

Runesmith 71

[Chapter 71 Descending into the dungeon.](#)

Town of Albrook it was called, it was a mostly unexplored settlement away from large cities on Dragnis island. The people that lived here were a peaceful bunch that liked to live their lives slowly. Most of them were farmers, hunters, and fishermen that earned their living through their craft. It didn't seem like the monotone life that they spent here would be changing anytime soon.

This changed on one faithful day, the ground shook on a certain stormy night. Everyone woke up thinking that some kind of monster had finally attacked. People had heard the rumors of dragons living on this island in the innermost parts. Maybe one of them had decided to pay them a visit?

The truth was slightly different, it did involve monsters but the citizens weren't in any danger. After the storm cleared up and the sun shone on the mountains they could finally see it. A large volcano had sprung out from the ground, smoke was coming out of it, clearly active and dangerous.

Only a small number of guards and hunters lived here. A scouting party was quickly formed and in a few days, they brought the news of the new discovery. The new volcano had an entrance, it wasn't a natural cave, no it was quite different.

It had an uncharacteristic gate design with embedded patterns. It looked man-made but the people living there clearly knew such a thing was impossible. There was nothing there just a day ago, this was clearly an entrance to a dungeon.

The people in this country or even the whole world weren't sure about how dungeons came to be. There were various types of them around, some even had their own ecosystems. Others looked like ancient ruins with catacombs spreading below the earth. This one was similar to the latter but also different in many ways.

With this news, their life got turned upside down. Their peaceful little town would soon be overrun with adventurers. The old farmers despaired but some of the more crafty ones knew that this was their chance. The person who took the initiative now could become rich. The adventurers brought a lot of problems with them but they also brought lots of gold coins.

Half a year later the people that took it upon themselves to invest were now taking in the profits. The inns and pubs were filled to the brim with new people, new shops were popping up to accommodate the new demand. The new unratd dungeon brought all of this in and this was just the tip of the iceberg.

Everyone knew that only after the dungeon was giving a rating its true potential would be discovered. Things like this took some time as even powerful adventurers weren't willing to venture into it blindly. It was believed that this dungeon was an extension of the main Dragnis dungeon that was a supervolcano in the middle of this island.

The biggest concern with it was the connection. It could be connected anywhere, to another smaller dungeon far away from here or even directly into the dragon's lair. This was highly unlikely but it was possible to meet monsters above tier 3 in random places if this dungeon connected to the main one.

Mapping out a dungeon could take even years depending on how large it was. Some of the beginner-friendly levels were already mapped out by the more experienced adventurers. The adventurer guild

even made money by selling some of the maps. Not all decided on a purchase like that which could prove fatal in the long run.

A certain person in an uncoordinated armor was walking towards this Albrook Dungeon. He was holding onto a map and slowly reading it while finishing up an apple that he bought on his way here.

'It looks like this dungeon is a Labyrinth type, those are tricky ones'

This was Roland wearing his brigandine armor along with his helmet to cover his face. He had his arming sword strapped to his side and a shield that he bought strapped to his back. He looked like a regular warrior, with his height over 185 cm he could easily pass for one.

He had made a decision of training up his close-quarters fighting skills. The sword related skills that he had were the most advanced from the combat ones he had. A decision was made by him to focus on it. The shield would also be used for protection and not only that as he had tweaked it a bit with his runecrafting skill.

Roland didn't abandon his spell casting just yet. He had two smaller wands strapped to his side as another means of attack. He wanted to increase his all-around fighting capability. He could go about it in a couple of ways.

First, he could focus on crafting better runic equipment. With various defensive and buffing runes, he would be well protected. His biggest weakness at the moment was a close-range exchange. It was very easy for him to even kill tier 2 monsters with his common grade spells. That is if they allowed themselves to be hit.

He had won most of his old fights by ranged surprise attacks. There weren't really any moments where he had to face a monster on his level in a true one on one battle. Either he hid and used his spells from a safe distance or he had other people distracting the monsters for him to land a critical blow from afar.

'I need to develop some kind of fighting style...'

While walking towards the dungeon he looked up while thinking. His close-range tactic came down to evading any attacks and then using a fire arrow spell with his wands. There was no fancy footwork involved, any blocking or parrying. It was just pure magical power that was possible through his runic weapons and his high mana pool.

'If I meet a monster that either dodges or resists one of these spells from close range, I might die.'

As he was thinking about some fighting combinations he finally reached his destination. The volcano was giving off puffs of black smoke here and there. The temperature increased slightly the closer he got to this volcano but it was bearable. He had also attached a special chilling rune to his own armor. If things got too hot, he could lessen the burden on his body by activating it. This rune worked similar to a buffing rune and lowered his mana pool by a set number while being active.

Roland moved forward, other adventurers were also here. Some were waiting for their teammates outside the entrance, some were going in, others were moving out. He could even see scratches and wounds on some of the rough-looking men. They were clearly in a fight not so long ago and now he would soon be in one as well.

This wasn't anything out of the ordinary, he had already been in a dungeon before. There was a slight difference, not from the adventurer's side though.

'Quite innovative...'

What he saw was a large wagon on the side. The peculiar thing about this wagon was that it looked more like a food stand. This cart was fully made out of wood and it had a tarp hoisted out from the side. There was also a window to which you could move over and peek in.

"Get your healing potions and mana potions here, we also have pure water for your parched throat!"

There was a young girl with a twin bun hairstyle shouting out. She looked rather young, about the age of twelve or close to it. She was clearly there to bring attention to this cart, in it was an older man selling some wares. Some of the injured adventurers were even buying up those healing potions. Roland wasn't interested but he took some time to examine the prices that were out on a large wooden board on the side.

'Those prices are at least 25% above the regular market value...'

It looked like this store was ripping people off but it did offer a new type of service. If you took into account that it was right outside the dungeon area the 25% rise in price could be stomached.

'I hope they know what they are doing though...'

Roland walked on while looking at some of the adventurers here. They were focusing on that cart with the healing and mana potions. Their faces had a certain attribute to them which didn't bode anything good for the future. He wouldn't get involved in something like this though, he needed to look out for himself instead.

He placed himself in front of the large dungeon opening. It really did look like a giant gate, it was at least five meters tall. It didn't have a door on it but there were columns to the side that continued upwards and connected in a half circular pattern to each other. Right at the area where they came together was a sculpture of a skull, its eyes flaming with a magic flame.

Roland almost instantly activated his debugging skill to scan this gate but he came out empty. There weren't any runes on it of any kind. He could see some strange writings which could be regular enchantments instead. There were other ways than runes to make objects magical in nature and spell enchantments were one of them.

Before people could start staring he moved forward into the corridor. After passing this gate he was greeted by a slight draft. There were stairs leading down into the dark dungeon, torches were on the side and the whole place was quite well lit. He continued forward without stopping while also scanning the walls for any runes.

The walk down continued and the further he got the more wind he could feel blowing onto his helmet. When he finally got down the stairs he found himself in a large area. The walls looked like they were made from large stone bricks and there were torches here and there.

'Which one to take...'

There were other people here with him, walking into some of the corridors. This area was like a large hub with tunnels. It was the beginning section of this dungeon labyrinth and was considered a safe zone. The monsters that were in those corridors wouldn't be able to come in here as some unseen force was keeping them back.

The experts weren't sure why this was the case. The monster bodies could be carried out of the dungeon and processed. The mana stones that they had didn't just vanish when they got out of the dungeon's domain either. But somehow there was a limit on how far these monsters could venture out.

Roland read that some people did some tests with weaker monsters. They captured one goblin and tried bringing him outside. There was a strange discovery made then, it was as if some kind of invisible barrier was keeping the monster inside. Even when the researchers tried pushing the monster past the dungeon area it wouldn't budge. It even got squished to death after they used too much force.

They could only come to the conclusion that there was some higher tier magic involved. They theorized that the dungeon could be in a different spatial space. To the monster, there was nothing past the dungeon entrance. The world outside might be on a different frequency or even in a different dimension.

The adventurers inside could somehow move freely between these spaces but the monsters could only do it after they died. The dungeon would also reabsorb any corpses of the monsters that died inside if they weren't taken. The same would happen to any dead adventurer. This was also why no one ever found old bodies in these lairs.

'Where should I go...'

Roland looked at the map that he bought. This floor of the dungeon's labyrinth was already mapped out and he even drew a line towards the next floor. This didn't mean that everything had been looted already. This dungeon type brought one large bonus with itself compared to the open forest one he previously was in.

Periodically a chest with loot would appear. Where they came from no one knew, it was as if the dungeon itself was trying to entice the adventurers to do more exploring. The higher the danger level of the monsters the better loot you would find. Bosses would also drop certain items and respawn at a set time just like in games.

'Well, I'm here to train for now. I'll just pick a path with the least traps around.'

The biggest reason for getting this map was to know where the traps were. If a person wasn't careful in this type of dungeon they would meet their demise quite fast. Labyrinth and ruin type of dungeons that looked man-made always had traps in them.

Without a scout or a thief in your party, it was very dangerous. Roland did have a life signal detection device but he didn't have anything for those traps. With the map in his hand, he would be able to evade his untimely demise. He finally looked to one of the corridors which he then picked as the one to use.

The passage was quite huge, it had a similar flaming skull above the entrance. The inside was another corridor with some torches on the side that gave the minimal amount of light for people to see.

Roland was a bit surprised about the insides of this dungeon. If he didn't know any better he wouldn't think that it was located inside a volcano. From the information that he gathered, apparently the further down a person went the more the heat increased. There was even a mining section after you made it past this labyrinth.

He continued further and finally, the first monster of this dungeon appeared. It was a common type of being that looked like a deflated basketball. Its body was semi-transparent and inside of it was a round object that was of red coloring.

Roland pulled out his arming sword and shield while looking at the small creature. Slimes like this existed in vast quantities around here and in other dungeons. They were one of the weakest monsters around but even then you had to be careful. They multiplied quite fast and could overrun a newbie adventurer party if they weren't careful.

He didn't hide his presence as he approached his first monster. It was quite slow in its approach. The transparent ball-like body stretched out slightly towards his direction as the creature moved. It looked a bit like a small worm but a rounder one.

Roland knew that he could one-shot this thing with the simplest attacking spell that he had. This wasn't the purpose of his training though. He wanted to level up his reflexes, dodging, blocking and even swordsmanship leveled up faster during real fights. It was unknown why but during actual combat the skills gained some kind of boost, increasing them like this was many times faster than regular training.

When the fire slime got in range it started compressing itself. It showed off its iconic attack of spitting some kind of heated liquid towards him. The pressure propelled this spit forward and made it look like some kind of ball of fire. He simply dodged it to the side, the creature was really slow and the attack was easy to read.

The moment this heated liquid collided with the wall to his side, it also started to sizzle. If he got hit in the face with something like that it would probably melt right through his skin. Even a simple monster like this could prove deadly if it got someone by surprise.

After dodging to the side the slime remained unmoving. This was the right time to strike, he gathered some magical energies on his sword while charging forward. The monster was far too slow on the uptake and could only wait for its demise.

He sliced with his mana imbued sword right through the monster. The slime died instantly after one hit. The slimy body that it had quickly dissipated into liquid and the slime core in the middle dropped down to the floor with a little clanking sound.

Normally to defeat this type of monster a person would need to destroy its core. Regular physical attacks were ineffective against the gelatinous body of the slime. There was a way around this problem and it was quite simple. A person just needed to use a spell or a mana infused weapon just like Roland did.

There was one reason that he used mana instead of going for the core. This slime core was something that he could sell, if he destroyed it he wouldn't get much for it. This item had similar properties to mana stones but it could also be used for various other things. Some slimes even had metallic cores that could be turned into weapons with high magic affinity.

'Well, that's one down... now for the rest...'

Roland glanced into the distance. There he saw many other fire slimes 'rolling' his way. He wouldn't be getting much experience from them but they were perfect for exercising before he went down to the more difficult levels. It was finally time to become a full-fledged adventurer.

[Chapter 72 Dungeon first floor.](#)

"GRUAHGHHHHHHH..."

A loud shriek of something non-human was heard followed by something similar to rattling bones. There was a strange screeching sound of metal against hard stone along with peculiar sounding footsteps.

This was inside the Albrook Dungeon that hasn't been rated quite yet. Dungeons in this country would be rated after an extensive investigation. The harder it would be to finish the higher the rating would become. Most of these dungeons also were given nicknames, the super dungeon in the middle of the island had its own. It was called the Infernal Dragon Dungeon, the dragon that lived there had yet to be beaten.

A certain youth in an uncoordinated brigandine armor was standing there, shield and sword in hand. He was looking at a new type of monster that he had never seen before but he had read about in books. It looked like a common skeleton that you would find in many other similar dungeons. There was a small difference though, this one here was literally on fire.

This flaming skeleton here was dragging a large sword with one hand and moving towards Roland very slowly. He knew that taking care of this monster would be an easy feat but he wasn't here to do that. It was the time to train his battle-related skills instead of his magic this time around.

He waited patiently without doing any hasty moves. The monster dragged its body toward him slowly and when it was in range it gave out a loud shriek. How the creature could scream without any vocal cords was what he started asking himself. The large overswing finally came as the skeleton tried hitting him with that sword.

He moved behind his shield and took the hit straight on. Normally this would be the time where he used his own sword to slice the monster's head off. Roland didn't do that yet though, he just backed off slightly while looking at his left hand.

'The attack wasn't that heavy, I can probably grind with this guy a bit...'

Some skills like shield proficiency and swordsmanship could be trained past the basic variant of the skills by some classes. This was true for most regular combat classes, even an archer could do this. But a non-combat class like a villager wouldn't be able to do that.

So the grinding initiative that he thought of had started. One of the easiest skills would be the one concerning shields and armor. By just blocking with this piece of steel he could level it up. It was even easier with the armor proficiencies as a person only needed to move around in combat to level it up.

If you took hits while wearing heavy armor it would go up even faster but was a lot more dangerous. The tactic was simple, fighting slow enemies that were easy to read. This skeleton was one of them, his attacking pattern was pretty simple. It would only charge at him blindly while swinging its longsword.

The creature's strength was quite low as it had trouble holding its weapon steady, blocking it with a shield was a simple task.

So the little dance continued until the skeleton's inferior weapon couldn't take it much longer. With one last swing against Roland's shield, the rusty sword snapped in half and flew against the wall. This was also the time that he decided to end the training session.

Roland listened to the voice that proclaimed how much experience he had earned. He was already used to how meager the gain was but it was still disheartening.

'I could probably get more experience by quickly making iron nails at this point...'

The monster crumbled into a pile of bones after having its head chopped off with one swing. The fire on its remains continued to burn for a few moments before leaving mostly dust behind. As a little bonus, a small mana stone was retrieved from one of the eye sockets.

'Can I sell this bone dust for something?'

Roland rubbed his chin while looking at the pile of half singed remains. He wasn't sure but an alchemist might be able to mix this with something. It was a magic skeleton that could resist fire while moving around so maybe this could be used for a fire-resistance potion.

More money was always better so he placed what he could into a large jar that then was pocketed into a spatial bag. After he was finished here he was planning to visit the city, the market there was booming. This was his first day on the job so it would be better to take whatever he could.

He had many spatial bags with himself so he probably had a leg up against the competition. Most bronze adventurers lacked the funds for a bag like this and steel graded ones probably only had one. The bags he had weren't bottomless, he would probably fill them up quite fast if he started gathering the larger creature corpses.

Roland grabbed what he could get and then examined his shield. He could see that the skeleton had scratched up his kite shield but it was still in working order. This particular one was in the shape of a teardrop. When he held it up to his chin it reached below his knees and was able to cover most of his body with its width.

It also had some mana stones imbued to its structure. He placed them on the inside right next to the shield's enarmes. This enarmes was composed of leather gripping straps attached to the back of the shield. It was held in place by riveting through the leather and the facing of the shield. On the other side, a person could see the spots that it was riveted through. It wasn't perfect and looked a bit janky but it worked well enough to get him by here.

There was a limit to how many mana stones a shield like this could hold. He couldn't just plaster the backside with ten of them to mitigate all of the mana requirements. The runic structure wouldn't be able to handle the purified mana and would just deteriorate the whole spell structure instantly. Something akin to a short circuit would happen which would destroy the whole rune.

He had chosen the lesser stones for this shield as he wasn't willing to test the common graded ones on it. The limit on this steel shield was three stones, with them around the mana cost went down dramatically. Each stone lowered the mana requirements by close to 20%.

That counted for only spells at the same level though. He had placed a regular mana shield runic spell on it. With the stones and his passive skills the cost was lowered by close to 70% of its original. For him, with a high mana pool, this meant that he could spam this skill quite often and not fear running dry on mana.

This wasn't the only spell that was on this shield. He had gotten the hang of multi-structural runic compositions a bit now. He had also gone with a lesser fire resistance buffing spell. This spell would take a flat number of mana points away from him for it to work. This would produce a constant effect, with the lowered mana costs it was quite manageable and a must for the dungeon filled with fire type monsters.

He had already done some extensive testing against the weaker monsters. The slimes heated spit was useless against this shield. He didn't even feel it heating up after taking a direct hit. It was also the highest possible spell structure which would make any fire attacks below tier 2 highly ineffective.

He didn't have time to work on all of his gear yet, his house renovation was taking up a lot of time and he still lacked a forge. The plan was to train in the dungeon while waiting a month for the construction workers to arrive. Most of them were busy working on the various new stores that were being built by some rich merchants or business owners. The city was constantly progressing but he had already made an appointment.

Roland gripped his shield while placing his sword back into the sheath. He then pulled out the map of this dungeon's level. This was still the first level and he was finished with examining it. It took him a few hours to go through the tunnels without rushing but it was time to move on.

The skeletons were the strongest enemy on this level and capped out at the 10th level. Besides them and the slimes, there were also lizard looking monsters called 'Baby Salamanders'. That last one was rumored to evolve into more ferocious monsters like fire drakes and fire wyverns if they gained enough levels.

The biggest problem with this level was the sheer number of other adventurers. He met them along the way quite often which slowed down his progress. When they were fighting he needed to wait for them to be done before progressing.

He could be accused of kill stealing if he tried forcing his way through. Roland wished to evade conflict with others, at least for now. After getting a silver grade card, he could start throwing his weight around a bit. With higher levels prestige wasn't far behind.

'If I b-line for the second level from the entrance, I could probably get there in 15 minutes...'

This level wasn't that large, if a person knew the way they could stroll past most dangers and descend to the second level quite fast. The lower levels would have less competition and more space to move. The size of the labyrinth increased with the lower levels, there was also supposed to be a boss room somewhere. After passing it you would arrive at a different area than the labyrinth or so the intel said.

'Should I go down, or head home?'

Roland looked at his remaining mana and stamina. Due to sticking to close-quarters combat, he didn't really waste any of his magic points. He did spend a lot of time here, mostly by using his shield to deflect

the monster attacks. He could easily kill the creatures here with one swing of the sword, using his spells on the other hand would be overkill.

In the end, he decided to head home, it was close to sundown and he didn't want to trek back while it was dark. He could still scribe more spells back home and repair his runic gear. This would also increase his experience pool and help him level up faster.

After using the map to guide himself he was outside after about fifteen minutes. Other adventurers were also going home and not many were going in. There weren't that many facilities in this city so remaining here during the night would be dangerous. Sleeping or camping inside the dungeon was also ill-advised.

There were expeditions that took precautions when venturing inside. Some gold and silver adventurers were already down in the lower levels mapping everything out at this very moment.

A large group, sometimes part of a larger organization would take on such a task. They would bring non-combatants inside that could cook and disassemble monsters. Some were used as packing mules as even with the spatial technology space would run out with long expeditions.

People like that would be called 'Packing Mules'. They were easily identifiable by the large backpacks that they were wearing. Those were specialized spatial devices with increased capacity and weight management. This job didn't pay much but such a person wasn't required to fight.

Roland was a solo adventurer so he didn't really have much use for a packing mule like that. He could just dump everything back at the guild for processing. The monsters he was fighting at the moment were small so he could manage. Protecting such a person in a one-man party would prove difficult.

The red sun rays greeted him after he ascended the long flight of stairs outside of the dungeon. The people that were selling potions were still there and the young girl was still trying to entice buyers. With time more merchants would probably set up camp here, maybe some large stores and even a hotel could be placed in close proximity.

'Can't have a store too close though, the dungeon might go through an expansion sooner or later.'

Some dungeons went through things like 'expansions' which increased their size. Such a phenomenon could change the landscape that such a dungeon was on. This volcano could start getting larger and push itself more in a given direction.

The possibility of that happening was low, mostly the dungeons expanded below ground but you had to take things like that into account. Having a smaller store in a wagon was probably the smarter option at the moment.

He left the dungeon along with some other adventurers that were probably also going back to their homes. He remained between some groups as it was unavoidable with so many people around. Roland took some time to look at the parties that were here and spotted a common trait that most of them had.

'Most of them don't look over twenty...'

This did make sense to him. Youths would be more prone to adventure out into other lands while seasoned adventurers probably already had things figured out for themselves. It was a big gamble to go to another city that was far away if you already had a good thing going for yourself. The veterans also knew the dangers of going into unmapped dungeons. The first ones there had the opportunity to gain some rare loot but also to get killed by a trap or unique monster.

'The grinding spots should clear out the further down I go, most of these people are bronze or steel grade.'

He thought that maybe going down to an area that monsters were around the 40th level would be the best choice. Facing ones over 50 would be manageable with his spells but he wasn't really a true tier 2 class holder yet.

With time he arrived back at his brand spanking new home. The door wasn't even squeaking that much as he did replace the hinges. That didn't keep it from scratching the wooden floor that he had fixed as the door was a tight fit.

No one had decided to pay him a visit back here for now. He was in the middle of setting up a wooden fence around his land. If he had the time and manpower he would place large three meter tall walls to keep everyone out. Along with barbed wire to make it hard for people to climb over it.

This would be a project for the future as he still needed the construction company to get over here. Roland was still in possession of some gold coins that he earned back at Edelgard. He received a large sum from Marlo, his old boss. Besides that, he had his own gold saved up from years of scribing scrolls and enchanting runic equipment.

He should be able to get the place renovated with what he had. Resources like wood or stone weren't that costly so setting up the wall and some defenses wasn't a pipe dream. The wall would be placed more as a deterrent than a defensive measure.

He just wanted people to see that they weren't that welcome inside. If someone decided to climb over the barbed wire walls then the gloves would come off. The first line of defenses would be the usual trap mines but he was planning to include some other things. There were other spells that he could use. Ones that didn't cause widespread damage to his own property.

'Wish this game system came with a target seeking defensive turrets. I'll probably have to design those myself, wonder if that will ever be possible...'

Roland had something similar in mind that utilized a specialized spell that could also be triggered. The only problem was with the scroll format. He didn't really want to have to replace the trap scrolls each time someone invaded his privacy. Making some kind of mana generator that included the mana stones was something he was very interested in.

He had the knowledge of runes and ethereal pathways that worked similar to wireless technology in his old world. If he managed to create something to generate a source of mana that was constant he could wire up his whole house. With this, he would be able to make mana powered utensils that he wouldn't need to power directly himself.

For now, he knew how to include mana stones into the runic structures. Those still required a small jolt of his mana to activate even though the drain was lessened dramatically.

'I guess I could look through the auction house, but finding something there as a reference will probably be hard...'

He tried to recall anything that could be of use to him. Something like the engine from that magical train came to mind but there wasn't anything like that here. He would need to check the town for any magical devices that could work by themselves. But for now, it was time to wind down, he had spent the whole day in the labyrinth, his research would have to wait for another day. Getting some hot water into his tub was the more important thing to do now.