

Runesmith 177

[Chapter 177 Eviction notice.](#)

‘What is that idiot doing this time...’

Roland stood there not knowing what to do. Normally he would just wait until Armand and the person he was up against argued it out, not like it was any of his business, to begin with. The biggest problem here was his relation to Elodia, she was right next to him and he could see the concern in her eyes.

In the three years that had passed Armand didn’t remain stagnant. He had actually improved significantly and became a proper gold rank adventurer. The only thing that he didn’t like, was the choice of class that Armand went with.

Name :

Armand L 111

Classes:

T2 Fist Berserker L 11 [Primary]

T2 Pugilist L 50 [Secondary]

T1 Warrior L 25 [X]

T1 Brawler L 25 [X]

Just like the name implied, the class caused some anger management issues. Armand was already prone to mood swings, this was apparent during the interactions he had with him three years ago. The only reason he took the class was probably due to how overpowered the berserk skill actually was.

While this skill had many faults, the boost it gave its users was truly immense. At higher levels, this skill could actually be offset by other ones and be controlled. It was not such a bad choice for a close-quarters fighter as long as the people from their party kept their distance.

As the name implied the skill user would go into a sort of berserked state. During this state, he or she would focus on the enemies before them. As long as the user-focused their anger on a specific target before the skill activation it would be pointed towards it.

The biggest drawback was probably not that there was a possibility of attacking their allies but the fact that they would abandon all defensive measures. The boost in stats would bloat up the muscles and turn the user’s body into something close to steel.

But even then, if the opponent’s attacking power was high, they would just be rushing to their deaths. If Armand actually managed to master this skill and keep a somewhat clear head, he could easily go against other warrior types that were even ten levels above his.

“Wait.”

“But...”

While he was trying to examine the situation, Elodia started moving forward. He had to place his hand in the way to make her stop. While his girlfriend normally managed to keep a cool head, it was only when it came to business-related situations. When it came to her loved ones and family, she didn't always think things through.

"I know, I'll step in if it gets out of hand but if we do it now, we could escalate the situation."

Roland feared that there could be more of those guards around. From his first impression, it looked like the men were just hired, thugs. In this case Armand punching them out could just be attributed to self defense. A problem would only arise if they were actual city guards hired by the city or noble lord. If a person raised a hand against them, they would be placed in prison where they would remain until bail was posted or they were sentenced.

"See that man."

Roland pointed to who looked to be the leader. The two remaining guards had their shields and swords out and defended him while he was glaring at Armand.

"Isn't that..."

"He is part of the merchant guild... but you seem to know that already?"

Elodia's reaction to the man was a bit strange as he could see her flinch slightly. While he noticed this in his mind, it wouldn't be surprising for her to know him. The man was one of the members of the merchant guild in Albrook. It wouldn't be surprising that Elodia came in contact with him through her previous work at the Adventurer guild.

"Also I wouldn't worry about Armand if I were you, that merchant is in more danger than anyone..."

It was clear that the small group of guards that the merchant brought over were no match for this Fist Berserker. They were all around level ninety which put them at a big disadvantage against someone that went through their second tier 2 class change.

The guards were probably retired adventurers that could not push themselves past the silver rank. This wasn't anything strange as not everyone wanted to risk their lives by fighting scary monsters in tight corridors of a dungeon.

Working as a guard for a merchant was mostly a lot easier and the only thing they needed to worry about was bandits. Then during transporting goods the merchant would also hire more adventurers for protection.

The guards would mostly just surround their boss while the adventurers did the dangerous part of fighting off monsters and bandits. This didn't mean that it wasn't dangerous at all like now the guards found themselves against a person that they couldn't handle. If Armand wanted, he could probably kill all four of them here.

"How barbaric, I came here to pass on the information. If you want to blame someone, blame the person that signed that contract."

The merchant that was standing there pulled out a handkerchief that was made from some costly fabric and covered his mouth with it. It was as if this place filled with orphans was below someone like him.

“You’re still spouting that nonsense!”

In response, Armand just shook his fist at the merchant that shrunk back. The difference in strength between these two was night and day.

“Blasted ungrateful savages, I have given you the notice, if you don’t comply with it, I will inform the city lord. I’d like to see you act the same when you get thrown into prison! We are done here, take those two idiots.”

The merchant started shouting back at Armand that remained standing in place. When some kind of contract and then notice was mentioned Roland was a bit confused. Soon though he discovered that there was some kind of large parchment thrown to the side. It was mangled up but it was there.

Luckily this was when it ended, the other guards grabbed their passed-out colleagues before walking away. When they did, Elodia finally snapped out of it and decided to move towards Armand to ask some questions. On the other hand, Roland homed in on the paper that was to the side.

‘What is this... You are hereby required to vacate the premises, failure to vacate will result in...’

After getting the dirt out he started to read through it. There wasn’t much, it was clearly an eviction notice. It stated that the contract that they previously signed would be annulled and it would go per some clause that was in the previous contract.

‘Are they just willing to pay the penalty for annulling the contract or did they find a loophole to evade it?’

Roland wasn’t really sure about how Elodia came to own this house. She did tell him that the price was quite low as it was a building in an unfavorable location and there were many things to fix.

This unfavorable location was probably due to it being close to the Albrook slums that had formed close by. After three years had passed though a lot of the bad elements of the city had been pushed back into another location. There were even some shops and restaurants opening up close by. If this was the true reason, he would need to investigate further.

“Hey, give me that!”

As he was approaching Elodia, Armand took it upon himself to quickly swipe the eviction notice from his hand. He never saw anyone crumble up a piece of paper so fast.

“Hey, what was that?”

Asked Elodia while Armand just shrugged.

“Don’t worry about it, I’ll figure it out...”

“Oh, I really hope you aren’t planning on storming the merchant guild or something?”

Roland chimed in as he clearly knew what was down on that paper. Armand was somewhat protective of his older sister. The two almost had a third confrontation with each other when it came out that he was dating Elodia.

Luckily Lobelia was there and managed to talk him out of it. In reality, he attributed this to Armand knowing that he wouldn't stand a chance in a one-on-one battle with him anyway. Even now after three years, Roland had managed to overtake Armand in levels. Everything ended in a contest of strength, which was just a simple arm-wrestling contest, which he won.

"Elodia, do you have a copy of your house's ownership contract?"

"Of course I do, but why would you want to...then that parchment..."

"Yes, it was an..."

Before he could reply he could see Armand's hand move towards his face. His 'brother-in-law' was clearly trying to cover his mouth before he babbled out the secret. Before Armand could silence him, Roland intercepted his wrist with his own hand. He had already proven that his raw stats were superior, so he didn't have much trouble in blocking this approach.

"Armand, what are you doing? Did you go crazy?"

Elodia shouted out from the side as she was taken back by what her younger brother was doing.

Roland didn't blame Armand for acting this way. He was just trying to solve problems their problems by himself. He wouldn't be surprised if Lobelia got involved along with the thieves guild to try to force the merchant to capitulate. This would be quite the risky maneuver though if they ever got caught they would lose more than a building.

"Give it a rest, this is not something you can solve with brute strength."

Roland let go of Armand's wrist as the two started struggling with each other. While he was stronger than the muscle brain, there wasn't such a big gap between them.

"Let's go inside before everyone from Albrook finds out..."

He looked to the side, people started gathering as they clearly heard Armand shouting. If they continued to cause a scene, even guards could show up.

Elodia had somewhat figured out the meaning behind Roland's previous words. Thus she bolted into the orphanage to go to the safe where the contract was. Armand and Roland on the other hand just headed in slowly behind her.

"Could you stop glaring at me, not like I had anything to do with that eviction notice."

"No, but if you kept quiet then Elodia would have gotten involved."

"Is there a problem if she gets involved?"

Roland replied quickly while Armand never let up with the glare. He understood the sentiment behind the white lie but it was better to have someone that actually knew a thing or two about contracts help out.

Three years had passed and this place did start looking a bit better. Even though Armand had a falling out with the guild master, he was now a gold rank adventurer. So was Lobelia, who managed to get

through the test a few months ago. With The rise in status came the rise in pay and they could finally start repairing.

Elodia also had much more time to spend with the kids so she made sure that the money was well spent. The number of orphans also didn't increase and a few of them were actually old enough to get their first classes and start working. It did seem like this place was on the rise but apparently, the merchants didn't see it that way.

It was still quite loud inside but even the youngest child was past five and didn't need to be spoon-fed. Roland didn't really pry into Elodia's past too much as it did seem that she was running away from something.

"Is this it?"

"Yes, will you look through it?"

"If you want."

Both Roland and Elodia knew the pros and cons of contracts like this. While it might have been written down well, there were always certain ways to go around it. Roland started looking over the contract together with Elodia as they tried to figure out the reason for the eviction notice.

"Would have been easier if someone didn't throw away the eviction notice..."

Elodia grumbled while Armand removed himself from the room, luckily Roland was fast enough to go through it.

"It said something about poor living conditions... I think they are trying to go with that angle to get back the house..."

There were certain laws in the city that were put on places like an orphanage. One of them was decent living conditions. It was a somewhat obscure law that no one really followed though as most people were already living in poor conditions. In this case, though, it could be a potential reason to break the contract.

"What we can do is go to the city hall and have someone inspect the orphanage, only then should the eviction notice go through... but it seems..."

"Did they already sign off on it?"

Roland nodded at Elodia's question as the inspector should have been sent to the house prior to the eviction notice. But the merchants had deep pockets and they could potentially bribe such an official to quickly sign off on it.

"I knew those bast..."

"You be quiet, don't you even think about doing anything stupid!"

Armand peeked his head back into the room where Elodia and Roland were discussing the current situation. It was clear that if they left it in the hands of this muscle brain, he could get himself in a big mess. Now that there was no guild master backing him, it could go south quite fast.

“Elodia is right, if you touch a proper city official you might actually become a wanted man, but if you want to start a new career as a bandit, then go ahead.”

Roland shrugged while getting glared down by the large man.

“Then what are we supposed to do? Just pack our bags and leave?”

“I didn’t say that... we must first see who this inspector is that signed off on that fake inspection. We still have some time, no need to rush things.”

Roland gave out a sigh as this was not what he expected when this day had started. Instead of spending some quality time with Elodia he would need to pay a visit to the city hall. Even worse, if all things failed the new noble lord might have to get involved as he might be the only person that wasn’t on the merchant guild’s payroll...

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“Hm... where did it go... oh there it is, that man sure can throw them.”

A certain cloaked figure looked down at a rolled-up ball of paper. The person was of average build and height but after closer inspection, there was something off with the hood. There were two lumps protruding from the hood, making it seem that there was something pointy there.

A few moments ago the person witnessed quite the spectacle. Two armored guards went flying before their eyes. It was quite magnificent to watch, it only took one punch and one kick from the person named Armand to quickly disarm the two opponents.

Regretfully that was when the battle ended, the two parties just continued to shout at each other before the merchant and his guards left. This left this hooded person in a state of disappointment as they wanted to see if the brawler was someone that they could hire.

But as they continued to watch there was more to it, another interesting person showed up next to a woman wearing glasses. The person was quite big and radiated something to what this hooded person was well attuned to. It told them that it would be wise to not get involved with that person.

This got them interested, who was he? and why was he involved with the man that easily dispatched the guards. Were they just a strong party of adventurers or was there more to it?

“Hope this answers some questions... hmm, an eviction notice?”

It became apparent that the people there were being evicted for one reason or another.

“Hm... this is getting more interesting but could this really aid my lord?”

The hooded person decided to take the eviction notice as there was more information about the involved party there. If this was something that they could use later was up to debate but that man was somewhat intriguing.

“His class was special but he is hiding behind some tricks, I need to gather more information!”

The person laughed to themselves before sinking back into the crowded street.

Chapter 178: More problems.

“Hey, what’s all the commotion about, even some of the kids are crying, can’t you do anything by yourself, Armand! Did you make little Alfie cry again?”

A concerned Lobelia burst in through the door of the main room of the orphanage. There she saw a silent Armand just sitting there while Roland and Elodia were going through some documents.

“Good you are here Lobelia, could you stay and watch over the kids, I need to take care of some things at the city hall.”

“Big sis? Sure I can do that... but is something wrong?”

The half-elf girl was a bit confused about the situation. When she arrived the door to the room was being crowded by half the kids that lived there. It seemed that they were trying to listen in on what was happening inside. Thus she took it upon herself to see what was going on but inside she only found silence and strange looks.

“I’m not sure, I’ll explain after I’m back.”

Before Lobelia could ask for some answers both Elodia and Wayland were already walking out.

“You, what’s going on?”

The only person that remained in the room with her was Armand. Though he wasn’t very talkative either though it seemed that it was because of the small ears that were listening in on the conversation.

Lobelia would not let it end on this, if Armand wasn’t willing to talk with the children there, they just needed to find a better place.

“You, come with me and explain yourself!”

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While Lobelia tried to get some information out of Armand, Elodia and Roland were on the way to the city’s hall. The last time he was here was when he was buying up land. The large plot of unused farmland luckily didn’t increase in price that much as it was still far away from the city.

Roland might have implemented the weekend system in his own shop but that wasn’t true for the rest of the city. Everyone was busy peddling their wares and shuffling their feet around the city.

The peddlers were peddling, adventurers in bulky armor and with heavy weapons were going for the next adventure. It was like any other day for them as life went on. Due to Roland’s tight work schedule, he didn’t really have time to enjoy the sights.

He saw the city somewhat differently than its citizens. For him it was like a slideshow of progress, each time he came here there was something new being built then finished. The never-ending expansion continued and there didn’t seem that it would ever stop.

But how this place looked was quite deceiving. The old buildings had been replaced by new ones only in certain sections. The people with no money were pushed into the slums where not even the guards ventured in at night.

Bernir told him tales of people getting robbed or killed there without end. Every day there was at least one brawl where a person could lose their life. He always complained that the guards tended to arrive late to only pull away the person that had lost the fight as it was far easier than confronting the one that was left standing.

The thieves guild continued to prosper and only people that had enough money to bribe them were on the rise. Anyone else had to watch out, getting their shops turned upside down for not managing to pay the monthly protection fee was a constant strain on their nerves.

While thinking about how life was unfair for the less fortunate he looked to his partner. Elodia was walking next to him while being quiet. They started the day hand in hand but now they were just silently treading along next to each other without talking at all.

“Are you okay?”

Roland asked as he knew that Elodia’s mind was probably filled with the impending eviction. He was able to look through the notice and the contract. In it, there was a clause of a situation like this happening.

Elodia now had at most three months’ time to clear out the house before the city could force them out. He was sure that in this world they would not have problems in throwing orphans out to the street. The building would probably be turned into another inn or pub to serve the ever-increasing adventurer population.

“Huh, ah yes I’m fine.”

Her shoulders slumped forward slightly as she looked into the distance with an empty expression. He did not know what was going through her head but for some reason, he felt like this was the right time to place his hand on her shoulder.

“Don’t worry, we’ll figure something out...”

Roland emphasized the ‘we’ part as he spoke out. At the same time, he brought the smaller woman closer against his own body as he tried to reassure her that he wouldn’t let her go through this alone. His gesture seemed to have worked as he could feel Elodia grasping his robe between her thumb and index finger before meekly replying.

“Thank you.”

The moment she did, there was a strange feeling in his chest. He wasn’t sure what it was but it made him want to protect the woman next to him. For him, who had spent most of his time trying not to rely on others, it was strange.

What was the worst-case scenario here, the orphans would lose their home but what off it? They still had three adults taking care of them, both of which were upcoming gold rank adventurers. With the amount of money they were making, they would probably be able to relocate to another area.

‘Relocate...’

But that was the problem, what would happen if they moved, could they even move to a big enough building to house thirty children of various ages? They certainly didn't own any land to build one on and due to the city prospering the prices were astronomical now.

The most obvious move would be to place at least the youngest children at another orphanage like the one Sister Kassia was part of. The older ones could try finding apprentice positions at businesses but would probably get a bad contract that forces them to work there for peanuts.

'Would she move to a different city if that was the only option?'

A strange thought passed through his head, what if Elodia decided to leave Albrook. She was talented enough to find a proper position at any other city, either in a shop or at a different adventurer guild. Armand and Lobelia were also gold adventurers who could find jobs elsewhere. It would be that hard for the trio to just move now if they really wanted.

When he thought about her leaving there was another strange feeling in his chest. This one wasn't as fuzzy as the previous one. He already knew Elodia well enough to know that she would prioritize the children over anything else.

For him on the other hand, leaving this city was something he couldn't go through. He had just started profiting from the secret room in the dungeon and that side entrance with the tier 3 monsters was also there, there was far too much here that he could profit from to leave.

'Now I'm overthinking it, first, let's see if I can find that person that signed off on that eviction notice...'

After some more walking, they finally arrived at the city hall. This building had grown in size as the city expanded. Inside there were many other people waiting in lines to fill out the proper forms.

Thus the waiting started, Roland and Elodia had to take a number that was written on a steel plaque. The ladies behind the counters would then call out to them when it was their turn. This system was apparently created so that people wouldn't have to stand around for hours in lines.

This is when it started, one of the worst days in Roland's life. It made the time spent in the mines locked with ant monsters seem like a vacation. After hours of waiting, he started hoping that a cult member could bust through the wall instead.

They were sent on a wild goose chase through the large city hall building. As their number was called out they were informed that they were waiting in the wrong line. They were taken on a tour through the entire building and only after eight hours of waiting they finally arrived at their destination.

"Ah yes, these are the inspection papers, everything seems to be in order."

"Everything is in order? But there was no appointment given? No one ever saw this inspector..."

"Sir, that is highly unlikely the inspector had made a proper report about the building in question and they clearly agree that it is unfit...When the building is freed up the children can be relocated to other proper orphanages..."

The person before them was an old-looking man, he looked tired and unwilling to help them. From the paperwork, he pulled out it seemed that everything was in order. There were dates of the visit and descriptions of how the building was in bad shape.

“Even if there was a problem with the inspection it wouldn’t matter, a new law has been passed, Ms. Elodia would need to get a proper permit to run an orphanage which she doesn’t possess...”

It seemed it was their word against the inspectors. It was clear that even if they took things to court they would not have much ground to stand on. They would need to prove that the inspector was at a different location than at the orphanage. Even then the inspector could just claim that the building looked bad from the outside and they didn’t see any reason to examine it further.

Then some strange law turned up that seemed to be custom-made to take over that building. If he didn’t know better he would think that the dwarven union is behind this. But if this was just a coincidence or if someone was just trying to cover all their bases was unknown.

The whole thing stunk of corruption, it was clear to Roland that someone just wanted to get their hands on the land the orphanage was standing on. The biggest problem here was that it wasn’t a proper orphanage like the sun one ran by the Sun church. This was also one of the points that the inspector went into in this document.

Roland wasn’t really that informed about the laws concerning that. By what the person explained it was a bit out of the ordinary to have a privately run orphanage. Normally to create one, a person had to go through the city or the church, otherwise, it wasn’t really accepted as one.

Normally no one would really care about those laws. If someone was willing to house unfortunate children then it was fine. If there was no incentive to get the land, the city officials would probably just be happy that the urchins were kept off the street. Now on the other hand they were given a pamphlet of the ‘proper’ orphanage run by the church.

“Someone really wants to get their hands on that house...”

Roland mumbled to himself while Elodia was left staring at this pamphlet. Both of them were not outside the city hall as it had closed down for the night. When he saw her staring at it, he decided to be quiet as he didn’t know what to say to ease her heart. The two then returned to Elodia’s house while remaining silent.

“I’ll be off then...”

“Ah sure, I’ll see you at the shop then?”

He wanted to give her some hope for the future but it seemed that the city hall officials would do nothing to help them. Roland’s standing in the city was also abysmal due to the dwarven union having it out for him. There would be no one willing to help him unless he probably turned up with an astronomical-sized sack of gold to bribe them.

Elodia entered her home and he received a wave from Lobelia that was standing on the side. He knew that look she was giving him so after a minute he joined her in the usual meeting spot when here.

“That idiot explained the gist of it, It didn’t go too well for you at the city hall huh?”

Lobelia was quick to pick up on Elodia’s saddened face and while Roland managed to somewhat keep a poker face, he also looked ticked off.

“You’re perceptive, think you can find out what this is all about?”

“Leave it to me, I’ll probably need a day or two, do you know how much time we have?”

“Three months at most but I’m not sure if they will wait that long.”

The eviction notice was delivered in a strange way. Probably if someone like Armand wasn’t living there, the merchant could have been planning to just throw them out without waiting. It was clear that they thought themselves above the law.

“I’d watch out, if they bought an official from the city hall, they could have guards on their payroll too. You should probably bring this up with Armand... otherwise he might find himself in a heap of trouble.”

The next time they came around they could even place some city guards among them. If Armand actually went against one of them, there would be consequences. Even his gold adventurer rank wouldn’t help him out.

“Don’t worry, I’ll knock some sense into him.”

Lobelia turned around and was about to head out to get more information but before that could happen she glanced to the side. Roland followed her gaze but he only saw some people walking around.

“Is there something?”

“... Must be my imagination... anyway, thank you for taking care of Elodia for me brother in law.”

“Could you stop calling me that, we aren’t married?”

“Yet you mean?”

Lobelia finished the sentence and skipped away to tend to her business. The half-elf started calling him brother-in-law after they got together. To her, they were already good as married but he felt like there was no reason to rush things. Then there were the orphans that were on Elodia’s mind which would probably keep her from wanting her own kids for a while.

‘There she goes... what do I need to do...’

It was already late so Roland turned around and headed towards the city gate. On his mind were some options for taking care of the problem. There were even some crazy ones in there, where he contemplated setting some tents upon his land for the kids to stay.

His own house would not be large enough to contain all those children. Then there would be the problem with his workshop, he could not have young kids running around in his compound poking the runic items.

The amount of gold he had was also minimal. Some of the precious metals he nabbed from the dungeon were already sold off after his return. He could not really afford to keep the kids there nor build a new home for them.

Seeing how it went for Elodia he would probably need to first get some kind of permit to make an orphanage. But if someone was bribing the officials then it would probably be a dead end.

‘Why does this always happen when things seem to calm down... I still need to deliver that golem to that lord...the lord?’

For a moment Roland looked back towards the city, there in the distance, he saw a bit of the villa that the lord was supposed to live in. He was a yet unfamiliar element in the city that might have not been affected by the various merchants.

'To rely on a noble...'

This was a proper option as the city lord had the power to force a change. This was also not a law produced by the main Duke hose as it just concerned the city, the city that he was the leader of.

'It might be worth a shot...'

While Roland didn't like to rely on others, he was somewhat out of ideas. Either he asked the new leader to help him out or he could try helping Elodia to get another property. If they didn't manage, the kids could also be moved to the Church, but knowing Elodia she would probably sooner leave the city to go look for another place to stay than to leave the children up to the church.

As Roland was close to getting home he realized that he was a lot more concerned about this situation than he should. In reality, he did not know Elodia for that long, normally he should have been fine with whatever happened. His position in the city was not in danger and he was about to make a breakthrough.

"Am I getting old?"

He gave out a sigh while shaking his head, maybe it was the newfound love or the dislike for change but he wanted things to remain how they were. Things had finally started to click for him and now he was unwilling to let it go. He had been running for his entire life and now he was more than unwilling to let others take what he had worked for.

Well, I'll see you guys next year, time for my Christmas and New Year break.