

Runesmith 79

[Chapter 79.2 Tier 2 trial part 2](#)

Sparks flew with every strike of his hammer. The echoes of those hits spread through the large sealed arena space. With one last bash of his smithing tool, Roland was finished. The runic structure was complete and he examined it before putting it to the side.

What he was working on looked to be a simple piece of steel. It wasn't much to look at, its shape was uneven and more thought was put into the handle than the rest of it. This was the last wand that Roland was able to produce. When he looked up he could see the last grains of sand finally falling, soon the time would be up and the next stage of this test would start.

He whipped the sweat of his brow while sitting down. He began gathering mana from the surroundings. There wasn't much time left but he would use it to recover at least a bit of his mana. The whole runecrafting process made him take a hit to his mana reserves that were at about 50%.

'This will have to do...'

Roland thought while meditating in a lotus position. He could feel the abundant mana in this strange virtual space entering his body. The concentration was much higher than what he was used to in the real world. With it being this plentiful he could hope to regain his mana pool past the 70% mark in a few minutes.

He was limited in what he could make in this short amount of time. The mace was to his side, it looked crude but it would have to do. He wedged the casted spiky head part on the shaft for a tight fit. There was even a spare for the head part in one of the molds that he didn't open yet. The runic structure he went with was the strengthening rune, he feared that this weapon would break easily if he just left it like this.

The next item was for defense, a tower shield with a handle made from leather on the other side. He used some strength to bend it slightly for it not to be just a flat sheet of metal. It could barely pass off for a shield. The part where his hand went into wasn't reinforced too well. He riveted in another piece of steel to add to the thickness on the inside but that was it. There was a mana shield rune inscribed on it as well.

The rest of his time was spent on creating disposable wands. Those didn't take much time to make as he only needed to make them large enough to hold the runic structure. He placed common grade attack spells on them while he used the lesser versions on his shield and mace. The wands were disposable but he needed the mace and shield to last a bit more.

He had also created a simple knife. It was also made by hammering a piece of steel into the correct shape, then sharpened to get a workable edge. He couldn't really call it a weapon much but it would have to do as a last line of defense. He went with the sharpness rune, if he needed to cut a throat it would do.

Soon the sand ran out and Roland could feel the arena rumbling once more. He was sitting in the middle of the workshop part so he felt it moving violently. The whole thing was moving down into the hole that it came from. He quickly grabbed all the gear and started tossing it down from the platform.

Luckily for him, the whole hole that the platform was going down suffered from the invisible wall syndrome. Even if he wanted to go down he wasn't able to as it started pushing him out along with the items that he made. He was left in the arena with no workshop to speak of, he grabbed his mace and shield and placed the wands on his belt. He had made it with some leather and just tied it around his waist. There wasn't really enough time to make a belt buckle.

While he was working the scratching on one of those wooden gates got increasingly louder. Now that the timer had run out the noise was at an all-time high. He looked to the door that the noise was coming from and first just prepared a regular spell.

"Source of all magic, heed my call..."

He used his voice to say the incantation, a bolt of energy appeared at the tip of his finger that he pointed towards the wooden gate that was now opening. He could see a couple of clawed hands coming out of there, the monsters in there were quite eager to show themselves.

"Mana Bolt!"

Soon one of them couldn't wait and shoved its head through the narrow opening while the gate was still going up. This part of its body promptly exploded into chunks of meat and black blood. This wasn't quite over as Roland used the slow opening gate to his advantage. He was already at the other side of the arena so before any of these enemies got to him he would be able to snipe some of them down.

"Mana Bolt..."

"GUOHh....."

A high-pitched scream was heard after another monster fell but this would be the last easy target that he got to slay. Soon the monsters revealed their ugly faces and lanky bodies. They were small fiends with leathery bat wings, a barbed tail, and sharp, twisted horns right above their eyes. Their size was about the same as a goblin's and the wings were small, not really meant for flight. This variant had rather pale skin, almost making them look white.

Pale Imp [L 30]

It was the creature called Imp. This was one of the monsters that was linked to the evil demon monsters. They all would start out as those small evil-looking creatures but with time they could transform into giant muscular beings that liked nothing more than to cause pain and suffering.

There were quite some of them in that room, all of them quickly spotted the spell swinging man. Without any rhyme or reason, they charged forward, with them now being aware of his presence landing a hit on them with his mana bolt spell and slow casting time was hard.

Soon they were upon him, he clutched his mace hard and delivered a swift blow to one of the monster's heads. His weapon produced a dim blue glow as he activated the runic structure. One hit and another of the monsters was down on the ground. They were comparatively low-level monsters to him so he was managing.

His footwork had improved after spending a year down in the dungeons. There were actually warrior skills that could be learned but regretfully he didn't have a class that could get any of them. With some

perseverance he improved still, it might not have had the backing of any special skills but his combat sense did improve tremendously.

Roland was sure to move, the arena was large enough for him to use his long legs. Even with his low agility, he could run faster than these monsters. The trick was to not fight them all at once, it was easier to fight one on one twenty times than one large battle against twenty opponents at once.

The monsters ran after him but they found it troublesome to get near. When they got in range they suffered a bash from the mace or a spell to the face. These small critters weren't a match for Roland even when outnumbering him by a large number, as time passed there weren't many of them left.

It was clear that these monsters weren't very intelligent. There were no tactics, just rage-filled charges, mostly with their heads out while trying to aim for a bite. No experience points were getting gained from the kills but soon he had managed to slay the last one.

He activated some of the wands with the lesser mana arrow and mana bolt spells while running away. Due to how easy it was to tell where the monsters would go next, each spell was a sure hit kill. With time the last monster's head exploded and its pale leathery corpse was down on the ground in a pool of black blood.

Roland leaned up against the wall while wiping some sweat from his brow. All of this running had tired him out but thanks to his high endurance stat he gained after switching to the runic blacksmith class he was fine.

There were about 30 dead bodies on the ground and the moment the last one fell the arena started to rumble. The large gate door started closing back up and the workshop in the middle had risen as well. The hourglass above him had been reset and the sounds of scratching were now coming from two of those doors.

'I guess sleeping and resting isn't getting accounted for in this test...'

He looked at his mace that was still in working condition, the things that suffered more were the magical wands that he used up the charges off. They were far easier to fix but he was slowly running dry on mana, replenishing it would be the first thing he would do.

Roland sat down while huffing, he looked at the dead monster cadavers. He expected them to vanish from this area after he killed the enemies. This whole thing felt like an illusion or a virtual game, he thought that they would just go away without a trace and reinforce his claim. But there they remained in place, just dead.

'Hm... what if I...'

Suddenly he thought of something, before finishing up with his mana replenishing exercise he moved over to one of the imp corpses. He pulled out his previously created knife and turned the monster over. He used the knife on the back, soon a square-shaped piece of leathery skin was removed, blood was dripping everywhere. The blood wasn't going to be wasted either as he was sure to bottle some of that black liquid.

'If my assumptions are correct this should work with an evolved imp monster...'

He could feel a faint trace of mana coming from the dead monster's blood. It was similar to a certain resource that he used for all these years, it was the magic ink he used to make his spell scrolls.

Roland didn't have time to process this monster skin, he would need to use the freshly cut out lump. A pointed piece of wood was used instead of a quill, he wasn't working at optimal conditions but he had done this many times before. In less than 10 minutes he had a working runic structure with a spell.

He checked it over a couple of times before moving his hand to the skin flap. After the mana injection, he could see the runic structures light up in orange light. The process wasn't as fast as with the regular scrolls and magic ink that he was used to but it worked. A bolt of energy flew out from this hastily produced runic scroll.

Roland looked at the magic energy colliding with the wall and quickly sizzling out. This skin and imp blood wasn't optimal for this and there was a certain decrease in power. Still, now he had another option to go with. He wasn't sure if this was done on purpose by this trial but he would be sure to use his scribing skills to their maximum.

The mace and shield that he created only needed minor repairs. He also was planning to create a backup with the previously molded spiky head. His hands started getting drenched in the pale imp's blood. This was a lesser magical being so their blood had magical properties. Luckily these ones didn't quite have any long-range skills that could contend with his own runic magic.

There was even more work for him to do. The timer was the same as last time so Roland knew what he could or couldn't do. The fleshy runic scrolls wouldn't be made as a means of attacking, more as a means of distraction. He had to spread his mana quite thin but with his large pool, he was managing.

With time the hourglass emptied itself out. Even though Roland had spent so much time here without sleeping he didn't feel tired. He attributed this to being some kind of world frozen in time and with different sets of rules. The strain on his body might have not been there but this didn't mean that he wasn't getting psychologically tired from overthinking everything.

With a resounding screech, another set of white looking imps flung themselves out of the gate. Their level had increased by 5 and there was a similar number. This group found themselves stepping into something oily. There was a large pool of grease right outside the gate and Roland was just waiting for it to open up.

The monsters weren't very smart so they charged towards him but they soon found themselves inside of a grease fire. There was a common spell to create a puddle of grease on the ground, with an addition of some flames it would create a combination called the grease fire. This one burned a lot hotter and could not be doused by water either.

Those pale imps were more susceptible to fire more than regular imps so he used that knowledge to his advantage. While they were burning up Roland used this chance to snipe them from afar. The burning imps weren't the only problem now as the second gate had opened as well.

Lesser Spiked Devil [L 40]

These new monsters were green in coloration and slightly taller than the imps. There were many spikes coming out of their bodies, if you looked closely you could spot some strange green liquid escaping from

those spikes. These guys looked like trouble but there were far fewer of them than of the other group. They looked to also be more resistant to the grease flames that were activated in front of the gate they were coming from.

Another game of cat and mouse ensued. Roland was trying to keep the enemies at a distance as that was where he had the advantage. At least that was true before some of those new spiky monsters started somehow ejecting those thorns from their body. He quickly defended himself with his shield while returning fire with one of his wands.

He was sure to activate his mana shield this time around. Those spikes looked poisonous, even when getting a flesh wound he could be done for if he got hit once. Regretfully for the monsters the grease fire that was made proved their downfall, more than half of them suffered a fiery demise through it.

The rest was blasted with ranged spells, the ones that got close enough were bashed in the head with a mace. Other ones suffered explosion wounds from planted mine runes that he had prepared. All in all, he managed to survive the next wave and both of the gates were closed up again.

Roland fell on his butt while looking at the many dead monsters on the ground. There were still two gates left. The monsters were just adding to their forces with each consecutive wave and it looked like there would be more of them coming.

The middle platform appeared once more and he got his butt into gear. There were more monsters that needed skinning and more repairs to be made. The grease fire approach looked to be working but less on the stronger monsters that were appearing.

They were also mostly fiend type monsters that gained fire immunity with their evolutions which made his strategy look bad with the future in mind. He didn't have any holy attacks up his sleeve though, they were the bane of evil-aligned creatures like these. He would need to figure out a way to get to them with conventional magic.

More scrolls were made as well as repairs for his gear. He had to replace the first mace as it shattered into pieces after colliding with a spiked devil's skull. With more time on his hands and a plan in mind, Roland was able to expand his protective capabilities.

He hammered a larger sheet of metal to create a half baked breastplate. Some wrist guards and greaves with more runic enchantments to boost his defenses. There wasn't enough time to make anything difficult so he needed to give up on getting any gauntlets to protect his hands.

Soon it was time for the third wave, then the fourth. If he would make it to the last one would remain to be seen...

[Chapter 80.3 Tier 2 trial part 3](#)

“Will this be enough?”

A beat-up looking Roland was standing close to the edge of the workshop. It was still there but soon it would slide down below the arena ground once more. The whole area was filled with monster remains that came from three of the four large gates.

He looked at the newest type that was a hell hound. These creatures were quite nimble and hard to fight off. The resistance to fire was increased even more which made the grease fire trap that he made mostly ineffective.

His body was all scratched up due to the fight with the monster hounds. He had no cloth armor to put under his armored gear. Only ordinary cloth that wouldn't protect him from the tough claws and fangs of these monsters.

Roland had still managed to survive the third wave of the monsters but he was now feeling the fatigue. He couldn't use the previous plan of setting everything ablaze or making a minefield. The hell hounds were fast runners and could smell out the buried flesh scrolls.

This last gate looked to have an even stronger creature behind it. The number of them decreased with each door but their strength also increased accordingly. Roland would rather fight more of those imps that were easy to kill with his current degree of traps. With a new unknown variant of the creature, he would need to come up with a new battle plan.

Lucky for him this world that he was in wasn't entirely real. The workshop he was working with had a strange feature in it. If enough materials were removed they would replenish themselves. He tested it out by removing some sheets of metal that were placed in one of the provided boxes. After removing all of them another set materialized itself in the box out of nowhere. This same phenomenon happened with all the other resources, be it the metal rods or ingots.

With this slight bug in place, Roland decided on his new plan. The unprocessed sheets of metal that were meant for making thinner armor pieces were distributed around the arena. When enough of them were out there he utilized the stock rods that were also there. The ones that were used were the thinner ones that could be used as wires. Soon a spider web-like pattern composed of metallic rods appeared through the whole arena.

For some reason, the hourglass was giving him more time for this last big door. Roland could try getting through this task in a less troublesome way. Creating a good set of armor and some weapons weren't out of the question in this time frame he was given. He had chosen a different approach this time around mostly due to the fact of not being a pure fighter.

With the help of a special rune wand that could discharge heat and flames, he began connecting the metallic parts together. He didn't need them to stick together that well, just enough for the runic traces to go through them. Quite a grueling process of welding and hammering took place as the work continued. The main runes of this 'trap' were placed on the larger pieces of sheet metal while the rods used as a means of transferring mana.

Roland had never tried connecting this many runes together in one runic structure. He knew that there were risks involved and that he would be instantly drained of most of his mana after one activation. The decision was already made though, he would take care of the last part of the test with one big bang. The biggest problem would arise if the monsters coming out were resistant to the magic he would be producing.

Time continued to pass him by as he worked. The more he hammered the more he started to doubt if this would even work. Roland was afraid that the thing that he was making would just blow up instead of working. That or he would either lose all of his mana instantly and pass out or it just wouldn't turn on.

After a lot of painstaking work, he was somehow done. There were no breaks in this trial whatsoever and he had been here for several days with no sleep. For some reason, he wasn't feeling that fatigued but the constant thinking was slowly getting to him.

He placed himself in the center of this spiderweb-like trap that he made. It would have to do as the hourglass was seconds away from being emptied. The whole thing he made was covered in sand. This was done by him to not make it too obvious for the monsters. He also hoped that the monster dogs would ignore the metal parts as there was no flesh involved.

'I guess this is it...'

Roland glanced over his creations that could very well blow up in his face. The area was still filled with his mines and the grease fire tactic would be used as well. He heard a clicking sound and the workshop part slowly descended below the arena. The clawing of the monsters against the gate walls intensified with their movement.

These demonic monsters were greeted by the usual fire treatment. These fiends didn't learn from their previous blunders as they just charged towards his general direction the moment they were out of their locked room.

Some of them fell to the flames while he stood away from the danger. He had his tower shield with him to block any incoming projectile attacks like the spikes from the demons from the second gate.

The doors were opening at about the same time which was fine for him as he needed the monster to enter the area of the trap together. Hounds that looked like they came out of hell started howling as they were finally free from their confines. Roland on the other hand looked at the sturdiest fourth gate which had the surprise last monster type.

There it was, about two meters of height and quite muscular. Its skin was crimson and disfigured, it looked like the being had been burned badly. The face had small beady black eyes with which he felt like the creature was looking at him.

The most characteristic thing about this monster was its chains. It had many of those wrapped around its whole body. To its arms, a set of chains with hooks and other pointy objects was attached. They were thick and the creature was dragging it on the ground while slowly making a trail in the arena's sand.

Roland blocked a few incoming spikes while trying not to get distracted by the new enemy. There was only one of those chained demons but it was a tier 2 creature above the 50th level. This was a tier 2 class change trial, normally monsters above level 50 wouldn't appear as enemies. When they did they would be that exact same level.

This trial was a bit different and Roland already knew that. The sheer number of these monsters already was out of the ordinary. From what he knew, even the warrior class trials weren't this enemy intensive. Apparently most of the time they would only fight one enemy at the tier 2 level to prove themselves.

Depending on the rarity of the class, the difficulty increased. He didn't think that a level 50 warrior would survive past the spiked fiends but he had to go beyond that and face off against something well past the beginning levels of tier 2.

"GUOHH...."

He snapped back into reality and tried to focus on the battle. The monsters exploded here and there while walking through some of the mine runes. He spent the most time preparing this metallic construction so this time around some of the Imps and Spiked Devil's would actually get through.

'Not yet...'

It was a waiting game, the more of the monsters went into this trap the better it would be for him. The biggest problem with that was the varying degrees of speed that all of these creatures possessed. The two first types of monsters were about the same when it came to that but the hell hounds were much faster. The new demon that was dragging the chains was the slowest yet. It was just slowly lumbering towards him without a care in the world.

This didn't bode well for Roland as he just wanted to activate his Frankenstein of a trap before any of the monsters could reach him. In a few moments, he could hear the loud howls and gritting of teeth. One of the Hellhounds was upon him and he needed to defend himself.

Thus a war of attrition began. While the tier 2 chain slinging monster took its sweet time, Roland was continually attacked by the infernal dogs. He was someone that actually liked dogs but here he was forced to cave their heads in with his mace. When he delivered a smashing blow to one of the creature's faces, its teeth flew in all directions. This didn't keep from another one from biting his leg, its teeth infused with magical fire.

The greaves that he fashioned beforehand managed to somehow protect his leg. With a quick smack of a mace to the monster dog's side, it was flung away into the distance. While being busy with defending himself from the more agile monsters a spike coming from another one made its way through a gap in his armor.

He winced in pain while putting up his shield and defending himself from any other incoming projectiles. The only thing he could do now was to move back, circling around the trap area he made while biding his time.

But there was a small problem, the more he circled around the more he found himself getting surrounded. Soon the spiked devils and even the imps were moving in for the kill. He was now mostly just pushing them back with his shield while not being able to use his mace. If he did a large swing he worried that one of the many monsters would deliver a killing blow.

'Now or never!'

Finally, the largest of the monsters had gotten in range, this prompted Roland to bolt back to the spot where the control rune was. He found himself tossing his shield away while inserting the shaft of his mace into a hell hound's mouth before finally placing his hand on it.

The control rune was engraved on a thick piece of metal. From it, many various rods of steel were sticking out while hidden under a thin layer of dirt. After placing his palm on this rune he injected his

mana into it, the moment he did he felt like his head would explode. It was as if someone was pushing a giant nail through his ear, right towards his brain.

'Argh...'

A flash of electricity ran through the entire runic trap that he created as everything lit up like a Christmas tree. After working for a year with generators and electricity he had learned a thing or two about those runes.

This trap produced a massive electrical shock that was discharged into the monsters. All of them got hit while Roland curled up in a small area where the lesser lightning runes that he made wouldn't jolt him into the afterlife. He didn't come out unscathed as the drain on his mana was immense. This was clearly shown by a bloody nose along with more blood coming out of his ears.

The whole place went silent, all of the monsters laid dead on the ground after receiving the massive shock. Roland wasn't in a much better state though, he started wincing while trying to push himself off the ground. He felt terrible but he was alive.

'My head... did I get them all?'

After a moment of silence, he got his answer in the form of rattling chains. He moved his head up and his eyes started to focus on the menacing sound. There it was, the tier 2 monster. It was still alive, inching towards him while the chains shook about. Its skin looked even more charged than before and it was even smoking.

"Fuck..."

Roland felt sick, due to using this jerry-rigged trap his mana had dropped below 5%. It was a miracle that he was even conscious. This demon or devil wouldn't give him much time to get back to his feet though. It just slowly tricked towards him with slow large strides.

It took him a moment to find the mace that he inserted into a monster's mouth along with his shield. With weak shaky steps, he moved towards it and managed to get to them before this monster got to him. Roland pumped himself up, the monster couldn't be at full health either. It received the hit from the trap but it was at the outer part of it. Because of this it probably received less of a shock than the rest of the monsters that were now dead.

This came to light in the coming exchange that these two remaining warriors had. The monster gave out a deep groaning roar before swinging its hand toward Roland. He defended himself with his shield that buckled under the pressure. Those chains rattled around as the Chain Devil attempted another strike.

The monster was quite sluggish and its hits were quite easy to read. The hits were quite real though, as each time those massive chained fists descended onto Roland's shield he felt his bones rattling. His hand that was holding onto the shield had gone numb a long time ago.

But this was the last enemy, and if he failed now, he would need to do the whole thing again. He gathered all of his strength that he had left and took another blow to the shield. It received another dent but somehow remained intact. This time around he didn't let the monster take its time to wind up again, no instead he swung his mace towards its knee.

He injected the remaining mana that he had into this mace and delivered a crushing blow with all of his strength. This part of the leg didn't have any chains wrapped around it, he heard a nice cracking sound of the creature's bone. Soon it lost its footing and tumbled forward allowing Roland the chance that he was aiming for.

The shield was tossed to the side as he grasped the mace with both his hands. With a long overhead strike, he brought down the spiked ball on the back of the creature's head. He started hitting it, over and over again. His maddened shouts filled the silent arena and echoed throughout it.

"Die, Die.... DIE!"

The creature's head that had a somewhat humanoid shape soon turned into a caved-in mess of flesh and bone. The spiked ball that was on the mace shattered into many chunks of metal while Roland continued. Even after that, he continued to hit it with what was left of the mace's shaft only after some time he managed to snap out of his rage filled stupor.

"Uhh..."

He groaned while falling to the side into some monster remains. The only thing he was capable of doing now was panting and wheezing. The only thing that kept him awake were the sounds of the large arena gates closing themselves back again. He dreaded the thought that this might not have been the end to this trial, if another monster showed up now then he would need to give up. But instead of that, something else happened. The walls started to shift again and the closed gates through which the monsters were coming out from started moving below ground. Though it weren't the gates that were moving, it was the ceiling.

Roland rolled over onto his back and could see the top of the arena opening. From it a flight of stairs descended along with the ceiling. Soon the rumble ceased, and he was left with a way up, it seemed that this might have not been the end of this trial quite yet.

"What now..."

Before he could ask himself if he would need to fight another monster when he climbed those stairs he felt a strange feeling wash over his whole body. The injuries that he had sustained were being healed and the cloudiness over his mind was being washed away.

In a matter of seconds, he was fine, a full recovery was achieved. He hopped up to his feet and also noticed that the monster bodies had long vanished along with any signs of combat. What remained were the stairs up, he was even back to wearing the generic clothes that he had before fashioning himself better armor.

Roland narrowed his eyes at the flight of stairs. There was nothing here anymore even after moving around those stairs and what remained of this arena. The only thing he could do was to move up, if there was some kind of bonus boss there was something that he feared.

So he climbed and to his surprise the area that he found himself wasn't fit for battle. No, it was a library. There he saw one large desk with some books on it and a magic candle lighting the way. After making sure that there weren't any hidden enemies around he moved forward, his hand went to the first book he could find.

“Hm...Secrets of Rune Smithing?”

After flipping through the pages of this book and picking out another one he figured out what this was.

“I guess this is the part that I receive my Runesmith Lord skills...”

Roland looked at the pile of books here, there were quite a lot of them and it looked like they would offer him more than just skills. There were designs for certain runes, theories that couldn't be bought at auction houses. With this he might be able to clear up the deficiencies in his knowledge, it was time to read.

"Is this going to be a written exam?"