

Runesmith 353

Chapter 353: A New Life.

“WaAaAaaaah...”

“Congratulations, it’s a boy!”

“...”

“He passed out...”

“Waaaaahhh”

“My baby...”

A woman reached out for her newborn son while trying to ignore the passed-out father next to her bed. The baby cried out almost instantly after getting smacked on the bottom by the attending cleric. This feline nun was performing the rites and quickly infusing divine energy into the tired mother.

‘Hm, so that’s how they do it in this world. Interesting...’

To the side was Roland who was having to pick up the passed-out father from the ground. Dyana had finally given birth to a healthy baby boy that didn’t seem to have any abnormalities. It was the first time for him in this world and his old one to witness a birth. After a quick scan with his analyzing skill, he was given a mostly blank scotus screen with no name or classes.

Name :

Strength

1

Agility

1

Dexterity

1

Vitality

1

Endurance

1

Intelligence

1

Willpower

1

Charisma

6

Luck

10

'The name is blank and all the stats are at one besides charisma and luck...'

Roland had to take a second to look at the child's luck stat which was a lot higher than the one he had at the age of five. This was a strange stat that kept going up with his age and had an obscure use that even people in this world weren't sure about. The consensus was that the higher the number, the more a person was favored by god and good things happened to them. Considering that he had a lot of close-death experiences in his youth, perhaps he was disliked for some reason.

After looking over the status he peeked at the midwife, Sister Kassia. Thanks to his involvement Bernir's wife Dyana was given one of the better clerics in the city to help her through the pain. This was considered a luxury as most commoners could not afford a higher-level priest to attend. Physicians existed in this world but they were seen as lesser to a priest. They lacked skills related to healing and had to use bandages or medicine made by alchemists as a substitute.

With the help of a priest giving birth didn't seem that bad. Kassia was able to cast spells to relieve pain and there were also potions that did the same thing. Using potions was somewhat inferior as they varied in quality. There was a possibility for them to affect the child as they had a hidden toxicity rating. When a threshold was reached it would produce a debuff that could last for a while.

"Hey... wake up..."

Roland moved his palm towards Bernir's cheek and gave him a few smacks. His strength was quite up there so he tried to not give the new father a concussion. Finally, after a few seconds, Bernir opened his eyes widely.

"Huh, what?"

"I think you should join your wife and son."

"My son? I have a son?"

"Can you stop embarrassing yourself already? Get over here you idiot!"

Bernir had passed out around the moment the child's head was emerging. The sight even made Roland look to the side. It didn't seem like it was Kassia's first rodeo as she didn't even flinch and kept infusing the areas with divine spells. Thanks to them the mother didn't have to suffer through the pain and the baby finally emerged.

He stood back while watching Bernir, who was his assistant awkwardly touch the baby. This reminded him of the reason that he was even here. The two new parents didn't really have anyone they knew in

this city. They had arrived here to start a new life and they had been successful. Yet there was a lack of certain people in their life that could take on the role of a Godfather or mother.

There were a lot of traditions in this world and it was quite similar to his old world. While there were multiple gods here it didn't mean that people didn't get baptized. One of the important parts of this world was the concept of a godparent which kind of fell into his lap. Roland was supposed to take on this title which would somewhat tie him to this family even more. If something were to happen to both of the parents, it would be his duty to take care of their child.

At first, he was apprehensive about it but after recalling the past history he had to agree. Bernir had proven to be a good assistant and also a good friend. When his home was getting attacked he protected it and even went against Valerian knights to protect it. There would probably not be that many other people that he could trust as much as Bernir.

'I bet he wouldn't even hesitate if I asked him to do the same if I ever got a kid. A kid huh?'

Roland felt strange when looking at this family before him. He had never really thought about getting and with so much work there was no time for one either. Perhaps it was an excuse to postpone the decision but he didn't feel that bringing a child into this world at this time would be the best decision. Before he could have some deeper thoughts about the issue he was interrupted by the midwife priest.

"The Lady of the Sun has graced us with another life, it's life is like the rising sun that illuminates the world we walk on."

"Ah yes..."

It was quite early in the day and the sun was rising. For the worshipers of Solaria, this was a good sign when a child was born. A new dawn signified longevity while giving birth at sunset wasn't as welcomed. Then in some other religions like the ones worshiping the moon, it was the exact reverse. Birth by day with the blessing of Solaria and birth by night with the blessing of Lunaria and Lunaris. Some people even attributed these birth cycles to indicating future classes a person could possess.

"Oh look at the time, I think Dyana needs to rest so I'll see myself off now that the ceremony is finished..."

While Kassia started babbling on while praying in the direction of the rising sun, he approached Bernir. His assistant wasn't even looking in his direction as he was too busy having his newborn son clinging to his pinky with that small hand of his.

"He has quite the grip! Ha ha, he must have gotten it from his mother!"

"Hey, what's that supposed to mean."

"N-nothing...B-boss did you want something?"

After seeing a large vein appearing on Dyana's forehead Bernir decided to turn to Roland for some help. He didn't really want to get involved in the squabble but instead decided to offer the two some free time. In this world, things like maternity or paternity leave didn't really exist. Usually, the mother took care of the kids while the husband never stopped working. Luckily for the two, Roland was able to offer them some more time with their newborn.

“Yes, I just wanted to congratulate you and also tell you that you don’t need to come to work for a while.”

“Thank you! Oh, are you serious? But don’t you need help at the workshop even more than ever?”

“Well, I’m going to meet the new Chief today, with the help of those dwarves we won’t need to worry about the city anymore.”

He shrugged as to be frank, he wasn’t that much in a rush to create items for his own store. With the Union feud finally ending there wouldn’t be as much pushback on the market. The two sides that created magical items within the city could actually work together for once. It was now possible to increase his prices to get more money for the same items as his opposition would not price him out anymore.

There was no need to strongarm merchants or use the auction house to get items. Roland would now spend less on everything and could earn more. When also including that tier 3 runes went for a lot more, he wouldn’t be running out of money anytime soon. After having a talk with the new Union Chief again he wanted to take Agni back into the dungeon.

Armand and Lobelia had managed to reach their caps as well which would allow him to focus on his own progress now. The dungeon held many secrets within it and before other platinum adventurers arrived he needed to go through all of the hidden chambers. Gaining a platinum adventurer card wasn’t required for someone that was a head knight but having it around wouldn’t hurt either. If he ever decided to end his knightly career, having the card would make things easier. The adventurer guild was accepted in other countries so it would be helpful if he ever was forced to run again.

“Is that so... Well I won’t say no to some free time, don’t regret it later Boss!”

“I won’t and also, congratulations on your child, Dyana.”

“Thank you Wayland but...”

“Yes, is there a problem?”

“Well, I know it was thanks to you but... could you do something about that?”

“That?”

He followed Dyana’s gaze which landed on the kneeling nun. She was performing some type of ceremony and continuously praying. What the mother required was some peace and quiet. Thus he just nodded and decided to grab her off the floor on his way out.

“Sister Kassia, I think you’ll miss the morning mass like this.”

“The mass? You are right, I need to tend to the flock, I have almost forgotten my duty, thank you, Mr. Wayland.”

“Ah sure no problem...”

Roland closed the door behind him and left the building. Kassia disappeared into one of the nearby alleyways as she headed to the church. When looking around he could see various people waking up and

some even opening the shops here. The place Dyana gave birth in was her own smithing shop. The building had been turned into more of a house through the years as the two could just focus on their work at his compound.

'I wonder if eventually, they will want to move here permanently?'

The shack that he offered Bernir a few years ago turned into a secondary smithy. This didn't mean that it was truly his. Roland knew that every craftsman wished to have their own little place to call their own and Dyana's house was better suited for it. He could see the two settling here and creating their own brand of items. In the end, he believed that most people liked to have a corner for themselves.

This didn't mean that Bernir would stop working right this instant nor that he couldn't still cooperate with each other even if they worked at different sites. With the help of the Union, it might be possible to implement some quality-of-life changes which involved them making all the street lamps and even runic turrets.

'So this is it huh? I've seen this place from outside many times but it will be the first time to actually go in.'

"Good day, you must be Master Wayland, please come this way, the Chief is expecting you."

To his surprise, he was instantly greeted by someone at the entrance. The person was a dwarf of unknown origin with some runic symbols adorning their clothes. They weren't working runes and seemed to be more of an artistic choice.

'Is this one of the apprentices?'

Previously he offended Brylvia slightly by analyzing her status screen after disabling her status scrambling item. This person on the other hand didn't seem to have one on them. Thankfully he could always use his position as a head knight as an excuse for these occasions.

Name:

Hufil L 77

Classes

T2 Runesmith L2

T1 Mana Scribe L25

T1 Blacksmith L25

T1 Mage L25

'It is a runesmith and one that only advanced recently.'

Roland felt slightly jealous of having access to so many apprentices. This man here wasn't the only runesmith around as there were two more walking around. He was at the main smithy that contained a large group of craftsmen. When stepping in the stuffy air and heightened temperature was apparent.

Someone without a resistance against heat would have a tough time moving through this place without passing out. In comparison, his own workshop was a lot more friendly towards non-blacksmithing classes. To allow Elodia to go through the underground workshop he created runic AC units that infused some ice energy as well as cleared out the stuffy air.

It was strange to follow after this man that could run their own runic shop just like he did. A runesmith could already create tier 2 items and earn a good wage by themselves. However, in the eyes of dwarves, they were still just slightly above regular apprentices. They still had years of training to go through. Also if they abandoned the union they would face scrutiny just like he did.

They would be forced to go through the same issues as he did. Renegade dwarven craftsmen existed and usually ended up as personal smiths of nobles that with their influence could provide them with everything they needed. These types would be scrutinized by their peers but sometimes earning more money was more important than furthering the craft.

‘It’s not as loud as you’d expect a huge smithy to be...’

The place looked more like an iron mill than a smithy. There were large cauldrons being heated up by magical flames. He could see a few dwarves dressed in thick leather pushing some of them over to pour the mixture into some molds. In other places, he could see four stocky men hammering out a piece of metal with giant sledgehammers in unison. All this without much sound getting outside.

‘They are using sound-canceling runes, no one is going to lose their hearing here.’

The pathway that he was taking with the runesmith was safe from the sound but sometimes when he went beyond the barrier he could hear intense hammering or sizzling noises. The men here were producing large numbers of weapons and armor. Only thanks to the adventurers that frequently went missing or had their items broken on monsters could such a business keep functioning.

The workers became aware of his presence rather quickly. While he was not wearing the bulky mithril armor today he was still a human. Due to his height, it was easy to pick him up from the crowd. At first, Roland was concerned about his relations with these people. They showed themselves as his enemies but was it the same now? The regular blacksmiths didn’t really know him nor did they take part in making the decision to shun him. Some of them did look somewhat annoyed with his presence but others were also curious.

“Chief, Ah brought the guest lik’ ye wanted.”

After going through the large building that made his own workshop look rather small he arrived at a door. It was newly made and the metal was recently worked on. In the middle, it had a nicely made plaque from mithril with Brylvia’s name on it. It felt like he was going into the office of a professor at a prestigious university. The only difference was that he was not a student but also a fellow professor of the same ranking.

“Aye, let him in.”

Both he and the man that brought him here were able to hear the Chief’s voice. The dwarf just nodded after hearing the words and decided to leave while Roland saw this as the cue to open the door. When

he opened it he could see quite a mess inside. Large stacks of papers were everywhere and after a quick glance, he could identify them as schematics.

They were all over the place but mostly shoved to the sides with some free space in the middle. There a desk of smaller height rested with a stack of books on top and Brylvia behind it. In the back, he could see several bookcases that seemed to have been assembled only recently for her use. Dunan and his friends were probably responsible for assembling this room and the things inside of it but the new Chief turned the place into a mess.

“Oy, be careful wi' that, if ye step on it, ye replace it!”

“I think you need a separate storage unit for these...”

“Ah know, If they idiots made this affice bigger then it wouldn't be a problem! How do thay expect a master lik' me to fit everything into this shit'ole! But anyway, have ye brought it?”

“Yes, I have what you asked for.”

After closing the door behind him he reached his hand into his spatial satchel. From it, he pulled out a metallic cylinder with some runes on it. On top there was a small latch that could be opened but only with the correct mana signature. Inside were some of his own runic schematics that he wanted to present to this Chief. One of the reasons was for some input and another as a bargaining chip.

‘I need to play my cards right, she must have some rune-related books I could go through, maybe even some skill books.’

While Roland didn't see himself as an inferior craftsman to this Master Runesmith, there were probably things that he didn't know. She was sitting on hundreds of years of dwarven knowledge that could propel his career into a new dimension. Yet for that to happen he probably needed to propose the right trade without giving away too many of his own secrets in the process.

Chapter 354: End Of An Era.

“Aye, sure tak' them, now gimme that.”

“Wait... you're willing to part with your books this easily?”

“Huh? aye? not lik' a'm needin' them fur anythin'?”

“Ah huh...”

Roland was a bit confused as he had given the Chief a proposition. After giving her some basic schematics to some of his creations he would receive access to some of hers. This would include craftsmanship manuals that dwarves had access to that contained their secrets. To his surprise, this woman was willing to instantly give everything up as if the old scripts were useless.

‘I expected her to bargain more but... Am I perhaps selling myself short here?’

“What? Ah thought we had a deal? Are ye trying to go back on it?”

When looking down he could see the dwarven Chief yanking on the cylinder he brought. His stats greatly eclipsed hers so she was unable to make it budge. Her grabbing onto it the moment he asked for a deal

was also perplexing. Were the higher-ups of the dwarves always this strange or was she just the oddball out?

'She did call Albrook a shit hole a couple of times, it doesn't seem that she came here by her own decision. Could her behavior have something to do with it?'

Even though this city was still developing it wasn't all that runesmith friendly. There weren't many mines inside of the city and the tier 3 adventurers had other options that were closer to the super dungeon. Most of the time a Master Runesmith was already an established craftsman. They usually chose to go to places that could offer them the most.

On this island, this would be the main city of Isgard which was the closest to the S-ranked dungeon. Judging by her level being well past hundred and fifty she was not a new Master Runesmith but someone that should have had her own group. Either she was pushed out by another more prestigious force or she saw something here that others didn't.

'Am I thinking too much into this?'

His grip on the cylinder lessened and when it did, the woman that was pulling on it was sent flying back. She crashed into some of the stacked up schematics while screaming profanities in his direction.

"Oy, Tell me whin ye'r about to let it go!"

"My apologies... So then, can I pick out something from here."

"Ye, go ahead, knock yerself out ... "

Brylvia stood up with the runic cylinder in her hand. Roland had not yet told her the password that was required to open the latch but that didn't stop her. Instead of asking him for it, she started fiddling with the runic components. It was the first time he saw someone else fiddling with runes which made him focus and even use various of his skills.

It was actually interesting to see if the new Chief was capable of cracking the runic code he made. She infused her mana into the runic structure to feel it out just like he did but after a quick analysis, a few differences were seen. First of all, her control over mana was greater than his, at least when it came to fiddling with runes. This he attributed to her probably gaining various other skills to compliment her craft.

One thing stood out though, while her mana control was superior to his, the same could not be said for her mana capacity. It was something that he expected as the Master Runesmith class had one glaring fault. While runesmithing required a lot of mana manipulation it didn't offer enough skills to lower the costs. His class had a huge stat multiplier of 4.5 and also had a passive skill of lowering mana usage on all rune-related skills by a whooping 60%.

'The multiplier of a Master Runesmith stays at 3 and I bet the passive isn't as high either.'

Tier 3 runes were vastly more complicated than tier 2 runes as they entered the third dimension. They also required a massive amount of mana to work with and this lock that he made was of this same tier. He could see her struggling to get through the traces of the program but she was able to eventually get

there. When she did, Roland saw another downside of this class compared to his own, working with the internals was not as easy for them as with the externals.

It started with the Runesmith Lord Class and now continued with the Overlord. He considered this class to be a mix of two classes, Runesmith, and Rune Mage. The former was poised in creating runes while the latter was a specialized user. Rune Mages could mold the integrated operating system but were constricted to what a Runesmith created. Roland on the other hand was a two in one package and after working together with his friend from the magic academy, his insights into the inside systems went over what a regular runesmith was capable of.

“Is this some kind o' a joke, do ye want me to pass out or something?”

“I see that you found the first lock.”

“Ye, If Ah had mah mana support apparatus but those idiots haven't set up mah workshop properly!”

The woman seemed angry and thought that he was trying to play a prank on her. The first lock would require a person to just inject a lot of mana through the runic components. It would be an easy task for him as he possessed the skills that lowered mana usage to get around this problem. The new Chief on the other hand required some outside help.

While he wanted to see this apparatus she spoke of he could imagine that it was something that just provided mana from outside. Just like he used runic batteries to run various runic tools, the dwarven craftsmen had ways of going around using up all their energy in one go.

“If I may?”

Brylvia grumbled and gave the cylinder back which Roland was able to open without any outside help. Showing off some of his skills was intentional as he wished to not be underestimated by his fellow runesmith. This would tell her that he was somewhat special and perhaps give him something to barter with in the future.

“Yer not a regular ol' Runesmith are ye?”

“I never said that I was.”

“Ah see, maybe this will not be as ill as Ah thought... The old bastards might have actually given me a boon in disguise.”

He was interested in what she meant by the old bastards but it kind of aligned with the story that was in his head. After the cylinder was open she snatched it back and started going through the various schematics that he brought over. Today it was mostly work-related. What was inside was related to the magic lanterns and other devices for the future.

“Ah will have to look thro' these just tak' wat ya need 'n' come back to me tomorrow”

Brylvia skimmed through the papers and mostly ignored the basic lamp design. It wasn't anything special but after flicking through the pages she stopped. There she saw something that looked like a windmill and the runic components that it was composed of, didn't quite make sense.

To this day no one was aware of his runic batteries or creating electricity that could be transformed into mana. It was something that could revolutionize this world that relied on mana fluid. What he brought over was incomplete and after Brylvia analyzed the papers she would figure it out too.

To keep it a secret he decided that it would be better if he made the finishing touches himself. What the people from the union were creating would be the framework while the heart of the generator was his to make. The possibility of the Chief figuring out everything herself after performing some tests was a possibility.

However, this didn't matter that much as he was not really that interested in becoming a mogul. It was probably impossible for him to monopolize this technology as it was rather easy to construct. It was achievable when he wasn't even a proper runesmith so a Master Runesmith would probably not have that much trouble. Luckily she was now working with them and bound by a contract, so for the foreseeable future, she needed to keep her mouth shut.

"Interesting..."

While Brylvia was busy looking at the runic mana generator he took his time in going through the books here. There wasn't that much that caught his eye as the basics were given to him inside the ascension trial and a lot of runes he discovered thanks to using his debugging skill. Nevertheless, he grabbed a few of the books off the shelf so that he could compare his knowledge against the dwarves.

'This one looks interesting, 'Efficient Rune Placement' huh?'

On one side of the room, he discovered some material that looked promising. These books were not about runes but instead described ways of pushing up the efficiency of placement. Another one described the synergies between runic types and metals. Some parts pointed to the best alloys when working with specific runes. It seemed that there were ways of including some rare metals to make some spells more efficient.

'This could come in handy, maybe I won't need to make the next version of the armor so thick.'

There were a lot of helpful tips when it concerned smithing but not that much when it came to runes. After a few glances, Roland realized that when it came to the magic symbols he was somewhat ahead of this literature. He could not discover any hidden truths or wrong assumptions when it came to plain runesmithing. Instead, he even found some faults in the diagrams.

In a way, the dwarves were doing the reverse of what he was. He focused on amplifying the efficiency of his runic structures and pushing them to their limits but this left the outer shell looking plain. The dwarven smiths on the other hand focused a lot of time on the presentability of their wares. Their runes almost felt like an afterthought when compared to some of the sleek designs. Perhaps if he managed to work on this one weakness of his, then becoming a complete craftsman was possible.

'Well, I never expected to get any high-rank runes to play with... they are probably keeping the good ones in some kind of vault.'

After greater runes came grand ones which were usually the end all be all of runesmithing. The secrets of these runes and how they connected was a highly protected secret of the dwarves. His only case involving ones involved the monolith he encountered during his gold rank adventurer test. It was made

up of multiple greater runes which made out a larger magical structure. With it as a basis, he might be able to reverse engineer the correct pathways to produce a tier 4 grand rune.

If he was able to get his hands on other tier 4 runes, this process could be pushed forward just like with tier 2 runes in the past. The only downside that arose was the size of these things. He could not see himself being able to fit a gigantic runic structure into his armor. It would take up too much space and probably require him to upgrade his rune-compressing skills first.

'I wonder if they worked with rune mages more, if their rune technology would be more advanced?'

There was a way to go around the lack of mana of a rune-smithing class. With the help of a Rune Mage and come cooperation a Runesmith would probably be able to increase the potency of their creations. The mages were better at working with the operating core of the runes which demanded more mana to play with. In the current world, there weren't that many people that went against the grain. They all stuck to the old designs that just worked.

'They focus on creating the highest rank runes without really looking if they perform the function correctly.'

With no need for innovation in the runic side of the equation, they overfocused on the designs. The weapons that were made in this workshop were superior to anything he could make himself. Yet when it came to the implementation of runic components they were trailing behind and the gap was only increasing. With this in mind, he was convinced that with time he could outshine his competition in both aspects.

"I'll take these, I'll see you tomorrow then?"

"..."

"I'll see myself out then."

After going through the books and schematics he picked up all the reading material he wanted. His new business partner didn't answer as she was too busy looking through his handmade plans. This was an unexpected turn of events as he expected her to give him an earful for changing the runes so much. Perhaps she was not like the other craftsmen that just stuck to the old designs if she was this involved. Soon he left her office and arrived outside the large smithy.

'I guess this is the end of an era.'

When turning around and looking at the large building that was as big as a factory he recalled all the old problems in the past. Due to the Union, his first contract with the Adventurer Guild had been canceled and then he needed to involve himself with the thieves guild. Following that a plethora of roadblocks were put in his way that he had to annoyingly shove to the side. Even with all that blocking his path he somehow made it out and was still going.

Without anything left for him to do here, he decided to head home. Bernir and his wife would be inaccessible for a while and he wanted to head into the dungeon with Agni. Mary had finished leveling but had failed her ascension quest just like Armand and Lobelia. They were probably not pushing for super prestigious classes so he expected them to have them within a month or two at most. Then the two loyal knights could progress with the help of the upgraded killer maid without his involvement.

'Hm, should I close the shop for the time being?'

Roland passed through the entrance gate while getting saluted. There the sight of guards reminded him of the recent home invasion. If he were to head into the dungeon then Elodia would be left by herself at the shop. With the infusion of tier 3 adventurers, the area had become more hazardous. These new people would probably cause some trouble as they were not aware of the current power structure in the city.

When it came to money, he was quickly recovering the losses he suffered after creating Rune Mark I. He was able to stock up on tier 3 monster materials down in the dungeon which went for a good amount of money. Even if he gave up his profession and decided to become a full-time adventurer, he would not go hungry.

'Things are going well, so I don't really need to rush it anymore but why am I getting this bad feeling...'

His quest to become a successful craftsman had already become a reality. Nothing really stood in his way and the Valerian brothers from other parts of the island didn't appear. By his calculations, nothing too eventful would be happening for quite some time which would allow them to build up this city. After it was all done, they would have the stage set and could begin to fight back.

'Things do tend to go bad when you least expect it...'

After leaving the city he increased his pace. Time was supposed to not be an issue and he was supposed to guide some of the dwarves back into the dungeon in a few days. Getting the mine to operate at full capacity and also creating a good enough travel route was the next step. With his mapping device and the dwarven proclivity of digging tunnels, it could be possible to find a better solution.

'I guess not having to sleep much is still my best skill from all that I have.'

Soon he returned home to inform Elodia of the recent events.

"So it's a boy, have they thought of a name? Such a shame that I missed it..."

"I'm not sure, I think Dyana was supposed to choose a name if it was a girl. With it coming out to be a boy, Bernir will probably give it a more dwarven one."

"Oh, that's nice."

Elodia was home along with an enlarged Agni that was in front of the store. His size had become a bit too large to leave him on the inside but there was a plan to remodel the inside. With the increase in his skills, he wanted to create a separate section just for platinum adventurers where they would find better gear. Hiring more people and creating some golems to act as a deterrent was also part of the plan.

"If you want to go see the baby, go ahead. I was thinking of closing the shop for a while... Are you even listening?"

"Oh huh? Ah sorry, my mind wandered a bit, maybe that would be the best for today."

He wasn't sure what it was about but Elodia seemed a bit out of it today. She had been acting like this for a few days now and he was starting to think that it was due to the recent birth. Elodia's age was a

few years above his and she was not getting any younger. People in this world usually started families rather early, even Bernir's case could be considered late.

'Children huh? Would it really be that bad?'

Roland looked at the woman before him and then was quickly distracted by the large ruby wolf peeking at them through the window. His sight brought his mind back to the current problem, before thinking about his private life he needed to progress further. Getting up his levels and grabbing all the possible treasures from within the dungeon was his main priority.

Chapter 355: Time To Explore.

"AWOOO?"

"For the last time, don't change until we reach the deeper dungeon! How many times do I have to repeat myself!"

"Worf!?"

Roland frowned while looking at Agni jumping around all over the place. Even though his size had increased he was more agile than ever. It wasn't that long since he achieved his Sunlight Wolf evolution and it was clear that he wanted to have some fun with it. Having two forms that differed from each other was not something Roland could relate to but it seemed that Agni wasn't taking it that well.

'Has he gotten more rebellious after the recent evolution?'

He looked at Agni who was jumping around and exterminating every salamander monster the moment it came into view. While he was a bit too excited for his own good, the wolf was still following all orders. There was no growling or animosity that he could detect from his mannerisms.

'I guess he isn't acting that strangely, he is just probably excited to be in the dungeon without anyone else dragging us down.'

Armand and Lobelia had managed to reach level hundred fifty with relative ease. Now they were up top trying to prepare to retake their ascension rituals. Even Roland wasn't able to get through his trial the first time so it wouldn't be strange if the two took a few weeks. He assumed that their classes wouldn't be as prestigious as his was which would allow them to retake the test more frequently.

'Mary is the same, I wonder what the three will change into.'

There were a couple of paths that all of them could take. Mary would probably choose something to aid her in gathering data and protecting her lord from the shadows. Armand would take something that enhanced his strength even further and perhaps also made him stupider. Lobelia had a few choices of ranged and rogue classes, a good combination would make her a lot deadlier than she was now.

'The biggest downside of this shortcut is the skills. It would have probably been better if all of them maxed everything out with the last skill included...'

He was a bit worried about the push in leveling being somewhat detrimental to the choice of the next class. However, his own Overlord class variation didn't require him to have everything maxed. It seemed

that maxing out on all the skills of the first tier 2 class was enough to get him through and perhaps it would be enough for his friends.

“Woof!”

“Watch out, it’s some type of evolved creature?”

“Could it be a rare spawn? Should we retreat, it looks strong, I think it’s a Dire Ruby Wolf, but it looks bigger... could it be ... “

“Wait... calm down, isn’t it walking next to that ... armored man?”

“Is that a man? Could it be some type of metal golem? That thing looks heavy...”

“Awooo!”

“Oh shit, it spotted us... let's run!”

“...”

Roland stood in shock as he appeared at the lava lake. A lot of new adventurers arrived and were itching to get down to the new secret area. Some of them did their research on the area and what monsters to expect. Volcanic wolves could be discovered in limited areas and Agni’s enlarged form could be mistaken for a rare variant of those types.

“Stop scaring the adventurer’s Agni, you’re using that skill too much.”

“Woof!”

Agni’s tongue flopped out after he performed his howl. He had gained a passive skill that would cause enemies to panic if they didn’t have high enough willpower. Every chance he got now he would use this howling attack as it didn’t really use up any mana or stamina points. While it did allow them to move through the dungeon faster, Roland was starting to feel bad about the newbies just trying to make a living here.

“They won’t go to the guild and tell them that a rare ruby wolf variant is terrorizing the dungeon, right?”

While looking at Agni’s stupid expression he realized that he might have to go and report the increase in tiers of his tamed monster. Even though Agni was wearing armor that he made to look tamed, his size was still comparable to a horse. His presence among the lesser monsters was eye-catching. If they bumped into an unreasonable platinum party that was informed of a rare variant running loose, then it could get bloody.

He tried ignoring this issue for the time being but heading to the guild was now a must. Thankfully he was the Head Knight so even bringing a horse-sized wolf into the city could be excused. Perhaps placing a saddle on Agni and riding him into the city would give more validity to the whole situation.

“Worf?”

For a moment, Agni backed away from Roland, who was taking measurements of his back. He had never created a saddle before but making one from some fire-resistant leather would probably not be that

hard. Perhaps his companion wasn't too keen on getting ridden by a man that was wearing armor above a hundred kilos.

"What? You're a big wolf, you'll be able to handle it. Anyway, the lake is clearing up, let's go."

The two traversed this stretch in a record amount of speed with Roland losing the race in a substantial manner. At least when it came to running speed he could not go against his derpy-looking wolf. The two soon disappeared through the secret door and squeezed through the corridors that in some places were a tight fit for Agni's increased size.

'Oh, they are already here?'

"Ah, Sir Wayland, Good day."

When he arrived at the mining area he was greeted by an acquaintance. Myrtle was there along with the whole party of adventurers that had been hired by Arthur. After a quick glance, it was clear that they were here to act as bodyguards for the Dwarven Union. Arthur had already signed a contract for the mining rights. Luckily he was able to shove the responsibility of taking care of the miners into the hands of this platinum party.

With a situation like this, the other adventurers had to give up on getting any of the rare materials without in some way getting themselves in hot water. Even if they were able to get through the hired muscle, they would be going up against the Valerian household. As he nodded at the woman he took a glance at his mapping device and could see some movement at the end of the corridor through which he discovered this location years ago.

'They seem to be working on that lift too, I see they took my advice to heart.'

Thanks to spatial magic moving the heavy ores wouldn't be a problem. The real issue was the long walk back up and constant waits for the lava lake to clear up. To alleviate this problem he proposed to create a pulley system going up that didn't necessarily have to carry the dwarves up. If it was able to house a cart with a spatial bag inside, it would be enough. It was more important for the materials to leave the mine early than the workers that could even sleep in tents here.

"Oh my, that magnificent creature... Is that an Alpha Dire Ruby Wolf? But the man is even larger and that horn radiates strange mana..."

His thoughts were interrupted after Myrtle spotted Agni. Compared to the weaker adventurers in the dungeon these five didn't seem to care that much about Agni. Perhaps their extensive experience allowed them to distinguish feral beasts from tamed ones. All the other people including the miners began inching back but soon went on with their work after they realized that Agni was a tamed monster.

"Yes, something like that, now if you'll excuse me."

"Oh, are you going into the dungeon, Sir Wayland?"

"Yes, I'll leave things in your care here, if something happens you can contact me through the usual channel."

"Of course, I'll use this as you've instructed."

Myrtle smiled while moving her hand to the side. There she had a runic device that had the shape of a larger smartphone. Instead of a screen, it was covered in various runes with a crystal orb closer to the top side.

“Hello, is it working?”

“Yes, I can hear you just fine.”

“Splendid.”

It was a two-way connection that transmitted sound. Roland just implemented some of the crystal ball magical technology into this runic device. It could not send through any images which conserved a lot of mana. Thanks to all the runic mapping devices that could transfer signals, it was possible to connect sound too. It was similar to a wireless phone network but was still quite limited.

One of the biggest limitations was the route that was required. It would be impossible for more than two people to converse while going through the same mapping devices that were shoved into the dungeon walls. It would also affect the map on his armor and produce errors if he used all of them at once. The new audio enhancers that didn't interfere with the map still needed to be placed and his current trip here involved this issue as well.

“Please be careful and good luck.”

“I will. Come Agni, let's go.”

Besides Myrtle, the party leader, the other four didn't really react to his arrival. He wasn't sure if he was disliked by the four others but at least Aubron looked displeased for a moment when he appeared. Perhaps in their minds, he had put them in a disadvantaged position by pretending to be weak.

‘Okay, which route is empty.’

Without anyone holding him back anymore he ventured forth. The need for traveling with a lumbering mule golem was also a big perk. With the runic dimensional pocket that was on his back, his traveling speed had increased. Agni's armor had been enhanced with the same storage feature which made the old golem obsolete.

“Okay, this should be far enough...”

“Awoo?”

“Yes, go ahead Agni.”

With the help of his mapping system and the lack of tier 3 class holders venturing into this dungeon, he was able to safeguard Agni's secret. The shape of the Ruby Wolf started to shift as the ruby mane turned to one covered by red and orange flames. The main reason to come here was to level up but also to see how Agni fared against the undead creatures here. The first enemy wasn't far and also one of the favorite types, a Berserker undead.

Infernal Skeleton Berserker

L153

“Go for it Agni.”

“Grrrr.”

His floating cubes moved upwards to offer some ranged support if necessary. With the power of mapping, he was able to pick out the perfect location for Agni’s first duel. His opponent had a slightly higher level but was still at a large disadvantage. The moment it charged the effect took shape and the speed drastically decreased.

‘So even without using a proper spell a debuffing effect is in place, could it be the flaming mane made from divine mana?’

This Skeletal Berserker suffered a stat lowering debuff without getting even hit once. Once he got in range of the heat that was generated by Agni, his stats started to decrease. The monster was an undead so it didn’t feel any fear or pain so it continued forth. Both of its hands were raised up for a combined attack against the flaming opponent.

Roland didn’t say anything but he was still nervous. Agni was just standing there as if everything was perfectly fine. Even with the decreased stats the claws still regained their hardness and piercing power. If they connected the wound would be deep and if it hit an artery it could be devastating.

Before he could initiate his hovering cubes, Agni reacted. The first swipe came at him but he just jumped to the side. The attack was quickly followed by another which didn’t even graze the flaming mane. It became apparent that the difference in agility was tremendous and further enhanced by the monster’s constantly lowered stats.

‘The debuff effect isn’t as strong but the longer the fight lasts, the stronger it becomes.’

To get an immediate effect a divine spell needed to be utilized but a slow buildup over time was also possible. It was somewhat similar to the hallowed ground spell that he was able to create. From his calculations, the area affected was about ten meters around his wolf companion.

‘This is the perfect grinding spot for him...’

“Hey Agni, stop messing around, just kill it, more monsters are coming.”

It wasn’t much of a fight as the Skeletal monster couldn’t even land one single hit. Agni for some reason was playing around with his first kill as if he wanted to show off to his master. While everything looked fine, even a weaker monster could become a problem if not handled well.

After hearing the order, Agni finally got his butt moving. The ruby mana and tail had been replaced by sunlight flames but they still could be used for attacking. His bulky form moved up into the air as he jumped. He performed a midair spin and used the momentum to enhance his tail attack. Instead of it flying forward like the previous ruby version it created a sharp arc of flames. This half-moon connected with the monster's body and took out its legs causing it to fall down to the ground.

It was quite the sight to behold. Instead of falling down after the summersault Agni created a platform to catch himself. While jumping up even higher he raised his muzzle to the side of which some flames were already gathering. The monster down on the ground could only watch as the inferno descended from above.

'He decided on the flames instead of the beam, I see that he managed to see the bigger picture.'

His breath attack was somewhat weaker than the beam that he could produce but there was one advantage, it used up a lot less mana and stamina. The solar beam was better suited as a last hard-hitting attack to end the whole fight and not when more monsters were on their way. Just as the skeletal fiend croaked, another one arrived through one of the corridors. This time around, Roland was there to intercept it with the help of his floating turrets.

The monsters were composed of the usual Skeletal Berserkers, Guardians, and Champions. With Agni's help, they went down rather quickly. Roland took the job of the tank that forced the attention on his shiny armor. This left Agni open to strolling around the large chamber and using his divine flame spells to inflict massive damage. The weakness of the undead was far too advanced for them to last more than a few minutes against their combined attacks.

"Oh, you leveled up already?"

"Woof!"

Agni jumped down next to one of the defeated skeletons and gave it a sniff. With a lack of mana stones to eat he decided to grab one of the large femur bones to munch on instead. After gathering up the dropped undead cores they moved on. The bones that they dropped could be sold for some change so he decided to insert them into Agni's spatial rune. In the future, he hoped to increase the size of it, as he wanted to be able to fit in various weapons and even golems. He had to work with the four floating cubes to act as support golems.

The two soon left and continued with their journey toward the dungeon staircase. Previously he had explored this level and discovered all of its secrets so now it was time to head somewhere else. After finally arriving there and taking care of a few skeletons along the way, a choice needed to be made.

'Should I go up or down?'

There were only a couple more levels when going up and then the dungeon ended. Monsters became weaker and even tier 2 ones started appearing if he decided to go up. By his calculations, the upper levels became smaller by around five percent until the last one that seemed unfinished.

'Well, I'm not purely here to level a greater item is a greater item.'

When looking at his weapons he was still using the sword that he had obtained from his duel. It had been enhanced with several runes and so was the skull shield that he retained from this dungeon level. The room that it appeared in had not replenished itself so his search for more loot would continue upwards.

"Awooo?"

"Yeah, I made up my mind, let's go up first. I'd like to look through the highest level... or in this case, it would be the lower levels."

The theory that this was still an expanding dungeon looked the most plausible. He wanted to check for himself how a dungeon in this stage looked as not much information about this phenomenon was accessible to him. Perhaps when he arrived there he would be able to discover some other secrets like

where this dungeon was heading. If for some reason it popped out outside the Albrook region it could become a problematic event.

“Wait, before we go... I should probably give her a call.”

Roland stood straight in place while activating several runes. His armor released a torrent of blue light that started shining in front of him. It created a region of blue light that soon started to pulsate. The pulsing continued for a minute before it changed into the form of an orb and within this orb a human face could be seen.

“Wayland? Is something wrong?”

“No, just wanted to give you an update on the situation. I’m about to go up into the dungeon and don’t worry, the monsters here are rather weak so it won’t be a problem.”

“Please just be careful in there, when will you be back?”

“I don’t want to spend more than a few days here.”

On the other end, Elodia’s brows furrowed. He had promised to keep her informed about his whereabouts within the dungeon and this was not the first time he had contacted her. Both had ways of signaling if something went wrong and he had a direct line to some allies like Arthur if something did happen to her, his home, or the orphanage. After a little back and forth he ended the magical call and turned to Agni.

“Let’s go, you can take point this time around.”

“Worf!”

Agni was ecstatic at the order of moving forward. Both soon ascended the stairs to a level with weaker monsters. With both of them now being in possession of rare tier 3 evolutions and classes, there was nothing to fear. The dungeon would soon open up all its secrets.