

Runesmith 181

Chapter 181: Getting dressed.

“Good day, Mr. Wayland I presume?”

“Ah yes, that’s me...”

Roland wasn’t at his best, his face was covered in sweat as he had just walked out of the workshop to get some fresh air. It was still the middle of the day but he didn’t really care if people saw his dirty face. All the craftsmen in this world were somewhat expected to be covered in grime.

Before him was someone that he never expected to get a home visit from. While his clothes were different now, the man was once the town mayor. During some

Announcement

s at the town square, he had seen him performing some speeches. Even when the new lord showed up this man was there.

“Good, Mr. Wayland I won’t take much of your time as I have only come to deliver a message.”

The man looked more like an old butler now than a city mayor. It was quite the fancy suit along with a vest and white gloves. In those gloves, he was holding a letter that had a seal with the emblem of the Valerian household.

“This is?”

“It’s a letter from Lord Arthur Valerian, the lord hopes that you respond positively to his call, the details are included in the letter, please read through it with haste.”

Roland just looked at the sealed letter while spacing out for a moment. The golem that he sent to the new noble was probably the reason for this letter. If this was a reason for joy or despair would only be revealed when he read through it but maybe this butler could answer some questions first.

“The Lord calls for me?”

“I’m afraid that I’m not allowed to relinquish any more information, I have only been tasked to deliver this letter thus I will bid you farewell Mr. Wayland.”

The old man bowed quite graciously before him. This reminded him of the old butler from the Arden estate, both of the men had a similar air around them. Ferdinand did appear a bit different now as during the speeches he seemed more relaxed. Now on the other hand it looked like a switch had been flipped and he was now role-playing as a proper high-class butler.

“Ah yes, good day...”

Ferdinand turned around and started walking away. Not far away he saw three people holding spears standing next to the forest. There were obviously guards from the city, one of them he recognized to be one of the gate guards.

‘Maybe I should clear out some trees...’

In the past, he decided to clear out a path towards his store. Without a road, it would be impossible for a carriage to get through the dense forest. It was fine now as it was just the butler, but some nobles would find it offensive if they needed to walk through the forest to get here.

The people that delivered the message left, Elodia quickly peeked her head out of the store while Roland was looking at the letter.

“Wasn’t that the Mayor?”

“I think it was.”

Elodia looked down at the item Roland was holding before asking the next question.

“Did he come to deliver that?”

“It seems so.”

While he didn’t think there would be something incriminating in it, he wasn’t sure. Maybe the new lord figured out his true identity and was trying to blackmail him? This was highly unlikely as he wasn’t anyone famous when he left the Arden estate.

Besides his closest family, no one would probably be able to recognize him at his current age. Probably half his family members would have trouble, Robert was somewhat different as the two had more interactions while they were younger.

His two older brothers and sisters only met during the family dinners which grew lesser and lesser with time. Their father was quite busy with military work and did not stay at the estate too much. Only when he returned would they sit down to eat but even then, most of the time his brothers were missing as they were busy with the knight academy.

“It’s a letter from the lord, you probably should go through it alone.”

Thankfully Elodia didn’t prod the issue and just turned around. Roland was even considering reading the letter in front of her to further their trust but he wouldn’t be given a chance. They weren’t married, so a degree of confidentiality was still out on the table. Just like she didn’t pry into his history before he arrived in this city, so did he.

“Let’s see then...”

After Elodia left he decided to go back to his house and open the letter. With somewhat sweaty palms he held it out in front of his face and started reading.

“... What is that guy thinking?”

The letter was filled with flowery words and somewhat hard to read. If he was a common blacksmith he would probably had gotten a headache after going through the first few statements.

At the beginning of the letter, the person name Arthur started praising his craftsmanship. The golem that he had sent seemed to have done the trick. After the paragraph of praise, he finally arrived at the meat and potatoes of this letter. It was actually a call for a business offer.

'It has come to my attention that you had been wrongfully barred from participation at our Valerian auction house, I would wish to discuss this issue further...'

It looked like the lord had looked into his ban from the auction house. Roland did know that the Valerian household was the real owner of that establishment and it seemed that he was now getting another chance.

'So in short he liked the golem so much that he sees a potential business opportunity?'

Arthur Valerian was a new player in this growing city. It was normal for him to not have made any contracts with the dwarven union or any other powerful merchants. He could very well unban him from the auction house to allow him to reach a broader customer base if he so wished.

'The question is, why would he be willing to work with me over the dwarves? Couldn't they just supply him with similar wares?'

Roland wasn't really sure what Arthur's angle here was. While he could make golems that would probably go for a lot, he was still just one man. His output wasn't that great as he would not be able to supply the auction house with constantly golemic constructs.

On the other hand, the dwarves could produce more in bulk as they had many more craftsmen. Probably in the future, some higher leveled smiths would appear, if he went against the auction house they might decide to not use it at all. They had their own shops in which their wares could just sit on the shelves.

They didn't really need the auction house at which they also needed to share some of the profits. It was still a good place to drop off some wares as there was a certain spectacle to it. Some people liked to show off in the bidding wars which did inflate the prices.

'Does he know something I don't?'

From Roland's standpoint, if people knew his true level and his special class they would probably be willing to invest money into his progress. If he managed to become a tier 3 Master Runesmith his worth would skyrocket. Was this Arthur banking on his quick progress? Did he want to entrap him in a contract after doing some research?

'That's a possibility...'

Roland frowned while putting the letter to the side. At the end of it, he was invited to the auction house. The date was for tomorrow at noon, the person inviting him wasn't losing any time.

'Either way, I can't just refuse a meeting with the city lord.'

It was an unwritten rule for any commoner to answer the call of a noble. If he decided to not show up, he would be accused of dishonoring the noble's name. This was an actual law for which you could be thrown into prison. The sentencing depended on the noble and they chose when they felt disgraced.

"The new lord wishes to see you?"

"Yes, that's why I need your help..."

Some time had passed since he received the letter, and now he was discussing everything with Elodia.

“I’m not sure if showing up in my usual clothes would be appropriate...”

Roland never really cared about his appearance, he liked to wear more functional clothes than ones that made him look good. Thus his wardrobe only consisted of things that he could either take into battle, like armor or workshop gear. Other than that he had loose t-shirts and loose pants that he wore when he was relaxing at home.

“You are right, I don’t think wearing that bulky robe and armor would be appropriate for the visit...”

Elodia looked to the coat hanger where a dark cloak was hanging. It was one that Roland liked to cover his half-plate armor that he usually paraded through the city in. Then there was the ugly face mask to the side that he also tended to bring with him. To this day Elodia was not sure why he was that pedantic when it came to protecting himself but at this point, she was afraid to ask.

“Yes but he wishes to need me tomorrow, I’m not sure I’ll find anything at the tailor this fast...”

This was not the modern world, a person needed to go to the tailor and get their measurements. A person would not just create twenty sets of clothes of varying sizes and leave them out on the shelf.

With tailoring skills they did work fast though, it wouldn’t take longer than a week for the order to be finished. The person with the proper skills wouldn’t even need to take measurements of the potential customer. They could just take a snapshot of their dimensions and quickly manufacture anything they had previously worked on.

“I don’t think that will be needed, it was supposed to have been a surprise but ...”

“A surprise?”

Elodia smiled and told Roland to wait a moment as she went to fetch something from the store. After a few minutes, she returned with a locked box in her hands. Roland recognised this box as something that she kept up in the attic.

“This is?”

While still being silent, she opened up the box to take out a nice-looking set of clothes. There were pants, a vest, and a nice proper shirt that at first glance looked to be made from some expensive fabric.

At this moment he recalled that Elodia did have quite a wide range of skills, tailoring was one of them. She was not an expert tailor so she would not be able to work as fast but this did not make her creations any worse.

At first, he thought that she might have made it as an acknowledgment for the bracelet that he made for her. The timeline didn’t quite add up though as he had given her the bracelet recently and with the orphanage situation on her mind, it would probably be hard to focus on it.

“It should be proper enough for a meeting with a noble, you should have some fitting leather boots to go with it...”

“This is great, when did you have time to make it?”

Roland started going through the box and could see himself wearing this to a meeting with a rich merchant. The fabric and leather was of high quality and while buying the materials was cheaper than buying fabricated clothing, it still had to have cost Elodia a bit.

Initially he wanted to ask about the costs of those materials but he bit his tongue. It was clearly intended as a gift and if he tried to cover the cost of it all, it would just lessen the work Elodia went into.

“Mostly when you were out on your adventures or in the workshop, not like we have customers in the store the whole day, just something to keep my hands busy, now go wash your face.”

It seemed that she was intent on him getting into these clothes here and now. Lobelia and Armand were sticking closer to the orphanage now due to the problems with the merchants. While Elodia did have some more time on her hands, he would not want to keep her away from her extended family in their time of need.

But while looking at Elodia’s rather radiant face he decided to drop the issue. Perhaps what she needed was something to keep her mind off it, instead of a constant reminder of the deadline.

While he had shared his tent idea with her beforehand, she didn’t seem all that glad in taking him up on the offer. It seemed that she didn’t want to abuse his goodwill and was still trying to fix her problems by herself.

Thus he headed over to his bathroom to get cleaned up, regretfully he was refused when he offered to take a bat together. Elodia proved to be a tough nut to crack when it came to the one-on-one time. It didn’t take him that long to clean up and after some time he was given the clothes.

“These really fit well, how do I look?”

Roland asked while looking into the mirror with Elodia next to him. He was quite surprised at just how well these clothes fit him. There was never a point where he was measured by Elodia which meant that she had to eyeball it. The tailoring skill must have worked its wonders as it was a perfect fit.

He was now standing with a dark vest on and with a white shirt under it. His pants matched the vest’s dark coloring, the only thing that he was missing was a tie and some shoes to go with it.

“Is there a problem?”

Elodia seemed to have gone quiet after he put on some clothes. He even attempted to style his hair into a more modern look. Now he was being stared at by his girlfriend that had gone quiet. She was clearly staring at his face with a red tint to her cheeks.

“Problem? Ah now... but maybe... it would be better to wear that robe when you go into the city...”

“So you want me to wear my old robe?”

He wasn’t sure what this was about as Elodia clearly agreed with him when he pointed out his lack of attire.

“Well... what will you do if your clothes get dirty? You only have one pair and it could start raining.”

“Raining huh?”

Roland nodded a bit as it was possible that he could accidentally get some dirt thrown his way.

“Maybe I should take the cloak instead, my hair could get messy...”

“N-no, just put the robe on!”

“Oh... uh, okay?”

It did seem that Elodai wanted him to cover up from head to toe apparently. He wasn't sure why but there was no reason to dig into it too much.

When it was an hour before the intended meeting he decided to leave his house. There were many things going through his head. At first he thought to bring up the orphanage with the lord but this would show a big weak spot.

If they were there to discuss business the lord could prod at this issue. He could promise to take care of it only if Roland signed an unfavorable contract. It wasn't out of the picture but first, he needed to prod this Arthur Valerian for answers. What kind of person was he? What did he want to achieve here and why was he giving him this strange offer of cooperation.

It didn't take him long to arrive at the Auction House. It was a place that he had not visited in quite some time, even Bernir and his wife were eventually banned from attending it. Any known associates that tried to sell anything were seen as potential eyesores.

He came half an hour early and it didn't seem that the lord was quite there yet. For the time being, he decided to wait while examining the current Auction House. If things went well, then perhaps he could resume his involvement with them.

How they treated him for the past few years didn't matter to him. It was clearly just business-related and he just did not have enough pull to make them bend the knee. Now on the other hand he had managed to attract the eyes of the city lord. While he still didn't like to work with or for the nobles, if it allowed him to progress and save the orphanage, he was willing to take some risks.

Chapter 182: Meeting the city Lord.

‘This place looks more like the auction house in Edelgard.’

Roland had arrived at the meeting place half an hour early. Without anything else to do, he decided to examine the Auction House that he was banned from.

The first real difference he discovered was the large sign on the front of it. Previously it didn't show any affiliation with the Valerian household but now there was an emblem of their house there, Instead of the old ‘Albrook Auction House’ name it changed to ‘Valerian Auction House’.

It seemed that this family would offer up their name that easily. Perhaps without the new noble appearing here it would still have the old naming scheme. Now, on the other hand, it was profitable enough to give it a boost by affiliating it with their brand.

‘Having brand recognition must be nice...’

While looking at the sign he thought of his own little magic shop. While he tried to present his store as one with high-quality wares, it wasn't that easy. His competition went out of their way to badmouth his wares and any dwarven adventurers were clearly affected by it.

Even though the runes that he produced were better than the enchantments his competition was offering, a lot of people were scared. They didn't want to risk their hard-earned money into a product that didn't have a good reputation.

That's why his shop's progress was slow yet somewhat steady. Most of his advertisements went through word of mouth. If he actually managed to reel in a customer, they mostly returned for more. There was just no comparison between the quality of the magic a rune could produce. Then with the added aether alloy treatment, it produced just a better product in general.

He was gaining some ground but it wasn't quite enough. The wares were not flying off the shelves as he had hoped. Without money, he was not able to fuel his continuous research into his golemic creations and various weapons. Luckily whenever money was low he could always go into the dungeon and hunt for some monsters.

But even with the new mining spot now accessible to him, there was always a problem with selling the better products. There was nowhere to dump the spider droids off and the black market merchants were somewhat unwilling to fork up what he was owed.

The products he was offering fit more with the nobles and merchants as they were not quite the killing machines that people at the black market could use. The spider bots didn't work that well for other people that didn't have direct access to their runic software. Without a proper strategy, these would most work as mobile turrets that could give some ranged support.

But even with the somewhat clunky way they worked, they still packed a punch. With enough of the spider golems casting attacking spells, any tier 2 monster would go down eventually. They also ran on mana fluid that was replaceable.

They were like portable mages that could be placed at certain locations. He could imagine one adventurer just luring a larger monster into a trap where his golems spammed it with multiple elemental arrow spells. The problem lied in convincing people that it was a worthy investment over any other magic weapon.

This he hoped to achieve by having it be auctioned off to people that could actually afford it. He would have to improve on the design a bit further but he was confident in making a valid prototype that could be used by anyone.

'Getting a bit ahead of myself here, first I need to hear this noble out...'

Roland gave out a sigh while standing there and waiting. The motives of this person called Arthur Valerian were unknown to him. The most obvious turn of events would be that he would be given some unfavorable contract.

Then there would be the worst-case scenario where the noble was already working together with his enemies. He could be offered two options to either work under the dwarven union or get kicked out of

the city instead. The city lord could crush his business in various ways, one of them would be similar to what was happening to the orphanage.

They could accuse him of performing various acts of dangerous witchcraft. If there was a priest that could be bought out, they could testify that he was some kind of demon worshiper. Evil Warlocks like the one he ran into all those years before were deemed as enemies of Solaria. They were hunted down by the church and seen as criminals for signing contracts with evil deities or demons.

While his imagination raged on, time passed. The more he waited the more anxious he became, then he even noticed that there were people looking in his direction. Before panicking he realized that for some reason all of the people staring at him were women.

Old ones, young ones, and the in-between. It seemed that they were staring his way after he had disrobed. His face and more fashionable clothes were now on display. At this point he realized that they were not people out to hurt him, no they were clearly staring at him without malicious intent.

‘Oh... was this why Elodia didn’t want me to take this robe off before I entered the Auction House?’

It seemed that his new girlfriend was feeling threatened. Roland was aware that he was quite handsome and his charisma stat had gone up over the average a few years ago. Most of his time was spent in the dungeon or working in his workshop so he didn’t really have time to mingle with other people.

Now after enhancing his looks with better clothes and somewhat styled hair, he was clearly attracting more eyes. Luckily for Elodia Roland did not have any intention of using his newfound good looks to cheat. To him, such things were far too troublesome and he quite liked his current situation with a woman that could actually aid him in his ventures.

‘What time is it? ... Should I go ask one of the guards?’

Noon was quick approaching and Roland glanced towards the Auction House. There were many guards all over the place and several entrances. One for the customers, another one for the sellers and another one for the people working there. Before he could go and ask, he noticed a certain out-of-place cat girl walking out of the entrance used for workers.

Her red cat ears were on display and they somewhat clashed with the maid uniform that she was wearing. The girl was quite the sight for sore eyes and a head-turner. But her beauty was not the only attribute that Roland noticed. There was something in the way she was walking, then there was also the fact that he could not examine her status.

‘Either she has some kind of analyzing blocking skill or a magical item like me...’

Around Roland’s neck was still the item that he received from his old boss. When he was there he didn’t realize but this thing was quite high quality. Only a person at tier 3 with an evolved analyzing skill would be able to see past it.

“Well come, you must be Mr. Wayland, Lord Arthur is waiting for you, please follow me.”

She was quick to pick him out of the people standing there. He had never seen her before but for some reason, she was informed about his appearance. The worst thing about this visit was that he could not bring any weapons with him.

At first, he thought about bringing something small like a ring with a simple attacking spell. But if it was discovered by the lord's guards he would be quickly sent to jail for attempted murder. He didn't like it but for the time being, he would have to get through this without wearing any extra equipment.

'This puts my class in perspective...'

His class of Runesmith Lord might have given him battle strength over most tier 2 classes but it had a huge weakness. This was of course that without proper preparations and equipment he lacked most means of protecting himself.

Even though his raw stats might be above people of the same level, he lacked any battle skills that those classes had. Someone like Armand could reinforce his fists with certain skills to become hard as metal, in a direct exchange Roland would probably not fare too well.

Roland nodded at the cat girl's question and followed behind her towards the worker's entrance. Some of the guards looked at them with narrowed eyes, it seemed that they wanted to say something but couldn't.

'Haven't seen this place in a while...'

Soon they were on the inside, he had been here before the whole dwarven union debacle. The entrance for the sellers was quite close to this one and they shared the same corridor. Not far from this spot he could see the entrance to the room where he received some payments for his limited wares.

Roland had not spent much time here though, his contract with the guild was quite swift. For quite some time he unloaded his wares there and just came to pick up the coins later.

The maid turned to one side and the journey continued. His opinion of the maid started to increase as he noticed that she was not making any sound as she moved. Her whole demeanor was like a sharpened sword and for some reason, he was reminded of a certain elf lady from his days in Edelgard.

The woman was clearly not a simple maid but an actual threat to his life. Her status was hidden so he was not aware if she was above him in levels. Without his equipment, he was not able to measure her threat value which just increased the tension.

Soon they passed through more corridors and from the corner of his eye he could even see part of the auction house stage. At this time it was still closed but he noticed that the workers were preparing for tonight's auction already. Items were being organized by worth and then shipped to the correct stage.

This auction house only had two sections, one for the more costly items and another for the ones meant for people with less money. Both of them were about the same size but the one that involved the rich merchants would clearly look better. If he ever was allowed to sell, here again, he would probably target this more exclusive auction stage.

After another flight of stairs, they finally arrived at what looked to be the manager's office. The first thing that he noticed were two men dressed in bulky armor. They were clearly knights and this time around his analyzing skill did work.

Name:

Gareth Astastel L 91

Class:

Sword Knight L 41

Name:

Morien Hartmond L90

Class:

Spear Knight L 40

Roland didn't even bother looking through their tier 1 classes and focused on what was important. They weren't that strong, there were many silver-ranked adventurers and old retired veterans that reached these heights. They both looked to be in their twenties so they still had some time to improve.

"Please wait here, I'll inform the lord of your coming."

The maid ventured forward while he was left with these two people. Both of them were giving him the stink eye but not like they could intimidate him after he knew their levels. There was a large gap between them, even without his armor he was confident in being able to overpower these two or at least make a run for it.

Both of the guards had last names, this indicated that they belonged to some kind of noble line. Arthur Valerian was still related to the duke's household so it was normal for him to have retainers from noble houses at a lower standing. The house names didn't ring a bell so it meant that the two didn't hail from any important family.

"The Lord will see you now, but first we will need to perform a search, I hope Mr. Wayland understands."

The maid walked out after a minute and informed him that he would need to get padded down. This was expected and the reason why he decided to leave all magical items at home. If it was him from a few years ago, this would probably be the time where he declined the offer. Now, on the other hand, he had learned to put some trust into others and not presume that everyone was out to get him.

"That's fine, I expected this much."

Mary smiled and then turned her face to one of the guards. The man named Morien moved in after getting the search order. He was shorter than Roland by half a head but his frame was slightly wider. His chestnut hair and a balding patch at the back of the head became visible the moment he walked over.

Roland didn't resist, his new clothes didn't have any pockets as Elodia probably didn't have any time to add any. After a quick pat-down it seemed that he was free to go but as soon as the knight stepped back the maid got involved.

"Mr. Wayland, that pendant could you take it off?"

It seemed that this Maid was up to something. The two knights didn't say anything but Roland was not fine with revealing his status screen to people he didn't know.

“This was not included in the letter, I’m sure you know what this is used for, I would like to keep my status out of this.”

“You dare to go against the lord’s wishes?”

This time around it was the man called Gareth, he was closer to Roland’s height but thinner. It didn’t seem that the knight liked Roland’s tone or choice of words. Due to his modern-day roots and also him being an actual noble, he did seem to interact with these aristocrats in a more casual way.

“No, but I would like to keep some things private, I can offer you my adventurer card, you’ll find all the information you want there.”

This type of situation was something that he was expecting. Thus the only identification that proved who he was, was his adventurer card. The people here didn’t need to know that it was created without people actually peeking in on his full status screen.

Mary the maid raised her hand which for some reason caused the angry guard to be quiet. She reached out her small hand towards the card that Roland was holding and then vanished inside of the room. After a short moment, she poked her head out with an answer.

“The Lord says that it’s fine, you may come in now.”

This maid knew what kind of magical item this pendant was. It was clearly not hazardous to the man that was waiting for him inside this office. Finally, it was time to meet the lord, surprisingly the two guards wouldn’t be taking part in this meeting. Instead, the maid remained, it was clear that she was also a combatant, probably stronger than the two guards.

“Good day Mr. Wayland I must apologize for my guards, they are just trying to do their duty in protecting their lord.”

It was quite a surprise when Roland heard the first sentence. An actual noble apologized for his retainers that were rude to him. Normally they would only double down or berate the common folk for taking up their precious time.

The person named Arthur was sitting behind a large desk, behind him was a large window. It was somewhat tinted but through it he could see down to the Auction House main stage. Some of the workers were shuffling around even as the noble was speaking.

This office had a clear view over the whole stage and the people sitting there. But the people on the other side probably couldn’t look into it. Roland recognized the tinted dark glass, it was magical in nature and made from special material.

“I thank the Lord for his gracious words and understanding of my situation.”

Roland on the other hand replied in a cordial fashion while bowing his head. It had been some time since he interacted with a proper noble. His manners were a bit rusty but thanks to his current identity the noble would probably let it slide if he did something wrong.

“Please sit down, we have many topics to discuss.”

Arthur pointed to the chair opposite to him and Roland just nodded. It was time for the meeting to finally take place.

“Ah yes, Mary. Bring it out.”

“Yes my lord.”

As he was sitting down the Maid opened up a side door that looked to be a closet. From it, she took out something familiar and placed it on the middle of the desk. It was the spider golem that he had gifted the noble and probably the sole reason that he was here.

“I have received your gift Mr. Wayland and it was quite the fascinating one indeed. The instruction manual that you have created was a nice touch but I won't bore you with empty praises. I'm sure you are a busy man, so instead, I would like to make you an offer...”

“An offer?”

“Yes, become mine!”

“Um... become yours, my lord?”

Roland quickly replied while looking at the noble named Arthur. For some reason, he was staring directly into his eyes with a somewhat strange look.

‘Wait... am I in danger?’