

Runesmith 165

[Chapter 165 Time to explore again.](#)

“Huh? What’s that sound?”

Clang... clang... clang...

A strange sound entered the ears of a couple of adventurers that were standing before the entrance to the Albrook City Dungeon. After many years of exploring the dungeon was finally given a rating of C.

The Dungeon ratings were similar to grades with S being above A for special ranked dungeons. A C-rated dungeon told people that the strongest creatures that they could find there were below tier 3.

A rating of C+ could be given to such a dungeon if, for instance, it produced one final boss that was at the tier 3 level of strength. With the strongest creature being below that level it was given the C rating.

A B rating would be given to dungeons with some tier 3 creatures lurking on the more difficult lower levels. An A rank would mean that the prevalence of tier 3 was quite severe. This didn’t mean that a high graded dungeon couldn’t have low level creatures wandering in the earlier stages.

The new adventurers would have to take into consideration that a stronger creature could appear on the easier levels. Thus it was much safer for them to slowly level up through the easier dungeons unless they wanted to encounter monsters a full tier above them.

This caused this Albrook dungeon to be mostly populated by newer adventurers. The layout caused the easy monsters to stay on the upper levels which left all the new adventurers a safe space to train up.

It was also still enough for the more veteran gold adventurers to find something for themselves. It became a mid range dungeon that could be used by aspiring adventurers almost all the way up towards their tier 3 change.

Normally gold adventurers when approaching the 150th level would form large parties with each other and head out to a B-rated dungeon. There they would attack the lower leveled tier 3 monsters as it was faster than sticking to monsters on their own level.

The group of adventurers that were looking out into the distance here was composed of steel ones and bronze ones. They were quite surprised by the appearance of a man clad in metal.

“What kind of armor is that... are those runes?”

“Never mind the armor, what is that thing behind him?”

“Is it a tamed monster? No... it’s made of metal!”

They continued to murmur while the person approached slowly. The armor that the person was wearing didn’t look like your everyday plate armor. Even though it was mostly covered by a dark robe, the gauntlets were too shiny for them not to stick out.

The helmet was nice and silver and while the visor slit was separated in two it had some sort of dark glass implanted. This caused the people to not be able to see the man’s eyes and worry about the

visibility. It also didn't seem that this helmet had any holes for breathing which made it look even more uncomfortable to wear.

The rest of this armor seemed more streamlined and the breastplate was somewhat angular at the chest area. The pauldrons were a bit more pronounced but not enough to the point that they would limit mobility.

The thickness of the armor also looked unordinary which showed that the person wearing it had to have an enhanced strength number. It was clear to the new adventurers here that the person inside of it had to at least be a tier 2 class holder to be able to move around in that heavy armor.

While the armor was interesting due to its size and runes, what drew the eyes was the thing walking behind this armored person. It looked like some kind of barrel with four legs. To the side, there was some kind of latch and it seemed that it could be opened. By the size of the construct, they wouldn't be surprised if a person was riding inside of it.

"Hey, isn't that just Wayland?"

"You mean the Runesmith?"

"Who else would be parading in armor like that?"

The young adventurers nodded at each other while the person in question could hear them talking.

'I didn't even make it red this time around, I guess it's not possible to not stand out when wearing something like this...'

Roland gave out a sigh while walking slowly. The armor that he was wearing was an improved version of his runic armor that was all made from Aether metal. It was still mostly deep steel but he managed to get his hands on some better alloys which would boost the spell casting output of his runes.

It was time to head into the dungeon to get his resources. He had planned and waited for the right moment, now it was upon him. While it was something that he was looking forward to he also realized that his heart was beating faster.

At first, he thought that he was pushed into some of these strange situations. The time with the ant queen or the run-in with the dark elves were some. There was always a safer way of doing things but he realized that he also didn't like to waste time.

If he took it slowly he would have probably been behind his current level. His stats would be lower and his store might have not even existed yet. He realized that taking risks was just a part of life and running a successful business.

Even now while going down into the dungeon there was more time than he could take. The store money had slowed down but he would be able to gather more with time. Waiting and twiddling his thumbs was not something he liked to do.

Maybe because in his past life he wasted time on doing things that others forced him to that now he was unwilling to wait. It was as if he feared that if he stopped for a second that he would lose his stride and for that he was even willing to put himself in some moderate danger.

A growl knocked him back to reality as he spotted Agni looking at some adventurers. They all quickly backed off after the Ruby Wolf peeked out from behind the chubby walking golem.

"It's okay Agni, calm down, they are just curious."

Agni snorted with his nose as some of the new adventurers were so curious about this strange party that they approached to take a look. This made Roland think about the talk he had with Bernir not so long ago.

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"Be sure to double-check everything."

"Sure boss! You don't need to worry, I'll keep everything safe!"

"You have all the key cards... Do you need me to explain them to you?"

"No need, I remember everything! You are worrying too much boss, have a great time in the dungeon."

About thirty minutes ago Roland was looking at his somewhat older-looking assistant. His beard was a lot longer than before and even had some braids. He did not understand the dwarven culture and even though his assistant was only half a dwarf he still loved to tend to this bushy mess.

"Don't worry Wayland, I'll keep him in check."

A womanly voice called out from the side and he saw a rather tall-looking woman which quite the large protruding chest area.

"That's reassuring"

Dyana, one of the other tier 2 blacksmiths from town was also here. For some unknown reason, Bernir managed to hit it off with this large woman. She was even taller than Roland was so he was somewhat surprised that she decided to pair up with Bernir who wasn't all that tall.

Bernir of course reported on his romantic conquests on every occasion that he got. Roland didn't believe most of it, Dyana was also clearly the one wearing the pants in this relationship as he could see his assistant flinch a bit after his girl spoke out.

Through the years Roland managed to be less paranoid about the people around him. This was mostly due to his own sweetheart that had grown on him through the years.

By going down into the dungeon he needed someone to keep the fort. Elodia had the orphanage to worry about so that left Bernir. The last time he was left was years ago and produced some dead thieves. Now the area was much better protected so he was sure that Bernir would be able to handle himself.

Dyana being here was mostly Bernir's idea and he didn't need to ask why he wanted her here. The two had their own places and they mostly stayed at her workshop for their nightly activities. With him leaving for a few days it was probably time for his assistant to let loose in his own improved house.

The shack that he had lived in was no more as his carpenter skills were used. The house wasn't as large as Roland's but the inside was somewhat cozy. There would be enough space for a whole family to live in and he wasn't sure how he should feel about that being a possibility.

Having Dyana over here would increase his store's profitability. She was also in the minority of people that he could trust along with Bernir. The large woman constantly complained about how her wares weren't selling that well.

The only people that went for the basic non-magical armors were bronze and steel grade adventurers. Getting involved with Wayland enterprises would probably earn her a lot of money but he was aware that making such a decision wasn't easy.

She would be selling off the store that she worked hard to create. Even though she wouldn't be moving far it would probably be a hit to her pride as a craftsman if she just gave up. The only other option that was less invasive would be an affiliation. Her store would get his logo and a shipment of runic wares to spice things up.

The problem with that would also concern the dwarven union. They still had it out for him, any store that had his wares up for sale would probably invite some trouble that was better avoided. But as time told he was able to work around that problem with good runic items.

Even without the dwarven help, his name carried weight behind it that the dwarves could not deny anymore. He was the city runesmith, he was the first one and they would all see him as one.

This didn't mean that he would be the only runesmith forever. The city was slowly stabilizing itself and there were even houses being built outside the old walls. This would be a new district that was supposed to be called a new town while the old town remained inside.

While he didn't think that this expansion would reach his home any time soon, it was a possibility that he would get actual neighbors here after ten or so years. The intermediate ranked C dungeon was popular enough for this to happen. Even the nobles that ruled the area were slowly starting to show some interest in it.

"Come here for a second..."

Roland pulled Bernir over closer while he was looking at his future wife.

"Listen, you are free to use all facilities but if I find out that you did something in my own house then..."

Roland glanced over towards Agni who in response showed Bernir his nice chompers while also looking at something between Bernir's legs.

"No boss... I need those, don't worry, we won't!"

"Fine, have your fun"

"You too boss and be sure to bring ol' Betsy back in one piece."

"I'll try."

With click to a runic remote old Betsy sprung to life. This was a heavy golem that was built for transportation. It was something Roland decided to create to replace Bernir as he didn't want to endanger a good blacksmith like him with more dungeon runs. He wasn't getting any experience from the kills which slowed down his progress.

Instead, they built a mechanical mule to carry around the heavy load. This golem looked like a bulky headless horse with a golem eye at the front. It had a compartment inside with the largest spatial bag that Roland could afford. The plan was to replace this bag with a proper space rune when the time came but for now, this would have to do.

By bringing only this large mule-type golem he would save on energy. The spatial bag inside of it would be enough to house all the other weapons and provisions that he needed for his new expedition. The batteries that it used were also inside along with a portable charger that he could use his own mana on. If he ever ran out of energy for some reason, he would be able to recharge the golems a couple of times on his own.

"Did you pack the lunch I made for you?"

"Yes, I've triple-checked everything... Stop looking at me like that, I'll be fine."

As he was about to head into the forest he was then met by Elodia. His woman wasn't happy about him wandering into the dungeon alone. Luckily she was used to the adventurer types so it wasn't as hard to convince her for this longer expedition.

"Be careful, if you don't come back in time I'll send a search party for you!"

"Please don't do that, I'll be fine, the monsters in the Dungeon aren't anything special."

He of course didn't quite come clean about what monster he would be fighting as he knew that Elodia would be probably against him soloing a unique boss that no one else had met before.

"I'll be waiting, don't forget to eat."

After a little smooch they finally parted ways, he felt bad about his lie but he didn't want to worry Elodia.

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Thus now he found himself walking into the dungeon with a lot of eyes on him. Luckily Agni with his increased size and level was enough so scare anyone from coming over and asking stupid questions.

The lumbering golem behind him wasn't very fast but not like he was in a hurry. The stairs caused it to wobble around a bit but it was not falling down. The runic program that was created for it made it shift its weight to offset the angles so it wouldn't fall over. Even if it got flipped around for some reason it had an axillary arm to turn itself over.

There was also one perk of using this mule golem instead of Bernir as a porter. The monsters would normally not attack this golem unless it moved. When he turned it off they would just see it as a lump of metal with no life.

Thus before each battle, he could just press the off switch and place it on the side. No monster would even interact with it as it was an inanimate object to them. But whenever the runs sprung in motion the monsters could feel the mana flowing and would react.

Thus for now, Agni was in the rear to keep any monsters from destroying the portable armory that he needed to take out the lurking boss in the lower levels. The weaker monsters fell to Agni's teeth and claws as his tamed beast had profited from Roland's experience gains.

After taking some shortcuts they arrived at the tenth level boss area. Luckily it had already been cleared out by some adventurers. While a few years ago there was a good chance to take this boss down with a random party, nowadays a person had to make an appointment with the guild.

The boss respawned at a set time after it was defeated and the doors to its room opened. The guild would send out their employees to monitor the room a few hours before the boss would spawn. If a party that didn't buy the privilege to battle this boss appeared they would be denied entrance. If they decided to ignore the guild worker and fight the boss out of order, they would be fined. Their adventurer cards could even be suspended.

This showed how much early adopters had the advantage over the new people that arrived here. Even the new adventurers that came around the same time as he did were able to battle this boss if they wanted. This helped them earn a lot of money as the boss always dropped a chest and its materials could be sold off for a lot of coins.

Even though the golem wasn't the fastest, without having to fear the weak monsters they arrived in the lower levels in just a few hours. At his current level and with the help of the improved runic armor he could just shoot down any enemy and take them out with one shot.

Roland's eye sockets glowed as he examined the area. Before him, a bright image of a map appeared with many small red dots. All the dots were moving around slowly and in his mind, he already saw a nice route where he could evade most of them.

'Okay, time to get this over with.'

[Chapter 166 Back for the loot.](#)

'There it is...'

Roland looked through the small angular eye sockets of his new helmet. While from the outside it looked like they were covered by some dark barely transparent glass on the inside it looked different.

It was a special material that didn't let light in but was able to produce a clear image from the inside. It was something fashioned out of crystals that were able to sustain some smaller runes.

Thanks to this he could use it as a sort of small monitor. The first thing he did was implement his mapping device into this whole armor. Now it really felt like he was in a game as a minimap was at the corner of his eye. He could make it larger to scan for enemies and the topography of the area.

At this moment of time, he was hiding behind a large boulder while looking into the distance. There he saw a large lake of lava and some adventurers standing before it. Even though he had the large mule golem behind him he went unnoticed as the party was busy fighting off some salamanders.

'I'll have to wait here until they are gone...'

Roland clicked his tongue as he hoped that something like this wouldn't happen. He entered the dungeon at a later hour so that when he got to this lower level the other adventurers would be leaving. He couldn't account for longer expeditions as some people did camp out in this dungeon.

There were a few spots to rest here, one was the cave the nobles spent some time after arriving but it was closer to the dungeon exit. Another one was past the lake at the last camping spot the nobles rested.

While the dungeon would make people disappear, any appliances they left behind would still be there. If someone abandoned a tent the dungeon would not be able to absorb it like it absorbed dead bodies of monsters or adventurers. The monsters would also not interact with them unless they could feel some signs of life or magic in them.

Thus with time, some areas were built up with flame-resistant structures. Even now some areas were set up for mining purposes as this dungeon did possess a large pocket of flame-resistant materials. It was of course quickly snatched up by the dwarves that had somewhat of a monopoly when it came to things like mining.

He didn't really blame them as he would have probably done the same. The dwarves couldn't really buy the mining rights to the dungeon but they could keep people away from the spots that they discovered. Unless someone had a fight to pick with them, they would evade such mining operations that were also well protected by high level adventurers.

The dwarves made sure to circle out mining expeditions on a weekly basis so that no one else could take their spot. They were running several such operations and were paying top coin. With so much work that they were giving the adventurer guild, it was normal for them to side with the dwarves if a dispute like his occurred.

"You sure like those, don't you boy?"

While waiting Roland looked over to Agni that was feasting on a dead tier 2 salamander monster. With so many of these around in this dungeon, he didn't really need to feed his tamed beast. Agni even preferred to hunt for his own food instead of receiving some store-bought sausages as they lacked the mana stones that he was fond of.

Thanks to the inbuilt feature of this new armor's helmet he didn't really need to peek out from behind the boulder. He could see them quickly moving past the dried-up lake as the lava parted to the sides.

"Let's go Agni."

"Initiate following mode."

While glancing at ol' Betsy and giving her a voice command they finally left from behind the large boulder. It didn't seem that anyone was watching him but he couldn't really be sure. Roland was trying to be somewhat stealthy but this large mule was somewhat eye-catching. This could very well be the first and last time that he had the opportunity to get those high quality materials.

The first time he was there, the commotion with the nobles was enough to keep everything hidden. Now on the other hand if someone saw him vanish in the middle of the lake it would look suspicious.

This wasn't something he could control and for this reason, he decided to take this large mule type golem along for the expedition. The inside was outfitted not with only one large spatial bag but several smaller ones. The plan was to get as much as he could now and not worry if the dwarven union discovered his little secret later.

He was just one man, so he didn't require as many materials as those large smithies that the dwarves ran. One good mining expedition was enough to last him for a very long time, for how much he would actually only know after arriving home and unpacking.

"Let's go Agni, we don't have much time."

"Golem, activate carry mode."

The lake was about to split apart once more and while this was underway the golem started to transform slightly. The legs on the side moved closer towards its body and slid into some hidden compartments to make it smaller.

Roland looked to the large golem that was behind him and quickly grabbed it with both his hands. The runes on his armor started glowing as he activated the strengthening buffs that he previously inscribed.

It was quite a scene of him lighting the large golem over his head and quickly running through the lake. While the golem could move around it was nowhere near close to his running speed. He risked getting swallowed up by the lava if he waited for it.

'It was around here...'

Roland came to a halt while placing the golem to the side gently. He was now in the middle of the dried-up lake of lava. His debugging skill was activated as he scanned for the entrance. Not far from where he was standing he found it, a set of hidden runes glowing brightly.

Without losing any time he moved over to this location and after a moment of fiddling around he heard a clicking sound. The thick rocky ground that looked impenetrable by normal means started shifting to the side to reveal an opening.

"Quickly Agni we need to get down, there shouldn't be any monsters in that area but be careful."

Not wanting to stand out more he ordered Agni to go down first and see if there was something threatening their descend. While the Mystical Ruby Wolf was going down he also used his own hands to carry the mule golem with him as the narrow stairs would have been a problem for it.

In its current state and with its legs folded inside, he was able to somewhat squeeze it through the opening that appeared. He would pat himself on the back for being able to remember the size of this opening. If not this would have probably been quite the short expedition and he would need to make his golem smaller.

"Woof!"

"No enemies in sight? Good boy, stand watch while I close the opening."

With both Roland and Agni inside it was time to close the door behind them. Even if someone saw them entering this spot they would find it hard to follow in their footsteps. Without a proper runesmith or a Runic Mage, it would be impossible to open up the door to this hidden chamber.

After the opening above his head was closed he could finally relax. The moment he descended into the room a set of torches lit up on the walls. There was nothing in this room besides those torches and a door on the other side.

Out of curiosity he looked down to the ground but could not see any signs of footsteps. It was clear that no one had been here for a very long time. With how the dungeons liked to reset any damage done to them, he didn't expect to see his old footprints being here.

"Disengage carry mode, enter following mode."

Roland felt a bit silly giving the golem commands but he didn't want to push his armor's programming by adding remote control to the mule golem. His armor was already jam-packed with various runic spells. Just like with any software from the modern world, adding more code could cause the old one to give him errors.

"Let me see..."

After the golem moved its legs back out he opened up a small side compartment. There he found a hand-drawn map that he had fashioned himself. It was a map of this place that he drew up three years ago when he was here.

The corridors inside were filled with monsters and some were dead ends. While traveling with his brother and Lucille he had to stop and draw where they had previously been. Without pen and paper, he used the walls or the ground instead. With The help of his good memory, it helped them to get to this area after wandering for some days.

"Ok, Agni let's go, stay behind me, and protect the golem."

Agni whined a bit while looking at the large door in the distance. Roland smiled a bit as he knew that his wolf just wanted to act as the vanguard to meet the danger instead of his master. While the monsters that led up to the boss weren't super strong, there were a lot of them. With Roland's current strength and improved armor, it would be faster for him to do it instead of his tamed beast.

Finally, the real expedition began as he pushed the large door open. This opened up a large corridor that was dimly lit by similar magical torches. While going through the threshold he heard a strange noise from behind the corner. After scanning the area for monsters he noticed a red dot slowly approaching him.

'These monsters sure react fast.'

A tier 2 upgraded version of a Flaming Skeleton was now in his path. The monster had a shield and sword in his hand and fire was coming out of its eye sockets.

Without giving the monster much time to charge him Roland raised his hand. A blast of cold energy was released from his palm and collided with the monster in front. The whole corridor lit up with bright blue

light that soon faded. The monster that was previously on fire stood in place while looking like a frozen corpse.

‘With such a big of a level difference, these won’t be much of a challenge.’

Roland slowly moved forward and moved his hand to the frozen skeleton. He relieved the monster of its head just to grab the mana stone that was embedded into its forehead. This mana stone made its way into Agni’s mouth as Roland threw it towards him.

At this point in time, Roland didn’t really care much about these mana stones that he could easily hunt for. The monster inside wouldn’t pose much of a threat, not at least till he got closer to the boss chamber.

So the slow walk continued, all the monsters that were before him fell to one of his spells without being given a second to react. Even Agni became fed up with all the mana stones that he was given to eat so the rest was tossed into the mule golem that was lumbering slowly forward.

Roland found himself wandering through these halls while holding the map and trying to recall if he was going in the right direction. With his increased level of skill and improved weapons he soon arrived at the area before the boss’s room.

‘Didn’t think I’d see one of these here...’

The monsters that had been in the tunnels had certainly changed, even this one that was keeping him away from the boss chamber was different. Luckily for Roland who had been farming golems for their cores for years, this would not be a dangerous foe.

After some ice blasts here and there which were then followed by a sledgehammer to the golem’s externalities, the monster was down on the ground. It was unable to move and ready to explode like last time but this time, Roland was ready. He quickly dislodged the golem’s core before it blew up and then shoved it into one of the spatial bags for rare items.

“This is it Agni, please watch my back while I prepare.”

With the boss room before him, Roland was ready to give his monster subjugation drones a spin. Before opening the golem that came with him he examined the boss room with the help of his mapping feature.

Just like before there were no life signals inside. From what he remembered the moment the door was opened some sort of mechanism would be activated. Only then would the boss appear from above as he was probably waiting in a hidden room.

Before going in he made sure to examine the large doors here. His debugging skill didn’t show any side entrances that would let him evade this boss just like the years before. Thus it was time to get this job done.

Roland opened up the latch to his mule golem and reached into the large spatial bag that was in there. From it, he removed a certain spider-like machine that looked very similar to the drone that he was testing before.

There wasn't just one, no there were six of them together and after injecting some mana through his armor they all sprung up to life. With a small graphical interface in his helmet, he could see some numbers ranging from 1 to 6 appear that corresponded to each spider drone.

With everything in order, he slowly approached the door. On his left side, he held a large kite shield that almost reached all the way to the ground. On his right, he had a large war hammer with a spikey tip that would be too heavy for any normal person to wield.

The monster inside would be large and ferocious. He did not possess the sword skills of a tier 2 swordsman, even a runic longsword would find it hard to slash a large monster's hide. The heavy hammer on the other hand could be used to pierce through it with ease.

'This will either take a minute or go horribly wrong.'

The large door was pushed open but he didn't enter. Instead, he executed a program that he had prepared beforehand for the drones. After checking the layout of the chamber he just needed to alter some parameters for the golems to get in the right place.

Six of the drones were the first ones to enter. They hugged the walls right from the start and slowly started to encircle the inside. Roland theorized that unless an actual human entered the chamber the boss would not be triggered and he was correct.

His drones had enough time to walk to their designated spots and lie in wait. Next came the other large golem that quickly moved to the side and was instantly deactivated. Only then did Roland walk in as his trap was successfully in place.

"Agni stay by the golem and don't move."

Agni as always was somewhat unwilling to leave his master alone but he followed the order and remained next to the mule golem.

With slow steps Roland moved forward while constantly looking up and to the sides as well. Before the boss appeared a large red dot flashed on his screen. This dot was approaching them quite fast and soon a familiar looking monster with a large sword tail descended with a rumble.

'Good it's the same one.'

Before the bladed dinosaur could release a paralyzing roar it was instantly hit by a burst of freezing energy. Even without using a runic staff the frozen blasts that his armor could produce were enough to stop this monster in its tracks.

Just as the last time the monster switched into its enraged state. Lava burst forth from its body and all of the ice instantly melted. This was still all in Roland's plan, while the monster was going through its heating up state he activated the drones on the sides.

The medium-sized spider drone's opened up from the front to produce a metallic spike. Their legs dug into the rocks below and along with a support bolt they were quite stationary.

The spike shot towards the screaming monster. The spike was only the beginning as a silvery net was attached to it. These stakes shot behind the monster while covering it with nets from six directions.

This didn't go well with the monster as it tried to rip the nets apart. Before it could though a jolt of electric energy was sent through these combined nets which caused the monster down to the ground.

It was now getting shocked from all sides by the drones that Roland prepared. Even its heated-up body had trouble with melting these specially prepared netting as they were made from fire-resistant materials.

"Open wide!"

Roland appeared right in front of the monster while blocking his body with the shield. He was right next to the monster's huge maw. The Xornotaurus was not able to let such a chance slide and it tried to devour its enemy.

But instead of Roland's head, something else made its way towards this open mouth. It was large, round, and made of metal and the moment it went down the monster's gullet it activated.

Boom

A large explosion rocked this closed-off area and was followed by the system message of Roland receiving experience points...