Runesmith 111

Chapter 111 Nobles arrive.

"It's hot..."

A young lady with long blue hair was peeking out from within a lush-looking carriage. She could see the outlines of a city in the background. The interior was quite spacious and the moment she closed the blinds the warm air was unable to pass inside.

"So this is Albrook? Why do we have to be the ones being sent to the sticks?"

Another voice that belonged to a girl was also heard. This one was more high-pitched and belonged to a golden-haired girl.

"Charlene, you shouldn't say that. It's our fault for being late with picking our assignment, what if the locals hear you?"

"What of them? You care too much about those commoners Lucille!"

The blond girl by the name of Charlene looked slightly annoyed. Both of these girls were wearing very similar clothes. It was clear that they were some kind of uniform.

"But aren't they interesting? They were able to build this city and are able to live near a dangerous dungeon!"

"That's all because they have us. How could they build the city without us nobles guiding them?"

"I'm sure if they tried they could manage themselves..."

"Ha! My Papa always says that the commoners are like headless chickens without us!"

"Ah, if the Viscount says so..."

Lucille smiled a bit but it seemed that the girl didn't want to continue this conversation anymore. Her friend here had clearly made up her mind and she would be unable to change it.

"Do you think we will be able to pass the last test?"

Lucille asked while peeking through the blinds some more.

"Why shouldn't we? It's just another dungeon, we also have the knights with us. I'll be counting on your ice magic to keep us cool Lucille!"

"You can count on me."

The two girls continued to laugh and chat and soon heard a knock on the door.

"Lady Lucille, Lady Charlene. We will be arriving in a few minutes."

A voice of a young man was heard by the two and they instantly knew who it was.

"Thank you, Sir Robert."

Lucille blushed a bit as she saw the young man after moving the blinds to the side. He was riding on a horse, he was of above-average height and wearing shiny half-plate armor.

This man was packing a bit more meat than the regular youth his age. His hair was of brown coloring and he looked manly. The lady and the knight's gaze met for a moment. The intense stare that the two were giving of towards each other was stopped by Charlene.

"Shouldn't you be going back, Sir Robert?"

"Ah, excuse me, My lady."

The young man moved his head to the side while also slightly blushing and finally trotted off on his horse. He joined up with other men dressed in similar armor. All of them had a certain crest that didn't belong to any noble family but to the academy, they hailed from. The crest looked like an armored knight on a horse. He was holding a lance and pointing it into the air.

The carriage that the two girls were riding on also had a certain crest. It was a different one, it had a depiction of a robed man holding a staff.

"You should stop talking to that person Lucille."

"Huh... we weren't really talking..."

The girl with the blue hair snapped back to reality while holding her red cheeks. It was clear that the two were attracted to each other but there were certain problems that came with that.

"He hails from a baron's estate... he isn't even the heir Lucille, you need to find yourself a proper husband that is at least a Viscount! How about Lord Abbington instead? He shows a lot of promise!"

"Lord Abbington..."

Lucille lowered her head while thinking about the young man that her friend was talking about. He was a few years older and she saw him a couple of times at some noble parties but she didn't know much about him.

On the other hand, Sir Robert was someone that she kept running into from time to time. The two had bonded a bit through the years but she was also a daughter of a Viscount. The youth was not a full noble as he came from a Mistress instead of the lady of the house. He had no rights to his estate unless the heir died.

"Don't even think about taking Lord Percival, he is mine!"

Lucille then thought to the person Charlene mentioned. He was the heir of a count estate but there were bad rumors around him. Apparently, he was a giant womanizer that liked to sleep around. Her friend here didn't think that the rumors were true and was more interested in the wealth and title she could grab from a marriage.

She was a young lady that spent quite a bit of her life reading romance novels. She preferred the young knight to the older noble men that she met at parties. Her friends called her immature and warned them about silly acts of romance that didn't further the noble cause.

"Lord Percival isn't really my type..."

"Good! Now help me fix my hair!"

The two girls pulled out their pocket mirrors and started looking each other over. They were stuck in this carriage for quite a bit and could not look bad when leaving it. Their looks still remained important as they were ladies in their prime. Even well after achieving their mage classes, this concern about their appearance remained.

On the outside, the group of nobles was greeted at the gate with a salute from many guards. If Roland was here he would have a good laugh at how properly the guards were working for a change.

Nobles were not people that would visit such cities that weren't even properly developed. The noble house that this territory belonged to didn't even have any of their family members stationed here.

Most of the time younger members of the family would be tasked with something like this. While their elders remained in the big established cities. This also depended on the number of offsprings, if there was no noble family member then someone like this cities Mayor would be given the job.

To the noble house, the Mayor was nothing more than a servant, not even at the level of the official butler of their house. He was only there to make sure that they were getting the taxes and that no one was being disrespectful towards their name.

This same Mayor was looking out through his mansion window while his sweat was gathering on his forehead. He knew that this day would come and he dreaded the thought of anything happening to these noble brats in his city. He wasn't directly involved in this expedition but he might be held responsible if anything went wrong.

"Relax you old fart."

"How could I relax? The Duke will have my head if anything happens to those noble ladies. Even though they are only the daughters of viscounts, they are both mages."

"Eh, that's why I don't like those noble bastards, treating each other like breeding livestock."

A familiar figure was sitting down on a large couch that was barely containing his frame. His bald head and grayish skin was a dead giveaway of his identity.

"Aurdhan, shouldn't you be at the guild? What if one of your adventurers does something stupid? You can't have anyone offending any of those nobles, some of those knights are also from influential families."

"My guys aren't that stupid... well maybe there is one... "

The guild master scratched his head while standing up. A face of a particular airheaded guild member entered his mind as this question fell.

"I'll take my leave then. You worry too much, my men have been clued in. They are there to guide them into the dungeon, nothing more."

After reassuring that his adventurers wouldn't be picking any fights with the noble lords and ladies he departed. This was mostly a pretext to get out of the mayor's mansion. He knew that the overweight butler that visited him a month ago would be coming here as well.

That man was quite unpleasant and condescending. He would be coming here to impose on the mayor's hospitality and also to discuss business. Aurdhan did not want to be here as he feared that he might punch that fatty the moment his double chin came into view.

'The party members aren't the best... but nothing much I can do with these limited resources, hope I'm not wrong about that kid...'

The guild master thought back to how he reeled the Runesmith youth in. Due to the trinket, Roland was wearing he couldn't figure out his real class but he was sure that he wasn't the average Runesmith.

When he compared him to the craftsmen dwarves there was a stark difference. For one, his fighting capabilities were far ahead of what a dwarven runesmith was capable of. It was clear that he also had a way to use his own runic weapons more freely.

He didn't seem to suffer through the biggest weakness that magical armor or weapons put a user through, this being the high mana usage. It was clear that he either had a massive pool of mana or some special class skill that allowed him to do this.

The other thing was his combat ability, he had been clearly trained by someone. Mages and craftsmen that the Runesmith class came from mostly did not have proper combat training. Him being able to win against Armand two times clearly showed that he was capable.

There weren't really many smart people in this guild and Roland seemed like the closest thing to a mage that this city had. There were a few older spell slingers that were working here but they were too old to take part in expeditions like this.

Having someone that was aware of the mana around them was always a big advantage in a dungeon. There was also the tier 3 party leader, he was an expert tracker and good at detecting ambushes plus also traps.

He went with this man instead of someone that would be better at actual fighting. It was safer this way as avoiding combat was what he was going for. Their work would mostly consist of acting like scouts, the battle portion would be supplied by the noble knights.

"Greetings guild master, you're looking tired today."

Aurdhan was greeted by the elven receptionist girl. She was rubbing her eyes while also drinking a cup of warm tea. It was early in the morning and it would take some time before the nobles returned from the mayor's house. They had some time to get ready and he wanted to have a little talk with everyone before they left, mostly with Armand and Korgak.

These were the two meatheads of the party. Korgak was violent when he had to but he wouldn't step out of line as long as there was someone in the party that he respected. With the team leader being tier 3 this part was secured. Unless the nobles actually attacked the party there was no real danger of the half-orc running wild.

On the other hand, his old golden boy Armand was more headstrong. He feared that if some of the noble brats got under his skin he might do something stupid. The guild master wasn't quite sure himself why he was putting faith into the young man but he somehow reminded him of himself when he was young.

Armand had a certain look in his eye, he was hungry for more. He always took on the harder missions and came out victorious. It might have seemed that he didn't take anyone else into account but he actually prioritized his party members over himself during combat. He was someone that could be relied on.

The biggest problem here was that he had a hard time admitting to his wrongdoings. The guild master wanted Roland and Armand to figure things out down in the dungeon. He was of the mind that if two men were forced to work together with each other for survival. They would somehow figure things out along the way.

He was banking on this happening during this expedition. Getting Roland to take this mission might have been a little rouse that he had set up. The manufacturing schematics that the young runesmith was aiming for were given to him via an old promise.

The price wasn't actually that high as the Runesmith was someone that he had once saved before. The old dwarf was hard to convince but after bringing up old history he caved in to the demands. He had made a promise that he would keep. Aurdhan also reassured that he would be giving this knowledge to a runesmith and not sell it on the auction.

The guild master was aware of how craftsmen types thought. Just as he thought Roland was unable to pass up on something like this. The small danger of the dungeon was not enough to sway a proper Runesmith away from more knowledge.

"If you think that I look tired, you should have seen the mayor! That poor bastard looks like he didn't shit for at least a week!"

The guild master laughed while the elven receptionist scrunched up her nose at the thought of the mayor's bowel movements.

"Is everyone here?"

"Almost, I haven't seen Korgak yet, Lobelia and Armand just came in, Mr. Wayland and that person from the Solaria church have been waiting since early morning. Mr. Silvio is also here."

"Hah, we can start the meeting without that blockhead, just have him wait if he comes over."

The guild master was sure that the Half-orc would arrive smelling of cheap alcohol, it would be actually better if he wasn't there when the nobles arrived.

"Where are they now?"

"I instructed them to go into one of the waiting rooms..."

"Woof, woof, woof!"

While talking to the receptionist the guild master heard a loud barking sound. The sound was clearly coming from the main corridor that led up to his office as well as to most of the other guild rooms.

"Did someone bring a dog to the guild?"

"Mr. Wayland brought his tamed monster over, I think he wants to take it on the mission."

"Well that's fine... but why is it being so loud..."

"Beats me, it looked quite gentle when I saw it, maybe someone stepped on its paw?"

The elven girl shrugged while the guild master moved towards the corridor that the noise was coming from. After pushing the door open he saw that all the commotion was about.

'Those two really don't get along...'

He saw both Armand and Roland looking at each other. Lobelia was standing next to Armand while Agni was barking at the large muscle man. Both of them looked like they were going to fight which just made the guild master here nervous. Before he could go over to deliver a fist to Armand's head the young man took a step forward and did something unexpected.

"Huh? Could you repeat that?"

Armand started to nervously scratch the back of his neck, his gaze wavering while not meeting Roland's eyes. Aurdhan could see him move his lips but he wasn't sure what he was saying. This became apparent after the next line.

"I said I'm sorry! Now get out of my way!"

Armand burst out in rage while quickly running into the room that the meeting would be taking place.

'Huh? He apologized?'

"You'll have to excuse him, Wayland, it was hard to convince him to do this. I'm surprised that he even went through with it in the first place..."

Aurdhan then heard Lobelia call out to Roland while laughing. It was clear that Armand was somehow convinced by someone to give out an apology. It was quite forced and not really genuine but it looked like a good start. At least to this guild master it did, what Roland felt about the whole thing remained to be seen.

"I see..."

Were the words that left Roland's mouth, then finally noticed the Guild Master standing to the side and greeted him with a small nod.

"Well, I see that you two are getting along just fine, hope you invite this old man to your wedding!"

Roland face contorted in various ways. This day his helmet was off so everyone could tell how uncomfortable that comment made him. The party of five with a half-orc missing had a quick talk before the mission started. Before the guild master let them leave the elven receptionist knocked on the door and peeked in.

"Excuse me, Guild Master, a knight has arrived and he wants to see you"

"Finally they are here, you lot get ready and remember what I told you."

Everyone headed outside, some of the party members like Lobelia were interested in how this noble knight would look like. The exit was along the way and Roland was in the front, he opened the door and took a step forward but then froze in place instantly. Lobelia that was behind him bumped into his armor and almost fell back onto her posterior.

"Hey, why did you stop?"

She then saw the armored man quickly taking a step back into the corridor while hugging the wall. She saw him quickly place his helmet onto his head while slightly fidgeting. Confused at his reaction she looked outside, there stood a young knight of unknown origins leaning up against the wall and waiting...

Chapter 112 Making them wait.

"Uff..."

"Hey, what's your problem?"

"You think that just because you can sense mana that it makes you better than me?"

"What are you even talking about? I never said anything like that, is your head made out of mush?"

"Shut up!"

"Hey, stop it!"

Two children of young ages were seen fighting. One was clearly older than the other and the height difference was apparent. The smaller child was covering their head while the larger one was hitting it. Soon some servants came and were able to pull the larger boy of the smaller one.

"Let me go!"

"Young master Robert, you musn't. The lord has forbidden such behavior!"

"Young master Roland, are you okay? Does it hurt anywhere?"

While the youth by the name of Robert was pulled away while flailing around an older maid could be seen hugging the younger boy.

"What took you so long?"

The boy replied while rubbing his bloody nose. It was a bit odd that the younger boy was more composed and was not even crying. The older boy on the other hand burst out in tears the moment the adults arrived and started reprimanding him.

"What happened?"

"Lady Francine, young master Robert attacked master Roland again..."

The lady that arrived now started tending to the older boy while just giving Roland a side glance. Without saying anything she started walking away, it didn't seem like she would punish the boy named Robert nor did she help the one called Roland.

"Heh ... "

"Master Roland?"

The boy that was close to six years of age gave out a sigh while dusting off his clothes.

"It's fine Martha, I'm used to this."

"Oh, Master Roland..."

The old maid quickly gave the young boy a hug while tearing up. The boy on the other hand looked more annoyed than sad at the small cuts and bruises that he had suffered.

This was one of the many memories that were now rushing into Roland's head. He had just stepped out from the guild's corridor and saw someone that he didn't expect. It was one of his older brothers, the youngest of them called Robert Arden.

Just like him, he was someone that came from a mistress. He had no claim to the main Arden estate and was treated more as a resource. The last time the two had seen each other was during a family gathering that was more than six years ago.

Robert then was already at the knight academy working as a squire. The young teenage boy that he once knew was replaced by a large imposing young man instead. Even though he hadn't seen him for so long he instantly recognized his older brother.

'The hell is he doing here... why would he be here so far away from home? Did he recognize me? No, there is no way for him to know, I'm still wearing my armor.'

Roland was now backing away from the corridor while slightly panicking. There was no reason for his older brother to be here, he should have been in a knight academy that was deeper inside of the mainland.

There could be a few possibilities why he was here of all things. One of them was to find Roland which he was the most afraid of. The other one was the more bearable explanation which would make this only a coincidence.

The young lords could transfer from academy to academy and also perform tasks to gain merits. The academies worked similar to schools where you gained credit. This dungeon expedition could have been one of those assignments that would give a lot of credit. It might have been the best option for him to finish his knight academy.

Robert was three years older than Roland. The trainee knights would be done with school at around this age. This could really just be the last assignment for him. He would even get more merit points for crossing the sea and getting on this island on his journey. Which would then allow him to be done with the academy sooner than most other young lords.

'Calm down... this doesn't have to mean anything...'

Whine

While still being a bit shocked he felt Agni poke his leg with his nose. He was finally able to snap out of it. Lobelia was now standing next to him after he had come to a stop. It was clear that she was confused after bumping into his red armor.

"Hey, what are you doing?"

Soon Armand appeared from behind and just walked through the door through which the guildhall was. Roland flinched a bit while backing off, still a bit afraid of showing himself.

"So that's one of the nobles? Doesn't look that special to me..."

"Hey be quiet, he might hear you."

Lobelia elbowed Armand in the stomach that caused him to flinch a bit. The two were now looking at the knight that had come to the guild. Luckily for everyone Silvio was there as well, he was the team leader and had already been clued into this meeting.

"Good day, I'm the leader of the party that has been hired for this expedition."

He stretched out his hand towards this young man in shining armor but instead of a handshake, he got an empty stare. The young man continued to look over the people here before answering.

"Good, we have decided to rest for the day, you are to meet us at the dungeon entrance tomorrow."

Silvio retracted his hand while keeping his cool as the conversation continued.

"At what hour should we meet?"

"Just wait for us, we will arrive."

It seemed that they wouldn't be getting a proper answer and that this knight might not even know when they would be there. They were not in a position to complain, they were already hired for a large sum of money. Waiting for a few hours outside the dungeon entrance was the least they could do.

"Very well, we shall wait for you at the entrance tomorrow."

"Good."

The young man nodded and then quickly removed himself from the guild. He seemed to be in a rush while also having the look of disdain on his face. The moment he left the guild Roland finally decided to peek out.

"Who does that prick think he is?"

"Yeah, he was being awfully rude to Mr. Silvio!"

Armand and Lobelia commented after seeing the scene being played out. It was strange to look at the young knight be disrespectful towards a person that was in the position of a tier 3 class.

"It's fine, you know how those nobles are, no respect for anyone other than themselves."

Silvio didn't seem too concerned though, he even had a slight smile on his face as he continued to look at the door through which the young knight left.

"Listen up everybody, it looks like we will have to postpone the departure as our little noble guests have decided to stay for the day. It would be better if you avoided them altogether, we wouldn't want any incidents to happen, now would we?"

Silvio said while looking at a certain muscle-bound person.

"Hey, why are you looking at me like that?"

"Don't worry team leader, I'll keep him away from any trouble!"

Lobelia proclaimed while puffing out her chest.

"Hey stop treating me like a little kid, why would I get into trouble?"

"He isn't very aware of himself, is he?"

Silvio turned to Lobelia while raising one eyebrow. This team leader has already been clued in by the guild master about Armand's tendencies. The half-elven girl just laughed while Armand's face turned to confusion. While all of this was happening Roland was slowly entering the guildhall, now without the knight being here the coast was clear.

"Hey, didn't that knight look familiar?"

Lobelia turned to Armand while asking, her older brother just shrugged as he wasn't someone that really cared about men's faces.

"Oh well...see you tomorrow at the Dungeon Wayland."

Lobelia waved at the slightly spaced-out Roland while also pushing Armand out of the guild building. Soon everyone went on their way with only Silvio remaining here.

"You should go home, get some sleep, we don't know how much rest we will be able to have with those nobles around."

"Ah sure, see you tomorrow then."

Roland nodded while moving towards the exit slowly. He was wearing his armor and his entire face was covered. There was no reason for him to be discovered. His voice had also changed so in theory his older brother shouldn't be able to figure his origins out even if they talked.

The only thing that he needed to watch out for is removing his helmet. Luckily he was part of the adventurer party and not of the noble knights. He would not really need to comply if they even ordered him to show his face.

After stepping through the guild's door the first thing he saw was a large green man heading his way. It was the last party member that was already late, Korgak. The two stopped in their tracks and looked at each other.

Roland wasn't really sure what to say to this guy as they had never really interacted before. Korgak on the other hand had a certain alcoholic smell to him and wasn't speaking either.

The half-orc nodded and Roland nodded back unsure of what was the meaning of this gesture. The two then went on their way with Korgak entering the guild building behind him. This was followed by a sneezing Agni that was a bit more susceptible to the odor.

"Let's go home for now Agni."

"Woof."

It seemed that the coast was mostly clear. He could see a carriage out in the distance, it clearly belonged to the nobles and was pure white. Roland also recognized the symbol of one of the magic academies that was there.

Surprisingly it was also one that was situated deeper into the mainland. Through this, his theory of the young nobles getting more points for the prolonged journey on this mission started making some sense.

The not fully mapped out dungeon would also add to the mission's difficulty rating. The foolhardy youths were probably ignoring the dangers that could come out of this over getting better grades.

Roland knew that the possibility of unforeseen dangers was low, thus this might have actually been a good gamble. He wasn't sure about how they rated this but the added grade could allow the participants an early graduation.

The magic and knight academies took long and stunted the level of growth of their participants slightly. They focused mostly on leveling up skills over pure leveling that experience points gave them. Even with that, they came out stronger than their adventurer counterparts. Mostly from having access to better knowledge and unlocking more prestigious classes.

'I already signed the contract, I can't turn back now...'

His first instinct was to cancel this mission. Regretfully he already signed one of those magical contracts. He was already promised the manufacturing knowledge after completing the mission. Only after that, his deal with the guild would be finalized. If he quit now he would have to pay dearly not only with money but also with his time.

This was understandable as the guild's reputation with the nobles was at stake. The guild master needed to have everyone sign a contract that couldn't be broken easily. Otherwise, the whole party could fall apart even on the day when the mission started. Then the guild would need to pay a massive fine.

The more gold you earned during the mission the more was required from the guild. The nobles were sure to pay more to get some insurance. If the guild wasn't able to deliver their side of the deal they would be punished accordingly.

The mission that they would be taking on didn't seem that difficult so it wasn't strange that the guild master agreed to these demands. To him, the nobles were already overpaying by a lot for something like one party of adventurers.

They would be even doing most of the fighting themselves. It was almost like free money. Roland's party only needed to stay with them as lookouts and assess the situation. If everything went as planned, it would be similar to a camping trip.

The carriage was far away but he could see some of the armored knights following after it. He wasn't sure which one of them was his brother but it didn't seem that his position was that high.

'They used him as a messenger, he clearly is only one of the grunts here...'

Roland had an idea as to why this was the case. It was all tied to noble status. Someone from a Baron's household was mostly on the lower end of the hierarchy. Robert's mother was also only a daughter of a merchant, she was not nobility.

Bloodlines were taken very seriously in this kingdom. His father Wentworth was also just a first-generation noble. He gained his status thanks to his military prowess. Unless the bloodline was connected to some old nobles or lasted at least three generations, a person wasn't yet seen as a proper member of the noble cast.

Robert was probably fighting an uphill battle, a battle that Roland evaded with him leaving his old home behind. He knew that as the fourth child of a baron he would be treated like a commoner. Having to be bullied by smarmy noble kids for years to come was not something that he wished to do.

For some reason, his brother Robert was the reverse. He was adamant in showing his own worth to his father. The moment Roland showed that he had an aptitude for mana the two got into many fights. Roland had a few ideas about why this was happening and Robert's mother had something to do with it.

'The kid has his own problems... hope he matured a bit since last time...'

Roland wasn't really mad at his siblings for being like this. They were the product of their surroundings. The wives pressured their children into being the best while hoping for them to get high positions in society.

The noble life where your image and status was everything was very cutthroat and fake. It wasn't rare to see one of your friends or allies throw you to the wolves the moment they find a better deal elsewhere. Everyone needed to prove their worth before they could achieve anything. Robert was clearly taking the same path as his father did.

With a turn of his heel, he headed in the opposite direction that this convoy of noble people was heading. Bernir was quite surprised when he saw Roland being back already. There was not much to do besides checking if he didn't forget anything. He was sure to fasten his helmet to his armor as much as he could, it would have to stay on there for quite a bit.

On the next day, he said his farewells once more and went to the meeting place. It took less time than going to the city and he didn't need to force his way through the crowds.

"Praise the sun."

Was what he heard when he got there. Sister Kassia was already there just like the previous day he was the second person there. Roland started wondering if sun church clerics had some kind of sleep

resistance skill like he did. The woman had to have been here for some time as she was sitting on a blanket and was already drinking tea.

"Would like to talk about the ladies gospel while drinking tea my friend?"

"Ah now, I'm fine..."

This place was outside the dungeon right and not far away from the forest. They were near the main path so they would see other party members if they finally arrived. Roland leaned up against one of those trees while waiting.

Silvio was the third person to arrive, with the brother and sister duo of Armand and Lobelia being third. Korgak as before was late by a whole hour but this didn't matter much. The nobles took their time and even when the sun was close to reaching the very sky they weren't here.

"Damn nobles making us wait..."

Roland heard wood cracking as Armand punched a tree. They had been stuck waiting for multiple hours without anything to do. They had some noble ladies with them that were apparently mages. It was reasonable to believe that they wouldn't rush over here and only arrive after a filling meal.

"Hope they won't tell us to come back tomorrow..."

Lobelia commented while yawning.

"Don't worry, the guild will pay us more depending on how long this mission takes. The contract began yesterday, so we'll get compensated."

Silvio started reassuring the party of mad adventurers.

"Woof."

"Think They are here...."

Roland proclaimed after Agni barked out. Soon the sound of horses and a carriage could be heard by all of them. The time to delve into the dungeon has finally arrived. Roland was sure to fix his helmet once more his main task was to make himself inconspicuous.

"It's time to earn our keep!"

Silvio called out for everyone to get ready while also moving out first. He needed to discuss some things with the leader of the noble side, after that it was time for some dungeoneering.