Runesmith 137

 "Hm, that should do it."

Roland and Bernir were standing in a somewhat enlarged underground workshop. Due to the need of creating a new smelter they had to dig up some more space.

This was not such an easy task as the more they dug up, the shakier the foundation above became. Everything required support columns and beams. Without Roland wanting others to get involved he was stuck doing this himself with his assistant.

Luckily Bernir was quite proficient at this. The material they used was special flame-resistant wood that was easy to come by. The dungeon here in the lower area had ash-like trees that could be carried outside. They were very resistant, not much worse than rock but it was still wood which was lighter.

It took them two weeks to expand the workshop to accommodate the building of the new smelter. Roland was also thinking about future endeavors thus he made it a bit larger than he really needed it.

"Finally we can start, let's bring it over."

This would not be a regular smelter. Normally a smelter was used to extract metals from ores. This was not an easy process and most regular smelters would only produce metals with lots of impurities.

The smithing equipment in this world went in a different direction than in his original world. There, techniques implementing chemical reducing agents to decompose the ore were used to drive off other elements as gases or slag. Only then was the metal base left behind.

Here on the other hand, instead of more scientific solutions, magic ones were implemented. Anyone that had a class had a little bit of mana in them. A person didn't need to be a mage to run equipment like this as the lack of it could be counteracted by Elokin's Fluid.

This smelter that they would be setting up here was the same. In the schematics, there was even a little side section for the fluid tank. This would be something that Roland intended to modify. If it was just sitting in his workshop he could implement his wind turbines that didn't require him to spend more money.

The smelter was cylindrical in shape with the top part being wider than the bottom part. On the top, there would be a bowl-shaped center with six smaller areas around it. The middle part was reserved for the metals.

This type of smelter would require Roland to already have a ready ingot to be placed there. It could not smelt ores or purify them. The six spots around the main one were for the mana stones, there they would be melted into a liquid state, and then through small passages, they would flow into the middle.

All of this would be done by specific runes that he would need to runecraft into this thick slab. Under the middle part, there would be an opening that would be closed at first. With a crank on the side, it would be opened by the blacksmith and the concoction would flow into the middle part of the smelter.

Inside the bonding process of the metal and mana stone would take place. After going through some of the recipes that he received this process could take up to several days.

This thing would burn through mana, the heat needed to be constant, and the magical runes needed to change the structure of the mana stones and metals they bonded to.

When it was done the smoldering magical metal could be removed from the bottom. Under the smelter, he could place some kind of mold. This could take the shape of a regular ingot or something else. Thanks to this he could even use one of the older bronze weapon forging techniques.

Most of the time he would go with the ingot route as he had to deliver these metals to the other blacksmiths in the city. They would be the ones forging the weapons and then returning them to him for the finishing touches. He would of course save some for his own crafting sessions but he wanted to focus his talents on other things.

Crafting old-styled armor and weapons was not the only way to go for a runesmith. There were far too many magical devices that he could create. One of those were the golems that he had an itch to create.

The runic books that Lucille had lent him were gone now but he had memorized all the parts that were important. With their help, he was finally able to move forward with his golem program. Now the only thing was to build a basic body for his golem and start working the bugs out.

'I need to get that crystal ball and contact Lucille soon...'

While he and Bernir were assembling the new smelter together he thought back to the promise that he made with Robert. He was required to stay in contact, his brother would probably show up or go back on his vow if he ignored this request.

"There..."

Bernir wiped some sweat from his brow after hammering the last rivet into place. The prototype smelter was now in place and it only needed the runes to go with it. Due to it being made from separate parts it was better to leave the runecrafting for later.

The smelter was made from very thick specialized magical steel. It also cost Roland a small fortune to buy the resources. The all-around shape wasn't hard to make but it would take some time till he got his money back.

"This sure is a strange-looking smelter..."

"Well, it doesn't require any exhaust vents, the runes take care of everything."

Bernir just chuckled as he had already given up on ever understanding how magic and runes worked. Soon he headed outside and Roland was left here alone. Soon the slow process of runesmithing was started which he needed a whole week to finish.

The smelter was extremely thick and the rune traces needed to be deeply ingrained into the metallic structure. If they were too thin, the smelter would not be able to function for too long. It would require some maintenance later on but with this, it would be able to last for a few good years.

Roland took a step back to behold his newest creation. The whole thing looked like a boiler on four legs with a very thick bowl on the top. Two circular cranks one closer to the bowl part and one below the middle part were also there.

Everything was made from dark-looking thick metal that was not very shiny. In the back, there was one thick black cable that was attached to the bottom of this smelter. Roland was inspired by his old-world electrical sockets which he now used with all of his runic tools.

After connecting everything he could see the runic structures lighting up. Now it was time to test this thing out.

'Let's try half load for now...'

He placed three tier 1 mana stones on one side of the upper bowl area. In the middle, he placed some scrap deep steel that could be melted down into the new magical ingots.

Just as previously stated the smelter lit up, there were several runes on the side that started glowing brightly as the process was started. The mana stones started melting and the deep steel in the middle as well.

Then the first problem arose as the mana stones were liquefying at a faster pace than the metal in the middle. At first, he thought that this was fine but as the metal continued to melt he could see it.

With the help of his mana sense and his Runesmithing eyes, he could see the mana dissipating into the surroundings.

'If the mana stones melt before the metal, there will be a big loss to the quality...'

Roland stopped the process as he could tell that if he continued he would only receive a lower product. His mistake was using cheap lesser mana stones along with higher graded deep steel which had a higher melting point.

This problem could be easily alleviated by either placing the mana stones in later or adding a little runic program. Thanks to his current knowledge, injecting a timer into the smelter's structure was not a problem. He was actually planning on doing this after going through some tests.

His biggest advantage against other runesmiths was his high degree of customization. While others stuck to the premade runes to a fault he always looked into them and tried to make them more efficient.

The problem here was that the smelter was really large and thick. It would take too much mana to change the runic program each time he found another magical metal.

That's why he came up with another solution, plates or cartridges. These would look like cards with runes on them. Each one would have a pre-programmed timer for every metal that he tests.

Roland didn't know much about other runesmiths and their techniques but he had a theory with this smelter. Probably the runesmith or their assistant would need to place the mana stones at the right places and at the right time.

This would mean that either he or Bernir would need to watch over this process and lose hours of their time if he did it the old way. With these cards, his assistant could just slide it in and go on his merry way. The cards would be small and easy to alter as well.

'First I'll need to test out these recipes that I have.'

The recipes that he was given gave him the timing of when he needed to place the mana stones on the smelter. The time that was required for the metal to stay inside the middle part was also included. Some of them required him to get other magical ingredients to sprinkle before the first crank was turned.

'This will take a while to figure out...'

Roland brought out a notebook to take some notes. It was time to test the limitations of this smelter. Later in the day Roland finally turned the lower crank and looked at the hot red metal in liquid form pouring down into his ingot tray.

"Hm..."

There it was, his first creation. Every metal that went through this process had the 'Aether' prefix. It seemed that the process was successful but how well this compared to an item imbued with mana stones the old-fashioned way only time would tell.

His analyzing skill was not yet fully matured. If it was he could tell at a glance how high the mana saturation of this metal was. The only thing he could go off was the 'lesser' part.

"I guess this will be enough..."

It was time for a test and for that he called Bernir over. It was not required for them to make nice-looking weapons like a dagger from this, a paddle would do.

Reminiscent of his old days, he had Bernir hammer a similar deep steel ingot into a paddle wand shape. He did the same to the new aetheric ingot. After making sure that the two were of the same weight and shape he began the runecrafting process.

When it was finished he was left with almost two identical wands with the wind arrow spell on them. The only difference was that one of the wants had a spot for a mana stone on it while the other didn't.

Back on the outside, it was time to give these two a test. First would be the mana usage which would be easily tested.

Roland took aim into the sky and fired off a couple of wind arrows. The birds were spooked by the green bolts of energy and quickly scattered to the sides.

Soon he discovered that the mana usage was around the same. Surprisingly the paddle with the mana stone lost out by about 10%.

'The aether wand is probably better saturated, if I placed another mana stone on the other one it would equal out.'

Roland was sure that the reason for this was the mana stone in question. If he added another one or a tier 2 one then the mana stone wand would probably edge the aether one out.

It seemed that even with this technological improvement there was still use for the old models. While the Aether metals could be further improved and didn't suffer from the exposed gems that could be destroyed. The mana stone variant could be customized a lot more.

The ingot that was made also took on the qualities of the mana stones. If he combined mana stones from fire-based monsters it would gain bonuses towards that element. It was locked to this bonus and would actually work worse on opposite elements like ice.

This was not really much of a drawback as most weapons stuck to one theme. There weren't that many crazy people like him that infused their weapons with multiple elemental spells.

The armor that he had made would mostly be considered a failed item as no one besides him could use it. He was someone who lacked any elemental affinities but made up for it with a large pool of mana.

Thus he didn't really care if the mana stones contradicted with each other too much. There was always a base quality to each tier of mana stone which should be the same with these aether metals.

'Great, now comes the boring part...'

With the first test being successful it was time to go through it again. He would need to start mixing metals, mana stones, and everything else to create the best ratios. He already felt bad about selling a lesser aether item but not like he had enough knowledge and resources to get a higher tier just yet.

Starting off with lesser mana stones and slowly building up to the common ones. On these, he would probably remain for quite some time. This smelter was a tier 2 item, it was only made from common runes and he would need to study it.

Then in time, he hoped to achieve a breakthrough. When he was younger he managed to create common grade runes even when he only had a tier 1 class. This gave him hopes for doing the same here.

The time continued to pass and Roland continued experimenting with the new smelter and his favorite alloy, deep steel. With time he was managing to improve on the lesser type of aether deep steel.

This would also be his main experimentation resource. With a lot of scrap metal in his workshop, this smelter was the perfect tool to produce recycled parts.

While the young Runesmith was working hard on improving himself other forces were working in the background. At a certain place, a group of short bearded men was discussing some business.

"So, how bad do ye think it be?"

"Ah am nae sure, this human Runesmith is not known to me n' this ..."

There was a large wooden table next to these four dwarves. On it there were a couple of bladed weapons, some looked to have mana stone attachments.

"Bamur, you're th' magic expert 'ere, whit do ye think?"

"Ah am an Enchantsmith not a Runesmith, Dunan. How should ah know!"

"Just look at it, you old fart!"

The two dwarves started fighting and finally, the one named Bamur picked up a longsword. It was a runic item with a characteristic blue mana stone attached to the bottom of the hilt.

"Th' craftsmanship is amateur at best, mah apprentice could mak' a better sword than this."

"We know that, how aboot th' runes?"

"Th' runes on th' other hand, th' mana flow... it's a very unfitting combination. Whit kind of idiot would put such pristine runecraft on a failed product lik' this?"

The old man shook his head while placing the weapon on the side. It was clear that this group of dwarves was discussing the new competition that came to the city.

"Aye, that's what ah feared, we might have to ask for some help from th' union but for now we shall wait."

Chapter 138 Busy days of building up.

 "Here it is."

Roland found himself outside of a small shop. The building was squeezed between two others and the entrance was hidden in an alleyway. It looked like the owner of this shop was trying to not sell anything.

The sign depicted a magical staff along with some potions around him. He was not sure why but all the shops in this world had such banners. It made him think of the old RPG games that he used to play when he was still in his old world. In them, all the stores always had a characteristic sign to show the player what was inside.

He took a step forward, once he opened the door it triggered a bell that was above it. Expecting someone to call out and greet him but there was no response. It seemed that the person running this shop was probably in the back room thus he decided to take a look around.

The first thing he noticed was that how cramped the place was. His head almost touched the ceiling and the shelves were crammed with various strange items and potions. With the help of his debugging skill, he could even spot some runic items.

"Is anyone here?"

Roland called out while approaching the shop counter. On it, he spotted a little bell that looked similar to the bells at hotels. He gave it a ring and finally someone called out from behind.

"Hold your horses, I'm coming!"

There was a strange rumbling sound followed by something falling down. The voice seemed to be somewhat high-pitched yet also old. After a minute the cloth that was covering the entrance to the backroom finally moved and the owner of this shop emerged.

"My apologies, must have forgotten the time."

An old gnome popped his head out. He looked really old and had a very characteristic pointy black hat on his head. This was accompanied by a black robe which made him look like a stereotypical black mage.

Roland had to wait until the small gnome slowly walked over. The store counter also had a little step ladder that he had to climb.

"How can I help you, young man? Do you want to buy some health potions, maybe some herbs for a bad back?"

"Ah, no. I'm looking for a crystal ball, one meant for communication. I heard that I could get one here at a good price."

Magical items still weren't that widespread in this city. The dungeon was here but without having tier 3 monsters inside it would not attract the wealthier people. All the strongest adventurers were close to the S class dungeon in the middle of the island while Albrook could attract at most tier 2 ones.

A promising adventurer party would not remain in an area where the monsters were a tier below them. They would just not be able to progress further, the experience gained would be too minuscule.

Besides the dungeon, there weren't really any natural resources to attract people here. Roland on the other hand knew that there was some potential sleeping deep inside that dungeon. That spot with the rare metals and mythril ore deposits was proof.

Dungeon mines were sought after for one reason, the ore deposits would respawn just like the monsters did. The area he found could be farmed for resources repeatedly. The time of respawning was mostly set and could range from weeks to months.

"A crystal ball? Well, you came to the right place, I think I still have one lying around here, give me a moment!"

The old gnome called out and slowly moved down from the step ladder. He vanished behind that dark piece of cloth. Roland could hear something like pots falling down, maybe some crates it sounded like the old man was tripping over everything.

After about five minutes he emerged back with a round object in his hand. His hat was now turned to the other side and his robe was full of dust.

"Sorry about that lad."

The old man laughed and placed the object on the counter. Roland looked at it and thanks to his mage skills could tell that this was the item in question.

'Huh? So those came in runic form as well?'

Surprisingly this magic crystal orb had runic inscriptions on it. They were not visible to the naked eye, without his debugging skill he would also not be able to notice it. The item looked like a clear orb made from crystal how someone forced the runes into it was the biggest question.

Roland was quite knowledgeable about runecrafting when scrolls and metals were concerned. There were far more materials out there that would not be able to sustain regular rune smithing.

He would not be able to make a flying carpet as the runecraft would burn through the fabrics. The only explanation was that such a crystal ball required a somewhat different approach similar to the scrolls.

There was still a big hole in his knowledge. While he was light years ahead in some places like runecrafting there were many basic things he did not know. Just like the magic ink there were various other concoctions that could be applied in various ways.

What he needed is more knowledge and this here crystal ball could help him with that. For this, he needed access to the magic knowledge that was being held behind closed doors. Lucille, his new acquaintance, could help him with that.

The only real problem would be asking for some help, due to Roland's character he found it hard requesting help from others. Normally he would try to figure it out by himself but a promise was made. If he didn't contact her, his brother might come looking for him, this time with his father in tow.

"Yes, this looks like the right item, how much will it be?"

"You have a keen eye for such a young lad, just for that you can have it for twenty small gold coins."

"Twenty?"

Roland almost keeled over as the price was mentioned. This was more money than he was given by his old adventurer party. He was able to survive half a year on that while also crafting scrolls and now this crystal ball cost more than that.

"You might not know it lad but this crystal ball was made by a powerful runic mage!"

"Runic mage? Not a Runesmith?"

"A runesmith making a crystal ball? You must be joking young man, how could those brutes make something intricate like a crystal ball. They are better off making clunky golems!"

Roland was surprised by the revelation. If this old man was right then this item was quite rare as it was made by the unpopular class of Runic Mage. From what Lucille explained to him they were not proficient at crafting runic items but only using them.

Instead, they were supposed to alter the program inside that was crafted by a proper runesmith. There could be some exceptions to the rule, most of the regular crystal balls were enchanted items. These could also be made by enchanters instead of enchant smiths that just clobbered metals till the enchantments fit in.

'There might be some special spells that the mages use for permanent enchantments, which would make this feasible.'

From what Roland knew, regular mage enchantments were temporary. They would last a few hours or days at most before the enchantment faded away. Thus the services of these mages were more like a trial which some adventurers used before entering a specific dungeon.

Even though they were not permanent they had their uses. If there was a particular boss that was weak to a certain spell it was cheaper to go with an enchantment. There was no reason to buy a full set of fire-resistant armor to fight a flame dragon if a mage could produce the same effect for a fraction of the price.

"Twenty too much? Well, this is a rather old model..."

The old gnome started thinking really hard. Roland knew that this crystal ball was probably not something that would sell. There was no real reason to get a more pricey runic variant when the enchanted version cost less. The gnome also didn't know that a person like Roland would probably pay that price just to get his hands on a new rune.

"How about ten."

Before the old man could answer Roland started bartering himself."

"Ten? Do you want to rob this old gnome young man? Eighteen!"

"Eighteen? Can you even sell that crystal ball to anyone? New enchanted ones cost ten! Twelve."

Soon they went back and forth and finally Roland was able to barter down to fourteen and a half. Luckily he still had some found and with the guild promoting him he was getting some materials at a discount or even for free.

"Bah, No respect for their elders."

The old man was given the money and Roland now had a new item to test. If he figured out how these crystal balls worked he might be able to set up his own communication network.

The ones that the mages used were similar to old phones. The lesser models like the one Lucille had required magical rituals that boosted their communication range. Other ones could use Elokin's fluid as a power source instead or be implanted in other devices that hastened the process.

With how scarce the runic orbs were Roland believed it to be an untapped market. The problem would be how to reproduce this without the help of a Runic Mage. There was apparently one at the magical academy that Lucille hailed from.

Maybe if he asked nicely that person could help him do it himself. His class was a rare variant, maybe with some luck, he would be able to learn the Rune Mage skills as well.

The bell sounded once more as he went outside the shop and removed himself from the back alley. What people saw was not a man in red armor that was covering his face.

Roland finally decided to quit hiding his appearance. After his conversation with Robert, he realized that he could not live like this forever. Sooner or later his past would come back to bite him in the behind.

What he was wearing was mostly lighter leather with a couple of runic armor add-ons. He switched to darker colors and covered both his hands with runic gauntlets and armguards. On his chest, he only had a breastplate and then his shins were protected by leg guards.

There were no pauldrons or even a set of half-plate armor. This would be enough for protection as he did not think that people would attack him in the city. With the runic equipment, he was wearing he would be able to utilize various tier 2 spells which no normal person would be able to contend with.

People clearly noticed him as the armor parts were brand spanking new. It was clear that he stood out from the general public and not because of his armor. After now reaching the age of seventeen Roland started noticing people turning their heads towards him.

Even now as he continued to walk he was getting these looks as well. This was due to one thing, his face and his charisma stat. Even though it was not at the level of mind control it was above the norm.

Roland found himself with something he was not very familiar with, being attractive in the eye of the opposite sex. When he was out, the women were taking second glances at his face. His large stature only added to his all-around looks.

"Why isn't it my favorite Runesmith, what can I help you with handsome?"

"Please stop calling me that, just call me Wayland."

He had entered the store where Dyana worked. She was one of the more promising blacksmiths in the city and was young considering she was close to level one hundred. Due to Bernir having been a little pervert he needed to come here instead.

It seemed Dyana didn't like him that much and would give him a good thrashing if he ever entered her store again. This left him to do the dirty work for the time being. Even though the woman had that look she was still a professional, when the time was right she would revert to a true craftsman.

"First name basis already? You sure know how to make this young girl's heart flutter."

He wanted to comment on the age part but he was afraid to receive a knuckle sandwich if he prodded too much. Instead, he brought out some of the aether ingots that he had produced earlier.

"Oh, what is this, a present?"

Roland rolled his eyes and placed four ingots on the store counter. Dyana grasped one of them and started looking over it with much interest.

"This... this isn't regular deep steel is it?"

"No, it's aether deep steel, I've smelled a few samples, what do you think, can you make something that will sell with these?"

After looking one of the ingots over she placed it back down on the counter before commenting.

"Doesn't look much different than regular steel, it should be enough for a longsword. What about the hilt?"

"Doesn't really matter, I can place the runes in after the whole sword is finished."

With the help of the ethereal pathways, he didn't need to runecraft before the hilt was attached to the body of the blade. He would need to exert some more mana but it was possible for him to force the runes in there without hammering it too hard.

"Aether metals? Never worked with them before, this will be interesting."

Dyana smiled while turning back to Roland. A moment of silence fell between the two as she looked down at him.

"How about we..."

Before the woman could continue though, Roland cut her off.

"I should be going, I have a lot of work to do."

His chores were not over yet, as the two spoke Bernir was delivering the other ingot samples to the other affiliated blacksmiths. He hoped that within a week they would have one of these aether weapons on the display.

For now, he stuck to the weapons as a full set of armor would be hard to produce. Even when the smelter was used for the whole day there would not be enough resources to cover all the stores.

He was already thinking about building another one after he had worked the kinks out. Even now he was getting mixed results and the programming process wasn't that fast. It only took a little mistake to change the outcome of the end product.

"Leaving already? Won't stay over for a drink?"

"A drink?"

The moment drinking was mentioned he recalled himself at 10. The long-buried memories of being forced by certain three idiots to get drunk and pass out came back.

"I don't really drink alcohol."

"Alcohol? Why would I offer you alcohol?"

"If not alcohol, then what else, tea?"

"Milk of course!"

Roland narrowed his eyes and glanced at Dyana's horns. Then the hair was partially white and partially black. Going down he saw the large bell around her neck that was supposed to be used for cows and not people. Then without thinking much he glanced down at a pair of large mounds.

'Of course it's milk...'

While having trouble with keeping his eyes on Dyana's face he shook his head around.

"Uh... yeah... I think I'll have to have a raincheck on that one."

"Raincheck? I don't think it's raining outside."

Roland just inched out of the store and finally got out of there. The last thing he saw was Dyana's very saucy facial expression. He was sure that the older woman was having her fun harassing a young man such as him. What she didn't know was that he knew what game she was playing.

'That was close...'

Roland's heart rate increased as he handled the situation. Even if he knew what was going on, it didn't mean that he wasn't affected. He was still in a young man's body that was in his prime, it was quite hard to fight with the bottled-up hormones.

This was no time to relax, he had a business to build up. With the onset of his runic items that would be in proper stores his name would be known. Previously he used the auction house so no one really cared that much to look at his little crafter's emblem.

Now on the other hand there would be a name to go with it. Things were looking good for Roland but he knew that he could not relax. Just like previously he knew that if he didn't prepare enough things could easily turn sour...