and asked him that question. The moon elf had a full set of leather armor on that he had looted from a bandits corps. He had chosen the best parts from a wide variety of leather gear so it didn’t look uniform in color.

“Far away from here. The survivors from the caravan are going to continue towards the port city, I’m going to go with them... after that... who knows...”

There weren’t many soldiers or adventurers left that survived so those people actually needed him to protect the smaller convoy. Roland, on the other hand, didn’t really want to go on foot so this was fine with him.

From here it would only take them about two days to arrive at the larger city. They could also inform the guards stationed there about the bandit problem, maybe they would actually send someone to check out the mountains for any survivors.

“Is that so... I would like to thank you on behalf of...”

Before Logon could go through with his monologue Roland raised his hand to stop him. He didn’t really care to what faction this elf belonged. It would be even better if he had less information as he had a sinking suspicion that these two were involved in some kind of noble squabbles.

This was something he wasn’t willing to get involved in. What if they decided to show up on his doorstep asking for more help later? That’s why he also didn’t say where he was truly headed. From the port town, he could travel anywhere so it wasn’t really detailed information that could give up his final destination.

“Logon is right. If Mr. Carmine ever ventures into the lands of Bolia you are welcome to search for us. I’m sure my father will give you a hefty reward or if you are searching for work we could also accommodate you. You just need to head over to the Irithyl household.”

Aredhel wobbled over from the side. She had been treating injured people the entire night and was probably depleted of mana. Roland knew well the feeling of overworking yourself.

He also thought about her proposal, was ditching this kingdom for another one such a bad idea? But would he have enough freedom there? He could very well be looked down upon as a human being in the land of elves.

He also didn’t want to get involved with that so-called council of elders. It sounded like it worked in similar ways as the nobles in this country. They only had a slightly more democratic way of doing things but he reckoned that in the shadows there were some shady deals being made.

“It’s fine, I’m already set on my destination, and these mana stones and what those bandits had is enough for me.”

He replied while standing up.

“You should be careful from now on. You’ll probably have to take the scenic route to get back to your country.”

By that, he meant that they would need to evade the soldiers at the borders. They were still branded as slaves and would be apprehended if seen.

If they got caught there was still a possibility of someone from their side being called over. Depending on who that person was they could be saved. Keeping nobles from other countries as slaves could be a prelude to war. Normally the people in charge would return them to their homes but could also try to silence them in fear of retaliation.

“You should probably also look into the people who knew about your departure...”

Aredhel moved her head to the side while Logon frowned. He had already mentioned this before and the two knew that the whole thing was fishy.

“Don’t worry, this time I won’t let anything happen to Lady Aredhel!”

The moon elf spoke up as he saw his lady contemplating things.

“That’s very reassuring, I bet my father will hire you as an official warrior of our household when we return.”

This was similar to getting a knighthood. He would be given status and even some land if he got accepted.

“Golgrim hungry...”

The last party member finally showed up. He would also be going with the two elves.

“I see that you got your work cut out for you with this guy...”

The half-orc looked like a liability when trying not to stand out. Yet he was quite a welcome addition in any fight. It would be hard to not stand out with him around but if they kept to the forest they should be fine.

The borders weren’t highly defended and there was no such thing as a wall barricading both sides from one another. Both kingdoms only had large fortresses at strategic locations, three people shouldn’t have much trouble in slipping by.

“Don’t make fun of him Mr. Carmine, Golgrim is a good child! Now come, I think there still was some leftover meat.”

The two left while Logon approached him. He stuck his hand out and the two shook hands together before parting without any more words. He looked at the trio that he traveled with for a few days.

‘I really do keep encountering weirdos whenever I travel...’

First was the initial trio of girls he met in his first city. Then he met the half-gnome along with the gnome manager and his moon elven bodyguard. There were even those three guys he shortly interacted with during the ant monster disaster. They all were kind of peculiar from his standpoint.

'But maybe I am the weird one here...'

He gave out a sigh while leaving the tree stump he was sitting on. He walked towards one of the remaining caravans that were close to getting packed.

"Ah, Carmine was it? We will be able to depart soon, just waiting for everyone to finish with their meal."

Roland looked to the back and could see four people eating. One man and three women were the survivors from the adventurer side. They had also explained to him what had happened after the boulder incident.

After the initial hit, a landslide occurred and the caravan was split in two. The worst end was met by the slavers that tumbled down into their doom along with him.

The carriages that were in the front quickly escaped down the mountain. These were the people that were here. They thought that they had escaped the bandits but after half a day of being in this village, they were attacked again.

From over twenty carriages and large wagons, only four remained here. They were lucky that the horses and other beasts were still here to pull the remaining carts.

The villagers would be moving along with them. Some of the bandits had escaped and if more were out in the mountains was unknown. If they gathered up their buddies this village could be burned down to the ground even further.

Roland's mines and explosive runes had taken out chunks from the buildings and these people were now considering moving elsewhere.

From their conversations, he found out that bandit attacks weren't all that rare here or in other villages. Most of the time the bandits didn't go overboard and just took away some food and other resources like clothes or iron tools. The bunch here was more violent than usual.

"This would have never happened if the nobles didn't have a stick up their arse."

Roland nodded, it was the responsibility of the governing noble to send soldiers to keep their villages safe. This one was away from the main city and quite small. It was probably seen as disposable as it didn't bring in much grain or taxes.

"Maybe you should file a complaint with the lord?"

The coachman looked at Roland with a strange expression on his face before bursting out in laughter.

"Yeah and what? Get myself hang up on the wall for insulting a noble?"

Roland shrugged as that should be the proper way of conducting things. Problem was that most of the nobles didn't care about their subjects but only about their prestige. It was enough for them to appear strong and in control.

They didn't worry about the commoners complaining. They were only interested in how they looked to the other nobles. They would begrudgingly act if bad rumors started spreading about their territory so they wouldn't look bad.

There was one way to make most of the nobles act and that was money. They would protect their money-making businesses with quite the dedication but that left places like this ignored.

“I guess you are right, I’ll wait in the carriage.”

The man waved his hand at Roland as he was walking away. He sat in the back so that he could look outside. The villagers were packing up and had some carts of their own. The caravan increased in size yet again, this time around he might have to take a more active role in defending it.

Before they departed the elven duo and the half-orc showed up next to his wagon. They were there to say their last goodbyes, the female one even had tears in her eyes.

“We will surely meet in the future, you have been such a wonderful friend.”

Aredhel sobbed while Roland wasn’t sure what to say, he just nodded while nervously scratching the back of his neck. He was scratching it even more after Golgrim decided to give him a hug and almost broke it. The other two had to pull the half-orc away after they saw Roland’s spirit leaving his body.

Soon the caravan resumed its journey forward. His new temporary party was disbanded and they went on their merry way. He didn’t think he would be seeing them anytime soon. He hoped that they made it past the border, they were peculiar but good people.

“I sure hope that not... almost jinxed myself there...”

He leaned back against a new crate while looking behind him. The survivors were walking together, some were young and some were old. Surprisingly they didn’t look that saddened by the fact that they needed to leave their old home. Maybe they were just glad that they were still alive. None of the children got killed, also the casualties were mostly on the adventurer and caravan side.

Roland pulled out his detection orb and gave it a try. A mass of dots appeared on the display making things difficult to spot once more. He needed to see if he could buy some kind of skill or better runic spell in the future. This device would still probably work inside a dungeon with fewer people and more monsters in it.

For now, he leaned back and closed his eyes. He didn’t get much sleep last night so he would let the surviving adventurers do most of the heavy lifting. They had a scout with them so they didn’t need him to stay vigilant.

He made sure to cover himself up in a way that an arrow wouldn’t pierce his head while he slumbered. After closing his eyes he hoped that when he opened them up again he would be at his new destination.