

## Runesmith 199

### Chapter 199: Visiting the Auction House.

“Did I overdo it with this one?”

Roland was looking at what was his new golem. At this point in time, the golem was walking around and performing some simple tasks. Its two hands in the front were picking up wooden blocks and bringing it over to another location. While the robotic hands only had a three-digit design they could grab various objects.

In the middle of this hand, there was a focus point. That would dispense spells along with some other ones spread over its spider-like body. This golem would be considered a higher quality product due to how many runes were on it but this didn't mean that it would sell. This only depended on the use it had for the person buying it.

When it came to the market the best model wasn't always the one that was popular. Most people wanted the cheapest version that satisfies the given problem that they wanted to solve with the product. The golem that he produced could carry around items, mine minerals, and also protect itself.

Yet with more that he crammed into it, the more it would cost to make. Would a mining company need their golems to have attack spells inscribed on them? Most of the time the specialized products won out over the multi-purpose ones. Thus after this one was assembled he was slowly wondering if he made the mistake of not focusing on one thing.

‘It's too late to make adjustments now...’

Roland frowned a bit after looking at the slightly larger spider golem that he had made. The more he worked on it the more improvements he wanted to give it. In the end, he produced a multipurpose spider drone that could fight monsters, mine, and be used to transport various items.

‘I might have to bite the bullet and lose some money on this one...’

This made him think of all the resources he used to build this thing. Luckily most of them came from the mining spot he discovered so even if he sold it under the market value he wouldn't go out of business. But thanks to all of his work he did manage to improve the operating system even further.

In his hand, he was holding a control rod. It had some buttons on it but he decided to make this remote control more similar to what the people in this world were used to. It didn't need much mana to run so it didn't require any mana fluid. The person just needed to inject it and then speak the commands out to make the golem perform tasks. Now, what remained was to give it a nice paint job and then do the presentation at the auction house.

“Are we done, boss?”

“Mostly...”

“So if I go by this design, you want me to paint it blue?”

“Yes, just don't paint over the eyes.”

After performing many tests to see if this prototype was working correctly it was all done. Now he just needed to fasten the bolts and hope that there would not be any problems during the auction house visit.

“So, decided on the name?”

“A name?”

Roland replied to Bernir’s question as he was moving things around to get to the blue paint. Normally a craftsman would give something like a golem a designated name. It was a new custom variant of a preexisting creation but it was different enough to even be called a new model entirely.

“Well... it looks like a spider... how about Arachnea-1?”

“Arach... what? Isn’t that some kind of monster? You sure come up with interesting names, boss.”

While arachnids existed in this world they were not classified as ones. There of course were spiders but the more scientific names that were more prevalent in his old world were different. It didn’t seem that the people from his world cared as much or perhaps they funneled most of their funding into things that could aid the war effort or battling monsters.

“Oh be quiet, don’t forget to put it in the crate when you are gone.”

“Aye.”

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The painting process wouldn’t take much as it was magical in nature. The various alchemic concoctions just required a droplet to change the whole outer layer of the metal it touched to change color. What Bernir only needed to do was touch it with the minimal requirement of this liquid for his job to be done. While there was regular paint here this was much easier and at this point, Roland didn’t care about saving a few silver coins by going with the traditional paint job.

With most of the work being done now came the part that Roland was not looking forward to. He would need to inform the lord that he was finished and go down to the Auction house along with his product. Roland was fine working for long hours but when it came to socializing he just lost all of his energy.

While he had been an introvert even in his past life, his reclusive personality had gotten worse. Probably if he didn’t meet up with Bernir or Elodia he would have been living the life of a shut in. Luckily his unwillingness to work with others forced him to start his own business which he could not really do on his own. So while he did dislike it, he was aware that it was a part of life that could not be avoided.

Thus while Bernir was giving the spider golem the finishing touches he decided to pay the city a visit. His robe was in the usual spot along with his half-plate armor that he wore under it. Ever since achieving his new class he had not left his house. Elodia was busy working at the shop and Agni was with her as well.

“Are you going to the lord like that?”

Elodia was the person that gave him the better set of clothes when he met his new 'partner'. But he didn't feel that well wearing regular clothes that would put him at a disadvantage. Without any armor that he could inscribe runes on his capabilities to protect himself dwindled significantly.

Perhaps if he figured out the spatial runes he could somehow compartmentalize his armor into a smaller bracelet. How he would get it to spring up on his body would probably be the tough part of the design.

"He didn't feel like the type that cared about those things that much, the deal has already been made, my clothes shouldn't matter at this point. I'm also probably not going to meet the lord, I don't think he spends all his time at the auction house."

"If you say so, just try not to get into any trouble."

"Don't worry, I'm not Armand."

Elodia burst out into a chuckle while Roland felt a bit more relaxed at the expense of Armand's reputation. Soon both of them said their goodbyes, Agni as always was unwilling to leave his master alone after noticing that he had finally left the workshop. But he had become too large for the city, a large Dire Wolf like him would scare the horses and people.

It was refreshing to finally get out of the workshop. Even though this was supposed to be a volcanic region they were far enough to not get any smoke. The air was nice, clean, and without any volcanic ash or sulfur mixed into it. The people at the gate were letting in merchants as usual.

'The town sure has grown, not sure if I can call it a town anymore.'

People were now everywhere, while the rush to get a footing in Albrook had died down it only became rowdier. Everyone was working, the power structure had been established which made the workflow more streamlined. But while this might have looked like the right road towards progress he knew otherwise.

Just like in all the other cities that he had seen, the gap between people was increasing. The workers with worse classes or ones just saving up for a class change crystal were down on the bottom.

They were forced to sign lesser than stellar contracts to cover their expenses and became trapped. Then even when they regained their freedom there would be no spot on the market left for them. To gain freedom they would need to do what he did and try to establish themselves in another growing city. If not they could just bargain with the current business owners for a better contract.

While the big bosses at the top were busy with counting money, the people that they were using were too busy to care. If they made enough money to fill their bellies and spend a bit to get drunk it was enough.

Roland was convinced that a lot of these people took this as the norm. Without anything similar to a union they didn't have much leverage so they adapted to their circumstances. If they managed to haggle a few coins for themselves? That was more than enough.

In others eyes, he was the strange one. First of all, becoming a human runesmith with no master was difficult, even more so when a person was stuck in a city with a big dwarven presence.

Signing a contract with them would not be that outlandish and seen as the normal thing to do. Roland on the other hand was assured that a contract like that would just set him back by many years, or put him on a one-way road where he became nothing more than a rune crafting slave.

While his mind was clouded by thoughts of others he continued to observe. The streets while being busy weren't that well kept. The slums in the distance was also generating a lot of poverty-stricken people that had no way of producing food. The people that decided where the taxes went lined their pockets while others suffered.

Now Arthur Valerian appeared out of nowhere. He could somehow steer the budget that he was given to make the lives of the citizens easier. But he could also take it and invest it into the rich merchants or areas that generated more income.

Roland was not sure what the right decision would be. On one hand, if the city was cleaned up it could attract more potential investors. With more poverty, there would also be more crime along with the Thieves Guild's presence. Contenting with that element would be difficult but if done correctly could offer the city a better path in the future.

The easiest method would be to stick to the old tried route. This would keep Arthur in good faith with all the rich merchants and nobles that had invested in them. Perhaps the people at the bottom would somewhat suffer but he would continue to gain money and power.

It was the safer choice but it would also not gain him much favor from the citizens. There was a certain limit of the one-sidedness that a city lord could go through with. A thriving city still needed able-bodied people to continue working. If their morale dropped or if they were too hungry to do their jobs the city would go under.

The tough part was to balance both sides so that they remained content. If the working force left then the city would suffer but if the business owners didn't profit enough they could do the same. Luckily for Arthur, he did have the dungeon which was a gold mine.

'Heh, I wonder what he would do if I told him about the tier 3 passage...'

Roland's little secret grinding spot was unknown to others. He still wanted to at least reach level hundred fifty before he ever considered speaking out about it. This information was one of the biggest assets he had at the moment. Though without that much personal strength nor contacts he would be signing his death certificate if he let it slip. There were ways of getting information out of people in this world and a secret entrance to a potential B rank dungeon was worth smashing some heads in.

Finally, after walking for some time and thinking about his new partner in crime he arrived at the Auction House. This was the place where he first started out in the city. The sales of his scrolls were doing great before he signed up with the adventurer guild. They would still fetch a pretty penny and he only became more proficient at making them.

His only gripe with making more scrolls was that he felt that his talents would be better spent elsewhere. The scrolls didn't feel that useful when he could inscribe the same spells on almost everything. Pumping them out now wasn't as lucrative as in the old days.

With Bernir and Dyana working for him now, he could put much better runes on proper equipment. But there was an idea floating in his mind to streamline the process and that was to make a printing press for magic scrolls. With his current knowledge about runes and golems, he might be able to create a program that could transfer his rune smithing ability into a stamp.

‘It would be quite the money maker if I could make some sort of factory to produce scrolls...’

While making everything by hand would be out of the question, if he could create a prototype to do it for him then it was another thing. The hard part would be to copy over the rune smithing skill into a runic structure yet there was a way now open for him. With his new Runic eye of truth skill it could be possible but if he could copy a skill that might not be magic still remained to be seen.

“Stop, this entrance is reserved for special guests.”

While thinking about new possibilities he waltzed over to the VIP entrance. The guards here were quick to stop him as he did look somewhat suspicious in the black robe that he was wearing.

“Here.”

“What are you...”

Before the guard could continue shouting Roland pulled out his golden supplier card that Arthur gave him.

“This should be enough, can I go in?”

To not look too suspicious he removed his hood while showing his face to the guards. This card was proof that he was an important business associate. Yet they couldn’t just let him through like that.

“P-please wait a moment, Sir.”

The card needed to be seen by someone that could actually identify it as the correct product. This hired muscle certainly didn’t have any skills like that and Roland was still a new face. Probably after this day, they would remember his face.

“I understand but please hurry.”

Just as he had expected, another employee appeared along with the guard. They quickly bowed their heads before Roland while he just hand waved it off. With this card in his possession, he would be able to get first class service. No more waiting in lines or for his items to get checked by the person with the identification skill. He would be able to just directly hand whatever he brought over and it would be prioritized by everyone.

“Is the Auction House Manager there?”

“The manager? Yes, please come this way, Mr. Roland.”

While his face wasn’t that known around here they needed to show him respect. Not everyone could get that card that Arthur gave him. After passing the guard he was led to the Auction House Manager’s office that was not the same as the one that Arthur greeted him in. It was smaller and on the inside, he found someone that he had never seen before, a plump-looking old man.

“Welcome Mr. Wayland I have been expecting you, please sit down, would you like to have a drink?”

The old man had a bright smile on his face and he urged the lady that was probably his assistant to pour them both some alcohol.

“No, that is fine, I won’t take long. I just wanted to report on the item that I was supposed to supply.”

“Ah? Is it ready? The lord has been curiously asking for its arrival!”

“Did he... Well, I’ll be able to deliver it for the coming auction if that’s possible.”

“That’s wonderful!”

The old chubby man seemed ecstatic at the revelation. Before the auction started the young lord would probably inspect his new investment, if he for some reason disliked the design Roland would probably be set back by many months. Thus the time to present himself to the city merchants once more was on the horizon.

### **Chapter 200: Buyers gathering.**

“Mr. Wayland, Is this necessary?”

“Yes.”

A strange scene was playing out before a couple of auction house workers. They were tasked to help a VIP out in transporting their wares but the man in question made things difficult. Instead of letting them take the crate with the item that would be auctioned he decided to carry it himself.

Roland was somewhat nervous about this day, tonight his golem would be auctioned off. Previously he had agreed to let the people from the auction house take the crate the golem was in and transport it for him. They came with a small carriage that would be large enough to carry the crate and some people in it.

But then strange thoughts of thieves and bandits started clouding his judgment. What if something happened to the golem during transit? What if someone decided to steal it before it reached the city? He could not just let these regular workers go as the guards that were with them would probably be overpowered by silver rank adventurers.

“Don’t worry about it, I’ll explain it to your boss.”

Due to the golden card that he showed at the Auction House, he was given the VIP treatment. Thus the workers that came here were scared that their employer would complain that they let an important customer do all the heavy lifting. He could only reassure them that he would not say anything to get them fired.

“Let’s go then?”

Roland asked while holding the large box in front of his body with both hands. The golem did weigh quite a bit and it would normally need two grown men but in this world of fantasy stats, it wasn’t much of a problem. If Roland really wanted he could sling it onto his shoulder and run with it.

“Take care.”

“Awooo!”

Elodia and Agni were there to see him off while Bernir remained back in the workshop. The auction would begin later at night but Roland needed to deliver the goods now. This was an important event for him so he would also stay there to explain a few things to the Lead Auctioneer.

Thus the strange group of people was off, the small carriage was occupied by Roland and the golem. He decided to sit right next to it while using the built-in radar in his runic helmet. Due to his paranoia, he decided to wear his better armor and not the half-plate. If anyone decided to ambush them for some reason he would be able to make quick work of them with the help of his attacking spells.

Of course, nothing like this happened and the dots that were on the radar never went too close to the carriage. This was probably due to it having the seal of the Valerian household. Everyone knew that nobles were very prideful if any bandit dared to attack one of their possessions they would need a quick getaway plan. One that involved hiding from oracle grade tracking magic as the high nobles would spend the extra coin to catch the thief.

Thanks to the noble prestige he was allowed to slip into the city without any need to wait in line. The soldiers just parted to the sides while some of the other carriages had to wait and be inspected. They didn't even examine the content, they dared not to go against the symbol of power that was the Valerian noble crest.

Thus when he arrived at the Auction House he carried the crate all the way over to the check-in clerk. There he made sure that it arrived at the right VIP storage where he began unpacking.

“The Lord will be here shortly, you probably have about an hour to prepare Mr. Wayland.”

“Okay, thank you for your help.”

The previous time Roland was here there was only the chubby manager around. He had only informed him about the golem being ready and then received the date that he should deliver the goods. While normally there would be some kind of appraiser tasked with the inspection for some reason Arthur Valerian also wanted to see it.

Thus he was now here preparing for his double inspection which reminded him about the recent class change trial. There he also was graded by it while always getting low grades for his poultry design sense.

The golem was made a bit more eye-catching for the potential customers and had many more features than the old variants. For someone that was only a tier 2 runesmith this had been quite the achievement but if other people would see it the same remained to be seen.

Roland gently removed the golem from the crate that was filled out with straw. Arachnea-1 was the name that was written on the underside along with the little sun-like logo that he was using for himself. With how much people liked Solaria around here he somewhat hoped that his logo would help him piggyback from all the believers.

Just like with the other golems inside of the crate there was a handwritten manual. His drawing skills had actually improved and after getting the engineer class he was able to get the 'artistic drawing' skill.

Probably the main reason for getting it was the creativity skill, together with them he was able to draw up a realistic representation of the golem on paper. All of the parts were listed and explained, if the owner had any semblance of intelligence they would be able to easily control his creation.

The biggest limiting factor was the metal rod that he was holding in his hand. This was a rather inefficient way of handling the golems. It was a large headache for the craftsman that had to pre-program various commands that the owner would utter. While there was a pre-existing database it didn't cover all the bases or types of machines.

'I don't think the new owner will complain too much, as long as it has all the common command words it should be fine.'

Golems were already widespread magical constructs. They were divided into some categories like battle golems and transport golems. What he only needed to do was be sure to have his creation follow what was seen as common.

If Arachnea-1 wouldn't be able to perform a backflip it would be fine, it just needed to do what people expected from it, then if he could go above the expectations and add a few innovations it would make his product worth more. That is if the buyers didn't find the additional functions to be useful.

For the time being his golem was a mix of a few variants but it was not really exceptional at one thing in particular. It could give long-range magical support to adventurers but there were better battle golems out there. It could use some mining attachments and carry loot but there were also better solutions for that. Even his own mule-type golem had a vastly larger capacity for carrying.

"Maybe someone will see the collector value in it..."

Roland gave out a sigh while going through all the small parts. The inspection went by smoothly and soon he heard a commotion outside, the lord had finally arrived. The heavy footsteps of the guards that went to meet him outside were very telling.

"Good day, Mr. Wayland I see you are finished."

Arthur Valerian was quite a handsome man, he was wearing a somewhat militaristic uniform which made him stand out from the crowd. He could already see the poor young man being sold off to some old rich noble widow if he wasn't successful in this city.

While bad marriage prospects were mostly forced onto the women, the men weren't that far behind. Depending on their worth they could be shoved into an unwelcome situation. This might have been his fate if he was ever deemed to remain in the old Arden estate.

He would probably be forced to become a knight and then marry some random knight's daughter to proliferate the line. His kids than would be forced to work under the reigning Arden Estate head that would be one of his older brothers. Luckily for the past few years, he was granted respite, Robert had not told his secret either.

"Good day, my lord as you can see, the golem is ready."

Roland replied while looking at the person standing to the side of Arthur. It was the personal maid that never seemed to stray too far from him. It was clear that she served as more than just a maid. Even when the knights remained outside she was always there with him.

This was nothing out of the ordinary. Most of the high nobles would have some personal guards that always remained with their masters. It was for their noble lord's well-being as well as for their own. If anything happened to the noble they were serving it would be their heads that were on the line.

Roland didn't explain much as Arthur was quick to take the control rod from him. Even before activation he also asked for the instruction manual through which he read through at a blazing speed.

"Fascinating... this one is a lot different than the previous one."

"Yes, I have made some improvements."

The two started talking while receiving strange glances from the maid named Mary. Roland was quite nonchalant about it but a normal person would have a rather hard time when speaking to a noble. Even though he was looking away he listed some of the commands that the golem was able to shuffle through.

'This guy really does find these interesting?'

Arthur Valerian's eyes were wide open, he was like a kid in a candy store. His blue golem paraded through the storage room while he continued to give it some orders. One that even caused the guards from the outside to burst through the room as Arthur ordered it to shoot at the crate, a command that the Lord would not be aware of if he didn't go through the instruction manual correctly.

"My lord!"

"Haha, don't worry I'm fine but I think we will need a new crate for this golem!"

Soon the smoking wood was extinguished and the Lead Auctioneer visited him instead. It was a rather alluring looking elven lady with good proportions. It was the oldest trick in the book to have the Auctioneer be attractive to have the buyers show off their deep purses.

The time started passing as he handed over the instruction manual and tried giving this woman some pointers on the presentation. Thanks to him having the VIP treatment he got her to listen well. Normally the presenter wouldn't go out of their way this much but when a product that was unique came along they would rehearse their words well.

"Thank you Mr. Wayland I think this will be enough, you can return to your home or wait for the auction to take place, we have reserved a seat for you in the hall."

After showing off the golem to all the important workers it was carried out in a new box. Now he only needed to wait for the presentation to go through and see how much gold he could earn for it. Even now he wasn't hoping for much, the golem was a custom model from a craftsman that was being shunned by the dwarven union. Normally it would have been a big risk to invest money into an unknown element but he still had some hopes.

'It's out of my hands now...'

Roland decided to remain here all the way until the auction was over. His creation would be presented a bit later so that the buyers could get their toes dipped first. After a couple of lesser products, they would start auctioning off the pricey items that they always spread rumors about.

His seat was somewhat in the back as he didn't want to stand out. This large auction hall looked like it was made for a play. There were three balconies for the more prominent members of the city with the middle one being reserved for important nobles. But with Arthur Valerian remaining in the main office above it was devoid of anyone that important.

'Those booths are for the rich merchants... wait, is that?'

Roland peeked at the western balcony that was slowly filling up. He was sitting on the opposite side of it just on the lower level. If he didn't look he would have probably missed it but two bearded men that he was familiar with just entered it.

Normally he was planning to remove his helmet during the auction as there was no danger here. Now on the other hand he decided to not remove it as its feature could aid him. The armor was capable of listening in on people thanks to a simple spell. It was connected to his helmet through which he could hear the conversation that the dwarves were having now.

"Oi do we really need to come fur this?"

"Aye, now held yer whinin we need to see whit that basterd made."

It was instantly clear that the dwarves named Bamur and Dunan had been informed about his involvement. From what he knew, his involvement in the auction house wasn't specifically announced. They never mentioned what exactly the runic item would be, not giving the specifics would only entice people to come over.

It seemed that someone from the auction house had talked. Who it was would be hard to deduct as even some of the regular guards could have overheard someone talking. He had also visited the Auction House this week. They could have already had someone inform the dwarves about his visit which correlated with this magical item reveal.

'This isn't entirely bad though...'

This was something he expected to happen so he wasn't that worried. Perhaps with the dwarves being here the product, he was trying to peddle could actually sell for more than he expected. Would a dwarven craftsman let some random merchants get their hands on a golem they had never seen before? Probably not.

While the dwarven union had deep pockets this didn't mean that there were no other heavy hitters with them. Various rich merchants were also there along with someone he really didn't expect to see. This man stood out from the crowd as he was very muscular and bald. 'Why is the guild master here?'

The leader of the adventurer guild had decided to show up for some reason. Most of the money flowing into the city went through that guild so his purchasing power was quite high as well. Besides them, he also spotted some store owners and some people from the merchant guild.

After the rich merchants filled up the two balconies, the regular ones started flooding into the bottom section. He would normally be sitting up with the rich due to his VIP status but for now, he refused as he wanted to remain anonymous. Covered in a dark robe and without his armor showing he would somewhat mix into the crowd with all the other people.

Soon the curtain was yanked to the side and the lovely elven lady that he met before walked out onto the stage. She was wearing a form-fitting red dress with a lot of upper chest area showing, clearly to entice the many men that were in the crowd. She gave a little introduction speech that was probably rehearsed many times before the first item was brought out.

The auction was finally in full swing but while Roland was getting nervous two people were having a discussion. They had a nice view over the whole auction from their semi-secret spot that was the Auction House owner's office.

"He does seem to be bothered by those dwarven union fellows, doesn't he, my Lord?"

Arthur Valerian was just sitting there together with Mary and looking over everything. It was clear as day that Roland was taking glances to the side from the moment the dwarven union representatives showed up.

"Wish I could see his face, that man is hard to read... Mary, why don't you go help our friend out."

"I thought you'd never ask, Lord Arthur."

Mary smiled while placing a mask over her face along with a somewhat large hat.

"How do I look?"

"Like someone that has more money than reason."

Arthur replied while Mary slowly walked out from the room. Her body was covered in expensive-looking jewelry and the dress she had on was made from quite the costly material. Soon the auction would start but Arthur knew that with the help of his maid, Roland could potentially make a lot more money than he thought.