

Runesmith 201

Chapter 201: Going once, going twice, sold!

“Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to bring your attention to this set of six high-grade elixirs. These have been distilled from the finest Daga’s hearts and are very potent, the starting price will be at two small gold coins.”

Roland looked at what looked to be a small paddle with a number being raised when the busy lady stopped explaining the item that was being sold. These Elixirs were quite potent to the point of being able to regenerate fingers if they were cut off but not at the level of full limb recovery.

The initial price was more than what an average family spent in a month’s time and it only continued to rise. The amount of money that was going through this auction house was quite staggering. Yet without a proper class that could earn this much money the world seemed unfair.

Even Roland could easily earn gold coins now while just entering his twenties. Farmers with no special skills could only dream about his money-making capabilities. But some special cultivation classes existed, even farmers had potential breakthroughs that would allow them to grow special food that then could be turned into something costly. But such people were few and far between just like him who had quite unorthodox skills.

‘I wonder if I’ll get a good price on that golem... that is if anyone starts bidding in the first place.’

Ever since this morning, Roland was feeling anxious. If he didn’t have his sleep resistance skill with him he would have been dead tired from all the worries. These worries turned to questions he asked himself during the night that kept him awake.

With a slight glance to the side, he watched the dwarven union members looking over the items. They were clearly not interested in the potions, unless it was some kind of enchanted weapon or magical creation they would not be moved.

The biggest fear that Roland had now was that even with the help of the city lord, the union would be able to force the merchants to ignore his items. If something like that occurred he would be driven out of business, what good were high-quality goods if no one bought them?

But this was the auction house, many wandering people with deep pockets visited them, people, that did not worry about something like the dwarven union. While they were influential, this also had a limit. Anyone not in the circle of merchants and craftsmen would not really have anything to lose by spending coins.

‘My golem is scheduled to be out later, this might take an hour or two, depends how much these people are willing to barter up...’

Even when no paddles were raised by the potential buyers the auctioneer didn’t just end the auction. Her job was to squeeze out the most amount of coins from each auction. She would regularly pause while trying to sell the item on stage. Examining facial expressions came in handy as most of the time a person could tell if someone was interested in the item or not.

“Going once, going twice,.... sold to the handsome gentleman in the blue coat.”

The man was far from handsome with his balding head and age of fifty years. This didn't stop the busty elf from giving him a wink after the bidding war was done.

"Please remember to pick your item up before you leave the auction house, if you wish you may do it now or wait till the end of the auction. You don't want those bargain magical items to be bought out when you are gone, now do you?"

While she didn't elaborate further Roland was aware of all the procedures. The items were carried off into a special room where the buyer had to pick them up. It was heavily guarded not only to protect the items.

This was an auction and while rarely some people got overexcited and weren't able to fork out the money that they were owed. If something like that occurred they would be mostly detained and then punished. Sometimes even sold into slavery if the auction house boss was especially ruthless.

In this case, it belonged to the city lord so they would be sent to jail. Then they could barter on an equal exchange if they had any. It was hard to track people down in this world and verbal agreements were useless. The only way of such a buyer leaving would be with a signed contract that would give him quite the curse if he failed to deliver on the promise.

The potions were soon carried off by some guards while the person who bought them remained in place. Then the next item of interest was carried out which this time around was something he was familiar with, a runic mace that wasn't of his making.

It was a bit strange to see one of these out on the market. The dwarves that he was paying attention two seemed interested in the item to some degree. One of them raised the paddle for the initial bid and it continued until they got it for slightly over the market price.

'They do seem to be interested in runic wares a lot...'

From this exchange, he could somewhat confirm that the dwarves would bid for items concerning their craft. The spell on the mace was pushing the limits of tier 2 and was rather unique as it had smite on it. This was a holy element enchantment that required a priest to recharge it.

Roland was interested in getting his hands on something like that too. It was a runic weapon so he would not have to use the runic eye skill to figure out the schematic. But he was not here to spend his coin, a weapon like this could be bought elsewhere and he did not want to stick out. Not many people in this city had the money required to buy something like it which would pull unwanted gazes at him if he also bid.

"How come ye buy that thing?"

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Dunan asked Bamur that was the one making all of the bids.

"Tis fur mah research, why do ye care, Ah can spend coin as Ah want."

It seemed that the Enchantsmith wanted the mace with the smite spell on it for some research. Why he didn't know, the dwarf was not a runesmith but this didn't mean that he could not become one in the

future. Being an Enchantsmith and a Runesmith wasn't totally unheard of yet it would be harder to learn both fields at once.

'It also could just be an excuse...'

Roland turned his head back to the auction house and it continued. Various other weapons and trinkets started to be carried out. One was even a magical box that acted as a hologram that had some beautiful women performing an alluring dance to some music.

It was clearly some kind of spell that recorded it along with the music and was just grafted onto a golden box. Perhaps to some rich merchants, this had some value but to him, it was a waste of good metal. It went for a high price and would probably find its way into the hand of a noble with too much money.

There were even magical sets of clothes that glistened in the moonlight. It was quite surprising to see a good-looking woman walking out in a dress to present herself to the audience. There was apparently not anything that would not be sold here and the people were more than willing to spend money on it. If the item had magic on it, it was almost guaranteed to be resellable.

Then finally after one and a half-hours of seeing magical thingamajigs being presented, it came for his creation to be announced. This he knew by the unsuspecting wooden box that confused the people that were looking at it.

"Ladies and gentlemen, it is time for another special article, this time around it is something that has been constructed by a local craftsman!"

The people that were in the room started staring at the box in the middle of the stage. It was still closed but it was not the only thing there, next to it was a little stand with what looked to be a rod covered in runic engravings. The dwarves that were on the balcony quickly realized what it was just by a glance.

"That does look like a golem control rod, that whelp really managed to make a golem at his age? "

Bamur the enchantsmith that had a better eye for runes leaned over the balcony while somewhat shouting. His comrade that was next to him just started scowling while looking, it was clear that the two were not too happy to see something that should only be made by dwarven hands there.

After the members of the union got rowdy the merchants perked up. It was clear to them that something worthwhile would be presented if the penny-pinching dwarves were even interested. The richest of them came prepared, the costlier items were always presented to the end of the auction and this part was finally beginning.

Roland started looking around and he did notice that a lot of people were interested in what was in that box. The lady knew how to make a show of it, it seemed that they decided to have the golem exit from within the box by itself instead of presenting it out in the open.

He did explain giving the manual to a worker beforehand, perhaps the Lord had decided that it would be more interesting if the golem made a grand entrance. Thus after all eyes were on the control rod the elven woman made her move.

"Please observe, this is what is called a control rod, it can be used for various magical artifacts but in this case..."

Without revealing what the box contained she activated the remote control with the help of some mana and spoken words.

“Activate.”

After the command was spoken the golem would begin to function. While the people outside couldn't see it just yet the inside of the wooden container started to move slightly. Soon the top part was moved to the side and one of the spider golem's appendages appeared.

“Oh? What is that?”

“Is that a magical construct?”

“Interesting...”

The golem started to rise out of the box as it was programmed to by him. Moving through terrain and maneuvering through tight places wasn't difficult for his creations. It was able to skillfully get out of the box by stretching its legs to step outside.

When turned off it remained curled up on the bottom which also reduced the size of the package it was in. It was thus quite easy for the blue golem to gently present its shiny body that Roland spent an exorbitant amount of time polishing for this occasion.

The glistening metallic outer shell reflected the magical lights that shined onto the stage quite well. The golem that was shaped like an arachnid slowly moved towards the woman holding the control rod just like he had programmed it. Then it went back into its passive energy-saving mode while waiting for more commands.

“As you can see ladies and gentlemen, this is a brand new custom-made golem, while it might look like the popular spider-iron golem, it is made from durasteel and has many more uses. Let me bring your attention to this enlarged arachnid abdomen as its creator likes to call it!”

The abdomen area was used to house the spatial bag and other utensils. The elven woman opened it up while having the golem turn around by itself. While this was going on Roland felt quite stressed, his creation was being shown off and he couldn't really tell if the people liked what they were seeing.

At first, they were surprised by the unique design that was different from the schematics of a more conventional model. To the untrained eye, a custom model might seem better as it was newer but to these people here it wasn't so. There was a reason why people stuck to proven designs as there was less risk involved.

The lady listed all the features that the golem had but there was no space on the stage to perform any battle tests. For safety measures, they could not fire off any deadly spells which was a big selling point of this model that was made with the highest quality runes.

At first, everyone was leaning forward and listening closely but soon they all sat back to contemplate. The golem was somewhat risky, he was probably the only person that could repair it if something went wrong. But the noble house backing this auction house was known for its prestige so some might be inclined to risk it.

“As this is a well-crafted runic construct, we will be starting our bid at two large gold coins!”

This was it, questions would not be asked towards the auctioneer, everyone had to use their own judgment. While Roland could see someone trying to raise the bidding paddle he also heard a loud grunt coming from the balcony above. It was both of the dwarves again, one of them was giving the sign that he would be bidding.

Then Roland realized what the grunt meant, the moment the union dwarves were involved the other merchants started backing off. He could see them nodding at each other as if this had been discussed beforehand. Perhaps they had some kind of agreement on not bidding against each other in certain situations which if true could set him back by a lot.

The two large gold coins would not cover the manufacturing costs for the golem. If no one else placed a bid then he would be in the red and without a golem that was usable in the dungeon. The auction house could not pull the offer back at this point even if they were aware of the merchant agreement. At most they could ban the people involved in the scheme later or try to clear it up away from the public eye to not affect their reputation.

“Two large gold coins, do I perhaps hear three large gold coins? Three large gold coins for this beautiful magical creation?”

Even when the elven lady stalled the people here shook their heads around. Two gold coins was already a large sum of money that was equal to twenty small gold coins. There were not many merchants here that could afford it as a lot of people just came to see the spectacle of people bidding high.

Yet suddenly a hand was raised, instead of a paddle, it was a fan covered in jewels that looked very expensive. The bidder was a woman of unknown origin that was hiding her face behind a veil. For some strange reason, he had the feeling that he knew her from somewhere.

“Three large gold coins to the madam in white!”

The moment the bid rose the dwarves in the balcony turned to the lady. She didn’t look like someone from this city and was probably unaffected by the union.

“Is that a noble?”

“Maybe a mistress of some lord?”

People started whispering as the amount of money wasn’t small. There were two men in unfamiliar armor next to her which made her look like someone important and with a lot of money. Now with her in the game, the bidding war finally started. The dwarves seemed not amused as they quickly bid past her and continued.

It was a quick back and forth between the two, each time the price increased by mostly a random small gold coin amount. Roland wasn’t sure why the woman was interested in his creation but thanks to her the price reached an amount that he was satisfied with. Yet this wasn’t over as it continued past what he was expecting.

“...”

Bamur from the union slammed his fists down onto the balcony while going red in the face. It was not allowed to antagonize the other participants with words so instead, an outburst of anger was probably supposed to send the message to the woman bidding against them.

The girl dressed in white didn't seem to care though as she outbid the dwarves by another large gold coin which brought the price up to eleven. It was clear that she was not perturbed by the outburst which was somewhat sending the message that she didn't care about the dwarven union or was not informed.

Without knowing her true identity the dwarves could not judge if she was someone that they had to contend with. The bidding slowed down for a moment as the two started discussing if it was worth continuing. But to these craftsmen, new golems like this could prove important in developing their craft.

Roland was sure that they would want to analyze his creation. They would surely dismantle it and try to judge with their own eyes if he was the real deal. Though when they did, they would receive a small surprise.

"T-twelve large gold coins to the dwarven gentleman with the red face, does the beautiful lady in white wish to offer more?"

Yet, when the price reached twice what he was expecting to get it finally ended. He noticed that the woman was not looking at his golem but at something that was above it. Then after nodding once she moved her luxurious fan down towards her knees and gave the victory to the dwarven union.

Then as if she was never there, she and the two armored men walked out while the voluptuous elven lady on the stage was congratulating the dwarf for winning the bid.

While everyone was a bit stunned by the quick exit he noticed something. Even though the woman was wearing some high heels that would normally make loud noises while walking, there was no sound being generated.

'Wait, didn't I see that way of walking somewhere before?'

Chapter 202: Looking towards the future.

"Here you go Mr. Wayland, your cut of the sale."

The auction was over and at this moment Roland was in the office with an auction house clerk responsible for giving out the earnings. Thanks to the strange rich woman who contended with the dwarven union members, the sale amounted to twelve large gold coins, which was quite a sum of money.

"Isn't there too much in here? You only took out one small gold coin, this is not the price we agreed on."

With the help of his skills, he was able to quickly count how much money was in the sack. A contract was signed beforehand, it stated that he would be given ten to fifteen percent of his earnings to the auction house. This depended on the scale of the sale, the more money he earned the less he needed to pay up. With this one passing the ten large coin threshold he would need to fork up ten percent.

He was also required to present a minimum of ten items in a year otherwise, he would need to pay a fine. This was an understandable clause as he was given a better rate than other sellers that mostly had

to give up from fifteen to twenty-five percent from the sale. Thus he was confused that he only had to give up one small gold coin.

“This was the lord’s decision, he sends his regards and hopes that you will continue to work with us. He also wanted to inform you that he would look into the situation with the dwarven union and the merchants.”

“Oh he did? and he will?”

By the ‘situation’ the clerk probably meant the way the dwarves almost caused others from bidding. Such acts were strictly forbidden in any auction house, even without words it was clear what had happened there. The union members probably didn’t think anything off it after getting used to almost owning the city.

‘Those bastards were heading upstairs weren’t they?’

After the bidding war was over the dwarves left in a hurry. It was clear that they only wanted to get his golem for a cheap price. After failing in their attempt they b-lined it for the auction storage to pay up. Roland was a bit interested in their reactions so he followed behind them but then when they were about to leave with the crate the lordling’s maid appeared out of the blue.

‘Will that guy do something about them, or will they just offer him a bribe?’

Roland wasn’t sure what he should expect from his new business partner. It was clear that he was getting some favorable treatment at least for now. What the future held in store for him was unknown and he could be betrayed any moment.

Yet he was willing to give it a try as he had become tired of all the running. It would have been easy to just leave a few years ago when the union became aware of him. Even going to a different country would be that outlandish as his manufacturing class would probably allow him a position almost anywhere.

Until times became really dire, he decided to remain and go through the hardships. Contending with a few penny-pinching dwarfs wasn’t all that bad, his business was doing well enough even when he was getting sanctioned left and right.

“Well then, give the lord my regards, I’ll deliver the next set of products before the deadline.”

It was not the time to worry though, he had made a lot of money today. Many more gold than he could by selling runic weapons in bulk. Also now with everything in place he would be able to construct the same golem a lot faster and perhaps at a lower cost.

Thus the town runesmith made his way out of the Valerian Auction house, his mind was now only on his comfortable bed.

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“You can’t be serious...”

“Oh I’m very serious, this will be your only warning, if something like this happens again my father will hear about it. I wonder what the union would do to the little dwarf that caused a scene at a Valerian Auction house?”

The two dwarven union members that were bidding for Roland’s golem were now together in Arthur’s office. As always he was here together with his maid that was in the process of serving some tea to the two guests.

“We understand...”

While Dunan’s face went pale, Bamur remained calm. He lowered his head at the request knowing well that they were in the wrong. While Arthur Valerian here was not someone that they feared, they were in no position to offend a duke household. How much pull outside this city he had was unknown to them, thus it was better to tread lightly.

“Good, I will not fine you this time around but let this be the last time we have this conversation, you may leave now... oh and enjoy your new golem, I’m sure it’s worth all the coin that you paid for it!”

Arthur smiled while sipping his tea, Bamur just looked at him with a blank expression while his friend was biting his tongue. Soon the two departed with less gold in their pockets as they had already paid up for the golem. Finally after leaving the room Mary was able to speak up.

“That was somewhat boring, they didn’t even try to make a deal. It’s still disappointing, I’m sure I could have gotten more out of them.”

After her performance at the auction house she was feeling quite good about herself. This was not the first time that she inflated the price of an item around a place like this.

Before this day she had done some research for prices of golems, with the help of that knowledge she knew just how much the union dwarves would be willing to pay. How much they had in their coffers was also important but Arthur stopped her before she reached the amount she was going for.

“That was more than enough, it was already a big enough gamble, not sure how I would have explained it to our runesmith if you had won the auction.”

Arthur laughed to himself while thinking about Roland, his new business partner. What would he do if he knew that a noble was inflating the prices at his own auction house? Would he be all for it or did he have a more steady moral compass?

“Speaking about Mr. Wayland, I think that he might have noticed that it was me.”

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Mary shifted the conversation towards a different subject, which was Roland’s piercing gaze.

“Oh? Was he able to look through your disguise?”

“I’m not sure, I changed my voice and mannerisms, he is hard to read with that helmet on his face but maybe Sir Gareth and Sir Morien did a bad job in their new roles?”

The guards that she had with her were of course the two knights that served Arthur. They didn't have to do much besides standing in place while Mary shifted the attention towards her extravagant look.

"Think I need to train them more!"

"I think they did well enough but we should focus on other things now, is our next guest here?"

"Yes, he is drinking up all the expensive wine as we speak."

Replied Mary while frowning slightly when thinking about the person that she would need to fetch now.

"Good, would you be so kind to bring him here, I thought that he would at least make one bid but instead he kept to himself through the whole auction."

"Maybe he is just afraid of the union as the rest?"

Mary shrugged while walking towards the door to go to the VIP room where the next guest was waiting.

"He didn't seem like the type but I'll see for myself soon."

"Fine then, but I wouldn't trust that man too much."

"I'll take that to heart."

Replied Arthur while looking down at some papers. While the issue with the city runesmith was probably settled now, he was only a small cog in the machine. For this young noble to get his heart desires he needed more power and the amount of money that his new worker gave him wouldn't be much unless he somehow attained tier 3 status within the next few years.

"Tier 3, that would be nice..."

Arthur gazed at his own status screen while thinking about the fabled tier 3 stopgap that not many could get through. If his new potential follower could attain it he could become a larger chest piece but for now, he was only someone with some potential. Whether he could prove himself in the coming years remained to be seen. For his future plans, he needed many more pieces like him.

"Lord Arthur, our guest is waiting, should I let him in?"

While contemplating the future he heard Mary call out to him from the corridor outside. The door slammed open as it was pushed with impunity, the maid on the outside started shouting but the person that walked into the lord's office didn't seem too apologetic.

"How dare you!"

"Haha, calm down little missy."

Arthur looked at a somewhat imposing-looking man that was built like a brick house.

"Young lord, you wished to see me?"

The man ignored the maid that was about to grab him for being rude.

"It's fine Mary."

Arthur just shook his head, after locking eyes with him Mary backed away from the man that she considered an oaf. Soon she was standing right next to him while feeling uneasy, the man before her was not someone that she could really handle as he was of tier 3 strength.

“Guildmaster, I’m happy that you have accepted my invitation, I think we need to discuss a couple of things.”

....

“You’re back! How did it go?”

“Surprisingly well... but why are you still here at this hour?”

“Lobelia is taking care of the kids, they are also getting older so it’s not that hard anymore.”

“I see.”

Roland was back at his home along with the pouch of gold coins. This was the most that he had earned from one sale and the future looked bright. The lord named Arthur was somehow clearing up the mess he had gotten himself into with the union and he only needed to do things that he was good at, which was crafting.

“That’s wonderful, wait a moment I’ll get you something to eat.”

“No, that’s fine. I’m not hungry, I just want to sleep.”

After the stress buildup from working months on his golem along with the time spent during the class change, Roland was just tired. He managed to hold himself together thanks to his skills but in reality, he felt like he could sleep for a week.

“Oh... you want to go to bed... that’s fine with me too, just give me a moment.”

When he mentioned the bed Elodia started blushing wildly but even with her ready, he wasn’t really interested in that kind of stress relief. Thus the night ended a bit uneventfully with him passing out before she managed to return. In the morning he was greeted with a somewhat disappointed-looking girlfriend and him not being sure what was the problem.

“Thank you...”

Roland kept quiet as he didn’t want to somehow increase Elodia’s anger. Just as always they were sitting together by the table but this time around there was mostly silence. Finally, after a moment, she did break it.

“So... what are you going to do now?”

“Hm?”

The question was quite simple, what did he intend to do? The golem was sold and he could take the money and invest it either into his house or tools. With Arthur fixing most of his problems he could also stop going to the black market. While it was an interesting place, the regular merchants gave a better deal. Also, he knew that the materials he got would not be sponsoring any shady business.

“That’s a good question... I’m not sure, was so focused on the golem that I didn’t plan ahead.”

Roland laughed while taking a bite out of a large sausage that Agni continued to stare at. Feeling good about himself he decided to throw his wolf the unfinished part which was chomped down almost the moment it was thrown in the air.

“Is that so? How about you take the gold rank test?”

“The adventurer test?”

“Yes, Armand has been talking behind your back, that he is so much better than you because he outranks you now.”

Elodia chuckled while a vein appeared on Roland’s forehead. It was true while he was busy with his golemic creations, his new class, and the dungeon he somewhat ignored his adventurer rank.

“With things settling down now, I think you can put your worries at rest and leave for a few weeks. Agni has gotten so big now too I’m sure he can protect the home while you are away you don’t need to worry.”

She looked at the wolf that was staring at the meat that was on the dining table. When his name was mentioned he gave out a resounding howl, then presented his large tongue for more treats.

“What, I’m not worried...”

“Hah.”

Roland’s reply was laughed at as Elodia knew him well enough to know that he was a worrywart. The adventurer rank-up test could even take a month depending on his luck. If he was free to travel it would have been completed a long time ago.

“If you are worried, just hire a few more guards. If you toss a few gold coins towards Armand, I’m sure he will be willing to stay here for a few weeks.”

“Can I pay him some gold for him not to stay here instead?”

While he didn’t trust in Armand’s housekeeping capabilities, he was a gold rank adventurer over the level of a hundred. Perhaps he would destroy some of his furniture but it would be better than getting his workshop ransacked. The trust between Elodia and her siblings was deep so he was also inclined to trust them now.

“Stop joking around, I’m being serious. You should really go, what kind of adventurer reaches level 125 before changing their rank? You are missing out on so many good deals!”

With every adventurer rank came privileges, slightly better rates for selling monster parts, and also access to more lucrative quests. While wandering down into his secret mining spot, he did pick up some of the monster parts that could be sold off later. While he wasn’t missing out on much, with time it started to add up, and even more, if the monsters became rarer.

“That’s true, speaking of the adventurer guild, do you still keep in contact with Solana? Maybe she could procure a test that won’t have me wandering to the north end of the kingdom also there is the issue with my status screen and class...”

The tests were somewhat random as they depended on each adventurer guild. Most of the time they just took one of the easier gold rank notices off the board and called it a day. If Roland decided to forgo the test he would need to wait half a year to take a new one as punishment.

“Solana...”

After his question, Elodia remained a bit silent but after the pause, she nodded her head.

“I think she might help, but I’m not sure. “

“Does she have a grudge against me or something?”

“Grudge? No, it’s just... that girl has a strange sense of humor, I’m not sure if going through her is wise, but I can try if you want. You should really stop worrying about your class, don’t think anyone will care that much at this point...”

Roland had no idea what the elven guild receptionist’s and his girlfriend’s relationship was like. He knew that Elodia had covered for a lot of shifts that were meant for Solana in the past. A few favors should be owed through that but sometimes a sense of entitlement could cloud a person’s judgment.

“Oh look at the time, I need to go to the store!”

After talking for a while Roland was left in the house alone. Now he needed to make a decision, would he finally go get that troublesome gold rank test done, or was there something else that he needed to do first. If Solana helped him in concealing his status screen, then perhaps it wouldn’t be such a bad option for the respite that he was given now.