

Runesmith 153

[Chapter 153 To the Den of Thieves.](#)

'They sure picked an odd spot for this...'

Roland found himself looking down an old well. He had put on his runic glasses so he could see all the way down and it was quite a large drop. After leaning back he looked to the side and could spot people moving back and forth by the road.

This well that he was standing at had once been used by the old Albrook farmers. It had long dried up and was left close to the road that led to the Albrook Dungeon. Roland had the letter that the guild master had given him in his pocket.

That day when he had a conversation with him he was given some instructions. The letter was supposedly an introduction to the people that run the underground businesses in this city, the Thieves Guild.

How the guild master of the adventurer's guild knew the thieves' guild was a bit perplexing. But after further consideration, he realized that the two guilds didn't really have anything at odds with each other. Not like they had conflicting interests, they were actually quite similar.

While the adventures from the guild were more like mercenaries and hired soldiers, the guild members from the thieves' guild were more like hired assassins and information gatherers. If a task was too difficult for any adventurer it wasn't wrong to go to the underground and hire someone that was more prone to taking risks.

The adventurer guild was a proper business and this limited their scope of actions. They had rules that kept their adventurer's from getting into too much danger. They had ratings for each one of them and the missions they were expected to take. Thus they limited the loss of lives through a vetting process.

The thieves on the other hand didn't care about things like that. They somewhat had an internal rating between each other but nothing of the sort as the adventurers did. They would not keep their members from accepting difficult jobs that could cost them their life.

Their masters didn't care and most of the time the jobs pay was proportional to the guild member you got. This somewhat made it more difficult for the one hiring to get a good deal but that was one of the reasons why these types of people were called criminals.

'There it goes...'

Roland threw the letter into the well while somewhat looking in all directions. To others, it would look as if he was throwing trash into this well and that was mostly what people did here.

How this message would reach the thieves' guild was unknown to him but magic was probably involved. It made sense that if a person wished to get involved with them needed to know a person that was already was a thieves' guild member.

It was somewhat of an exclusive club that was difficult to get into but even more difficult to get out of. This was something the guild master had warned him about but not like Roland wanted to become a member of the thieves' guild. His purpose was to get access to the black market merchants.

At first, Roland was concerned about this letter. Anyone could see him throwing something into the well if they wanted to look. Then after thinking it over it was clear that the thieves were just trying to be smart about it.

Who would think that they were actually using easily accessible places for contacting each other? This was also apparently not the only contact point, the guild master informed him that it changed every couple of weeks. While it was a well now, it could change to a tree stump in the forest or even a loose brick in one of the houses in the city.

This was also why he needed to do it within a short time frame. If he didn't do it now, he would have no way of knowing what the next contact point would be changed to.

'From what he said, I need to wait a few days for a reply...'

Which Roland did, while his letter of introduction was going through he decided to venture into the dungeon for a change. He had managed to reconstruct his old armor but with the lack of funds, he still needed to go with the mana stone variant.

It looked mostly the same but he decided to ditch the characteristic crimson coloring. For now, he went with a more pitch-black variant which also made the runic symbols stick out less if they weren't being used. If used he would stick out even more as they did glow in various colors of the rainbow.

The golems and tier 2 monsters on the lower levels didn't really pose much of a threat to him as he was slowly gaining levels. The speed of his progress had slowed down since his last dungeon run but thanks to him getting the tier 3 schematics he was slowly going for that 100th level.

Name :

Roland Arden L 90

Classes:

T2 Runesmith Lord L15 [Primary]

T1 Mage L25 [Secondary]

T1 Runic Mana Scribe L 25 [X]

T1 Runic Blacksmith L 25 [Tertiary]

HP

3351/3351

MP

8157/8865

SP

3022/4529

Strength

90

Agility

67

Dexterity

118

Vitality

90

Endurance

99

Intelligence

151

Willpower

139

Charisma

17

Luck

10

“Not yet huh?”

Roland looked at both his own and Agni’s status screen. Agni was at the level cap of fifty but the Mystical Ruby Wolf variant was still grayed out. He had progressed through the levels by leaching from his master and did it too fast. Even now he was a few levels short with his mana-related skills.

While to most people the 100th level meant their second tier 2 class for him it would take a bit longer. Only when he reached the 125th level would his Runesmith Lord class be maxed out. He still could get a new one when he hit it but there wasn’t really a reason for it.

He was thinking about using a class change crystal when he achieved the hundredth level. It was still possible for a person to look at the classes they could change to without switching to them. He could even go through some of the trials as a test without passing through them on purpose.

It wasn’t odd for people to reach a level cap for their class and then try to gain hidden titles or traits. From what he knew this was how people in the old days went about discovering new classes. They continued to gain new skills, titles and abilities and then went to see if any new classes become available to them.

Even then some classes remained hidden away from the public eyes. Like his Runesmith Lord class that probably only became accessible to him through skills like debugging. His noble birth could have something to do with it as well but he wasn't quite sure of the importance of bloodlines.

'I wonder if I could use any of this for crafting materials...'

Roland gave a pile of red rocks a swift kick to reveal a golem core under them. These were the remains of a volcanic golem that after so much time he had learned to defeat with ease.

"Some of the books say that some of the golem parts can be smelted down into proper ingots..."

Roland examined a piece of the rocky golem. Regretfully this one wasn't of the metal golem variant that had enough raw metal in its body to be used as a resource. These rocky golems would be suited towards the enchanted golem models more.

Apparently, there was a way to reanimate the remains of these rocky monsters and have them work through the use of mana. The only problem as always remained was the mana uptake. Only a powerful mage would have enough mana to support a whole golem and have it work full time.

Roland was somewhat a mage himself but if he would be able to learn such spells remained to be seen. He could ask the cat professor if it was feasible but he was somewhat afraid that he would be laughed at for asking a stupid question.

There was a possibility of mining some rare minerals in this dungeon. The biggest problem was that most of it fell to the adventurers guild and the dwarven union that liked to monopolize anything involving mining. Even now he could see some dwarven workers hitting the dungeon walls with pickaxes while being protected by a small adventurer battalion.

If he wanted to join the mining he would probably catch the ire of the people working here. While no one really had any rights to the dungeon, it was forbidden for him to get involved with the mining efforts. If he did, he would be fined by the guild or even banned if they caught him doing it.

This only left him with the option of finding a spot that was not mapped out by the others. Thus his gaze turned to the large lake of lava that had the entrance to that large pocket of rare metals and minerals. If he was only able to get strong enough to farm it, his future would be assured.

"Come Agni, let us go back."

"Whine!"

Agni wiggled his tail while snorting at the volcanic golem.

"What's wrong?"

Roland asked while Agni started scratching the golem's body a bit.

"Ah, do you want a mana stone? "

The golems didn't come with any mana stones so his wolf remained without his favorite snack. Roland did try to feed him the crumbled golem cores one time, but Agni didn't seem to like them too much.

"Ok, we'll get one salamander but then we are going back."

After slaying, one of the salamander-type monsters Agni had his mana stone to nibble at and the two returned to the upper levels through the shortcut. Then when he was right at the exit from the dungeon an unfamiliar person bumped into him.

“Hm?”

“Oh excuse me...”

Just from the outset, the whole thing looked fishy. Roland with his new parallel thinking skill was now more aware than ever. He clearly saw the person shift their weight and bump into him on purpose for some reason.

He wanted to grab this hooded person by the hand and ask him what this was all about but then he noticed him trying to force something into his hand. When he realized what it was he just let it be and the person soon disappeared down into the dungeon.

Roland made sure to walk away from the dungeon before he opened his hand up again. In it was a crumpled-up piece of paper. Instantly he knew who the man that bumped into him was and the piece of paper confirmed it.

“That was fast... how did they know that I was down in the dungeon at this time...”

What was on the paper was a set of passages and also an address. He was sure to read through it and remember everything before setting the piece of paper ablaze.

It felt a bit eerie that he had been contacted this soon by the members of the criminal underbelly. He started thinking about how they could have discovered him this fast to deliver this crumbled letter.

It was possible that they had a lookout at that dried-up well that collected his invitation letter. Then he had been watched all the way until he descended into the dungeon and they waited for him to get out. It was either that or magic was involved in some way or other that could give him the current location.

With the knowledge of his next step, he returned home. There he informed Bernir that he would be going out into the city for the night.

“Going to the city boss? Are you going to the tavern?”

Roland nodded as this was actually the meetup place that he needed to go to. While Bernir was mostly the one leaving towards the city to get drunk, this time around he would need to remain home with Agni.

This little expedition into one of the more peculiar establishments would require a switch in gear. He might as well put a big neon sign on his back with the words ‘I’m Wayland the Runesmith’ If he went there while wearing his usual full plate armor.

Luckily before making the decision of throwing the letter into the well he had already made some preparations. He bought a black robe and fitted his half-plate armor under it so that no one would be able to tell what he was wearing under it. His face would be covered by the hood and his mouth by a specially made metallic mask.

From the outside, he would look like any other thieving type. The mouthpiece that made him look like a medieval ninja had a special voice-changing rune as one of its features. With it, not even people that he knew would be able to recognize his voice.

He had no idea who he would meet at the den of thieves. It wouldn't be strange if some dwarves from the union were trying to make some change by selling some unusable gear down on the black market. If they discovered that he was down there, it could cause more drama.

While returning to the city he still needed to show his face to the city guards that didn't recognize his hooded form. With the new getup passing the test he made his way into the red light district.

When he stepped in here he could smell the strong perfume which made his nose a bit itchy. This was the time to cover his mouth as he knew that this perfume had a small aphrodisiac mixed into it. He overheard a conversation between some adventurers that ventured into this district and knew that it was a way to take more money from the more unsuspecting customers.

On his way through the street, he could see many working ladies waving to the passersby. This road that he never really visited was quite long and on each side, there was a large building. On some of the balconies, he spotted scantily clad women looking out. Some were just resting and looking tired while others were winking at the potential customers.

While Roland's disguise gave him the opportunity to be anonymous here, this wasn't the case for others. He recognized some people from the adventurers guild.

This was quite the regular thing these sorts of people did, after days fighting monsters they used their money on women and booze. These things were widely accepted as the norm in this world quite different from the one that he came from.

'Is this it...?'

He remembered the note well and now he was standing before the establishment that it pointed him to. The sign in front of it depicted a heart that was shot through with an arrow. Even with his mask on he could faintly smell the strong aroma of womanly perfume.

"Hall of Heavenly Delights, huh?"

Roland wanted nothing more than to sigh out and leave. While he was younger he imagined how it would feel to take part in the services of a professional lady. Now on the other hand when he got older, it got less intriguing. This still was his way into the underground market where he could buy his materials from which would keep him from having to seek alternative routes.

"Hey mister, are you looking for a good time?"

While standing in front of the entrance of this brothel he was spotted by one of the working girls. It was a girl with cat ears, she was quick to shake her hips around while beckoning him over.

Normally he might have even found this alluring but at the moment he was far too nervous to concentrate. This was supposed to lead him into the den of thieves and he was not sure what he should expect from it.

There were a couple of options here. Either he would find the right black market merchants that would supply him with the resources he needed or he would be robbed blind.

The guild master assured him that nothing bad would happen to him as the thieves' guild is still in the building process. Apparently, the rumors about it being a place that a person could get stabbed for any small transgression was blown out of proportion. This made sense as no merchant would be willing to do business in a place where their life was in constant danger.

There were rules that people needed to follow while being there but he still needed to conduct himself accordingly. If the thieves and ruffians saw him being fidgety they might see that as an opportunity to start problems. Thus Roland straightened up and looked at the smiling cat girl while nodding.

This Hall of Heavenly Delights was the largest brothel in the city. On the inside was the gateway for him, there he would be led to the criminal underbelly not only of this city but of the whole kingdom. The black market was a large entity and this would be his introduction to it.

He took one step forward and the cat lady seemed glad to see a new customer heading their way. There was a specific sidebar inside of this large brothel and this was where he was heading. Thus he called out to the alluring woman with a question.

"Yes, could you show me the way to the bar?"

[Chapter 154 The black market.](#)

As Roland stepped in through the wooden doors of the brothel he was already happy that he had brought his new mouthguard along. People couldn't really see it under the fabric but it was made from metal and had several runes inscribed on it.

The strong smell of cheap perfume, sweat, and something unfamiliar made him quickly inject a small amount of mana into this mask. It was a filtering rune that quickly dispatched the awful smell and filled his lungs up with fresh air.

This facemask covered both his nose and mouth. It was specifically made for the sole reason to hide his real voice and filter out poison. He was going into a place filled with rogues and he knew that those types liked to employ various poison gasses.

There were even classes that made these poison attacks more potent. The best and easiest way to protect someone from this type of attack was a gasmask. He made a smaller magical variant for himself that didn't require him to wear an oxygen tank.

On the inside, he could hear a lot of chatting and laughing. He could see many beautiful women of various races talking to various burly-looking adventurers. There was a stark contrast between them as the men clearly didn't bother to dress themselves well.

"Welcome weary traveler."

While the cat lady that greeted him at the building's entrance went away, another beauty approached him from the front. This girl looked elvish in nature but the ears were somewhat shorter. Her hair also had an uncharacteristic red color which made Roland think that she was probably a half-elf instead.

“Dear customer, you look confused, could it be your first time here? Do you wish for me to explain the rules?”

This was indeed Roland’s first time in such an establishment. Due to the amount of skin that was being shown his eyes did trace to a couple of the scantily clad women. With his new parallel thinking skill, he was actually able to get a good look at all the goods even while talking to this woman.

“Ah... not that won’t be necessary... I heard that you had a pub here?”

While this was mainly a brothel there was a smaller pub inside of it. That was where he was heading as the entrance to his destination was there.

“Would you like one of the girls to accompany you? I’m sure that such a handsome man as you would love to have some company!”

The elven woman got closer. Roland was on the taller side so while looking down he had a clear view at her rather exposed cleavage. If he had to compare the women from this world and his old one, it was obvious that the ones here outranked them by several points.

To this moment he had never seen a bad-looking elf or half-elf. Even the average human would be above average if they visited his old world. He had to attribute that to the stats like charisma that probably made everyone somewhat more attractive if they leveled up.

“No, that’s fine, I just need something to drink.”

After a little back and forth he had managed to shake the half-elven hostess and arrived at the bar. Inside of it, he could see some patrons having their drinks poured to them by beauties. It was hard not to notice one of these clients as he stuck out like a sore thumb.

“You’re so strong, Armand~!”

A catgirl was poking Roland’s favorite idiot friend’s biceps while he was flexing without a shirt. His face was flushed red so it was clear that he was fully drunk and probably under the effect of some of the aphrodisiacs.

Luckily for him, he was far too busy with what he was doing to notice Roland walking in. After passing some of the drunks he arrived at the bar counter where he sat down.

“What will it be, honey?”

“...”

He looked over to the ‘bartender’ he needed to do a double-take as the person behind him was quite the muscular man. This wasn’t the reason why he was taken aback, the reason was that this man had an awful large amount of makeup on his face. Rosy cheeks, red lipstick, and fake eyelashes.

Then to top it all off he was wearing a one-piece dress with open shoulders. His arms were thick as a tree trunk and he could give the adventure guild master a run for his money.

“Oh, are you a shy boy? I love shy boys. What will it be?”

The bartender giggled like a little girl while leaning in. The moment he did Roland could notice his five o'clock shadow.

"Ah yes... I'm not really here to drink... I seek the passage below..."

"Passage? What do you mean cutie? I'm not sure I understand."

Roland was not beginning to doubt the letter that he received but it was hard to turn back now. While the bartender 'lady' was playing dumb she could have just been wary of people that would come to disturb the guild. This is also why he leaned in so that no one else would hear the password that he was supposed to say.

"...the password is Schwertfisch..."

He felt a bit silly saying it while trying to not stick out. But this was all according to the guild master's instructions along with the crumpled-up paper. He was supposed to get the password and just tell it to the bartender in this brothel. If this turned up to be some elaborate joke, on the other hand, he would probably have a bad day.

"Oh, haven't heard that one in a while, do you have the entry fee, sugar?"

Luckily for him, the exchange was going through just as the guild master explained to him. The password that he was given identified him as a newbie black merchant, not as a guild member. It was more of an introduction to the guild and he would need to pay the price to enter inside.

"Of course."

He placed five small gold coins on the counter and the large person quickly swiped it. Roland wasn't sure where his gold disappeared to but it was apparent that this bartender was not simple.

This fee was steep but it identified him as a potential black market merchant. The actual thieves that wished to join the guild would go through different testing methods. He on the other hand would be seen as a potential business partner. The coins were there to show that he actually had enough money to use their services.

"Rica, take over, I'll be back in a moment."

The bartender was replaced by a tall lady with long white rabbit ears while the man in the dress started leaving. Roland followed behind him and the two entered the back room of this pub.

There was a long corridor through which he went through. There were several tired-looking women smoking cigarettes and putting on various lingerie inside. It looked like this was the dressing room for the working ladies and it reminded him of the backroom of strip clubs from his old world.

At the end of the corridor was a door and before it stood a somewhat imposing-looking man. With the bartender leading him there the man just stepped to the side and both of them descended into this room.

The inside was dark and the smell of booze-filled his nostrils. It seemed that they had entered a wine cellar as there were many bottles and barrels with alcohol everywhere.

“Now listen sugar, I’m not sure who gave you the invitation but you’ll be on your own when you go inside, try not to start trouble or you might regret it~”

Roland nodded as the large man in a dress gave him some pointers. The two arrived at the end of the wine cellar and after pushing one of the bricks in a mechanism was turned on. The wall started to slowly spin and another path was revealed to him.

“Well, good luck~”

“Wait... aren’t you forgetting something?”

Roland asked as the words of the guild master were still stuck in his head. He clearly told him that the person at this pub was supposed to hand him something, something that was paramount to his visit down there.

“Oh, did little me forget something? I don’t think so.”

The man tried playing cute but Roland could see his muscular body getting stiff. It was clear that he was getting ready for battle. Without backing down though he stuck out his hand as if he wanted the item that he was owed.

“Don’t play stupid, I paid for it... are we going to have a problem?”

The two people began staring at each other without saying anything. It looked as if a fight could break out at a drop of a hat. Roland did come with a sword strapped to his side but even without it, he could activate various spells almost instantly.

“Ho ho ho, I was just being silly sugar, here you go~”

The large man that continued to talk like a young girl finally gave in. After a moment he took out an emblem that looked like a triangle with an eye above it. This was the symbol of the underground merchants which he would need if he actually wanted to trade here.

If he entered there without it, he would be able to go around but no one would actually trade with him. Then he would also not be able to return without paying another five small gold coins.

The guild master warned him that the gatekeeper could decide to test him. This was something that he needed to watch out for as there were few rules that these criminals adhered to.

While he told him that no fight should break out, this depended on his deposition. If the large dress-wearing man thought that he was easy prey he would have probably robbed him blind here and there.

Roland quickly swiped the symbol and entered through the opened passage. As it closed behind him he could see his guide smiling and sending a flying kiss towards him. If not for his masked face his frown would be noticed quite fast.

‘Everything is going according to plan... at least somewhat.’

The corridor that he was in now was lit up with some torches on the side. He placed his hands on the walls and could instantly tell that they were hardened through some magic. It felt like this passage was constructed recently.

He continued further and his narrower corridor connected to a larger one. This larger one looked to be the main space and also the gathering spot. There were many other passages connecting to it that he could see. These were coming from other similar locations like the brothel that he came from.

While he was looking around he noticed someone walking through one of the other smaller corridors. The person was dressed up in similar black robes as him but instead of a mouth mask, he or she had a full face mask.

Without introducing themselves the person just passed by him and continued on their way. The way that this person was holding their hand to their hip didn't go unnoticed though. There Roland saw a dagger strapped onto a belt, the person was clearly wary of him and ready to attack at a moment's notice.

'I need to watch myself, this could quickly turn sour if I don't pay attention.'

This made him be more on his toes. He was now underground in the city where the laws didn't reach. It was probably a daily occurrence for the people down here to end up dead and never to be seen again if they offended the wrong person.

He continued through the larger passage and soon he could spot more robed people. Some were hiding their faces while others didn't seem to care. It became louder and louder the more he continued. Then after about five minutes of walking, he found out where the voices were coming from.

It was a large underground cave with various small wooden shacks placed all over it. In these shacks, he could see people peddling their wares. Some had weapons, others had various gems and then others some peculiar-looking potions.

This was the underground marketplace that he had heard about. From what he knew, these kinds of places existed all over the kingdom and their scope increased depending on the city they were placed in.

While he was at first confused about how something like this could exist under the city, he realized that something was off. The crummy shacks looked hastily put together and the ceiling support pillars were even being worked on as he was looking.

It seemed that this underground black market had been hastily put together and it had not yet taken its final form. This made a lot of sense as Albrook was still in the process of developing itself.

'Okay, I'm here... what now?'

While he had arrived in this place Roland was not sure how he should approach the black market merchants. It didn't seem like the people here cared that he was here, mostly they were just annoyed due to him just standing there and looking at everything.

It would have been nice to have some kind of guide to show him around but it didn't seem that there was such a convenient person around here. Though after further investigation he noticed a blackboard with some words written on them along with a sort of map. When he approached it he realized that it was a conveniently drawn layout of this underground. There was the large corridor that he came from and the name 'Hall of Heavenly Delights' was written over one of the buildings which were represented by a rectangle shape.

This was quite handy as now he also discovered a few other places that were connected to this underground area. One was the brothel, another was an inn that he knew and then the third one was the tavern that he had the scuffle with that adventurer party.

It seemed that he would probably be able to get here through one of the three. Some of the exits were also marked there but they were in other locations. Apparently, one was not supposed to leave the same way that they came in. The guild master had mentioned something like that and Roland now looked to the passage that would take him to the exit.

With his escape route now being recognized he decided to take a look at the seedy merchant's. For the time being, he was not interested in selling anything, his purpose was buying exotic metals and minerals for his runic creations.

This place was rather large and by each merchant stall, he could at least see one imposing man standing. It was clear that the black market merchants had to hire their own muscle.

When he approached one of the merchants that he was potentially interested in, he heard some noise to the side.

"What are you trying to pull here you bastard?"

"What's your problem, you got what you wanted there are no refunds!"

"This is clearly fake, give me back my money!"

A little scuffle unfolded as one of the customers was not happy about what he had bought. Roland saw him throw some kind of vial with a green potion to the ground. He then pulled out a curved dagger and started pointing it at the person that he bought it from.

Roland wasn't stupid as he instantly backed away while looking at the other people here. In situations like this, it would not be strange if others used the ensuing chaos to try some tricks like pickpocketing. The other people were of the same mind as everyone was on full alert.

"What's this noise, calm down you idiots, fighting here is forbidden!"

To his surprise, someone actually confronted the man that was shouting. Two hooded people appeared out of nowhere, their robes seemed somewhat better than the rags everyone else was wearing and there was a certain symbol that indicated that they were actual thief guild members.

When the man that was making noise noticed them he instantly put his dagger away. The bodyguard of the merchant also backed away. It was clear to Roland that there was some degree of protection here and fighting was indeed forbidden. This didn't mean that this man couldn't take his grudges elsewhere, the merchant would probably need to worry about getting stabbed in a dark alley now.

With the commotion, Roland turned back to the stall that he previously spotted. There he saw a strange merchant covered in rags. While he couldn't see his face he could tell that this person was not a human. The elongated fingers that were covered in fur and ended in claws gave it away.

"Welcome, welcome! What're ya buyin? What're ya sellin?"

'If I'm not mistaken, that's a deepsilver ingot... and is that durium ore?'

After activating his analyzing skill he noticed that this merchant was selling various exotic metals, some that would normally be quite hard to come by. It looked that he would actually be able to trade, now it remained to be seen if this strange merchant gave him the right price for his troubles.