

Runesmith 223

Chapter 223: Touring the city.

“Watch it, if ye drop that there you’re goin’ to ‘ave to pay fer it.”

“Stop shoutin’ an’ just ‘elp me!”

From the distance, Roland could see people dressed like sailors carrying large crates with various items in them. From what he could tell all the merchandise was divided by worth that could be measured by the way the packaging looked. If it was something cheap then regular wooden crates were enough.

On the other hand, if it was something worth a lot of coins, the crates were made from magical wood along with several paper seals that produced a magical barrier around it. Even if someone hit a crate like that with a sledgehammer it would not leave a dent in it. But this didn’t mean that the items inside couldn’t be damaged if the outer shell was handled without care.

‘So this is the shipyard...’

He had entered the large building filled with various seafaring ships. Besides them and the mass of people, he could see some that were under construction. This caught his interest as he could see some construction golems being utilized. Some of them were carrying heavy logs and parts of the ship, some of them were even working on this world’s version of a crane.

The golem itself was not the whole crane, instead, they were used to replace laborers to pull long ropes that were connected to various pulley systems. Roland recalled some history lessons that back in his world before mechanical cranes were created people had to actually pull them themselves or use livestock.

‘It might be cheaper to have the golems pull those ropes instead of making a large crane golem instead...’

Roland didn’t see a problem in creating a golem that could actually work as a regular crane. The runic structure wouldn’t be as hard and everything could be configured to allow an operator to move it with the help of some kind of console. The only problem would be the money required to procure materials that would last for years without deteriorating the runes.

‘The underground dwarven city was said to use something similar to heavy machinery, I guess for a human shipyard this is already plenty.’

The golems that were working here were slowly lumbering on four legs and were clearly mass-produced products. With their help, the construction efforts probably progressed a lot smoother and the costs weren’t that high. A large investment would be required to produce a better effect.

‘The Valerian crest is also here, if I remember correctly then one of Arthur’s siblings should be stationed in this city...’

After glancing at the crest Roland recalled his research that went into the Valerian household. With one of their members being within walking distance to his house, it was a given. They were a family known for their swordsmanship, apparently, many of them were at least spirit swordsmen.

'I guess that's why they have the nickname of the Kingdom's sword. That's ironic with how they are in the aristocrat faction and not with the royalists.'

The Valerian household had won their position by pitting their children against each other in hopes of gaining stronger and stronger sword masters. Their current position was won by bloody conquest in the past. It was a tough life that consisted of being compared to other siblings, duels were quite common with these kinds of nobles that wanted to prove themselves to their elders.

'Sending Arthur out to a peaceful area like Albrook puts him in a tough spot...'

Arthur was still a son of a noble and what nobles lived for was rising up in the ranks. By being ordered to Albrook he wasn't given much to work with. There weren't any opportunities for him there, his brothers would probably be sent on most of the worthwhile expeditions to gain strength while he only had the dungeon to work with.

'Times against him, unless he can produce some results or if the dungeon suddenly goes up a grade it will be hard...'

Roland was not sure what to think of the noble in the city. He had helped him with his work so he was somewhat indebted to the young man. But he could work that debt down by helping him gain more money. This would be achieved by selling various runic creations in the auction house. While this could pad out Arthur's pockets with some extra cash it was not really something to bring attention to the city.

'I should probably stop worrying about him and get out of here. It doesn't seem that they will close the city for the time being...'

Not much time had passed since he came here as after getting his updated adventurer card he headed straight to the dock. Ships traveled around the sea on a set timetable and depending on it they could be a faster solution to his problem.

If he was unable to get a ship then the only way back would be through that wide forest. This was something that he wanted to avoid. Even if the caravans were blocked he could always buy himself a horse and travel alone. The only problem was the potential cult presence in the forest along with the church knights.

There was a possibility of running into both sides clashing with each other there which would put his life at risk. Even if he stayed to the outskirts some narrower passages had to be crossed. The cult could also come from the other side of the forest like on the bridge where they met the bandits.

If the cultists actually showed up to recover their large relic they would probably ignore the surrounding ships. The most troublesome area would be the forest area with the village that they had taken over. There was also another route by land that he could take, it went through a troublesome mountain path filled with various monsters.

'I'll make a decision after confirming it with the shipyard staff.'

After going through everything in his mind he finally found something that resembled a receptionist. It was another young lady that was similar to the ones he had come across in the adventurer guild. Next to the booth that she was sitting in was a large notice board with various scribbles that he didn't understand.

“Excuse me, could you give me some information about the next ship leaving for the port close to Albrook.”

“Albrook? Please wait a moment sir.”

There was no line like in the adventurer guild so this time around he was given an answer quite fast. The girl pulled out a large book that looked like a ledger found in an accounting office. He could see many entries with various names, dates, and even longitudes. The woman flipped through the pages for some time which started to make him nervous but finally, he saw a positive reaction.

“Ah, here it is... a merchant ship will be arriving tomorrow to unload its cargo, it will then leave towards Vita.”

“Vita...”

Roland strained his geographical memory and recalled that this medium-sized port was not the one that he had previously visited. It was further back into the island but the trip from it would be around three days on foot. While this was not the location that he was expecting it was enough for him to instantly ask for more information.

“Does the ship allow for passengers?”

“Of course, if you pay the coin they will surely allow you to come but...”

“But?”

“It will take a week before the ship leaves.”

“A week?”

“Yes, if you wish to buy a ticket please come tomorrow.”

After the quick exchange, he received the information and had an idea of what was happening. It wasn't odd for the ships to stay for longer than a day after unloading the cargo. The sailors could have families here and be given some time to relax with them before sailing off once more. Even if he considered that he would need to remain here for a week, taking the ship would probably be the fastest and the safest mode of transportation.

Perhaps if he was a tier 3 class holder he could attempt a solo crossing through the mountain range. Yet he was not, his items were depleted and both of his golems had been destroyed during the scuffle. They had turned into scrap metal that he shoved into a replacement spatial bag for the time being.

“May I ask about the location of this ship and when it will be arriving tomorrow?”

“Of course!”

The lady smiled at him and quickly disclosed the information. While this receptionist could give him the information he would need to go to the ship captain or the first mate to confirm everything. They could still deny him access to the ship if they already were booked beforehand. It was possible for the ship to be bought out by a rich merchant or a noble and no other passengers being allowed on the trip.

“You have my gratitude.”

“Please come again.”

After getting the pier number and asking about the layout some more, he had what he came for. Now like always he needed to find himself an inn to rest at. Thankfully this large city had an active adventurer guild and a dungeon. Considering this, there would not be a problem in getting a better room for his money as it was in the previous town.

With his visit to the city docks being over, he headed towards the commercial district. There he was surprised to find various neon signs and a city bustling with life. This was a stark contrast to cities like Edelgard or even Albrook where when night rolled around most people returned to their homes.

‘I see, they are trying to maximize on the large adventurer population and the people that come over to have fun.’

There were people shouting from the entrances of restaurants and inns that were trying to attract people. Colorful signs that radiated magical energy were purposely created to draw in the eyes of people visiting. From the distance, he could even hear music and the cheers of people. It seems that some kind of show was taking place in the open which was quite a rarity.

‘Street performers or perhaps something like a circus?’

Roland stopped himself from going towards the alluring sounds of music. What he needed now was not to have fun but to prepare for his journey home. Before leaving he asked the girl at the docks about possible alternatives and was shocked to hear that if he missed this ship the next one would be arriving in three weeks.

Most of the ships here connected to the mainland so he would need to first return there before finding a ship that would take him to Albrook there. The girl didn’t have a detailed map of the ship's paths so was unable to help him with that. If he decided to head with that route it might take even longer than going through the potentially dangerous mountain range.

“Sir, could I interest you in our city’s specialty, roasted Soul Carp!”

“May I interest you in this pearl necklace, I’m sure you will be able to grab the heart of any lady!”

“Would you be interested in buying ...”

The shout of the peddlers continued as he ignored them all. They were selling almost everything from food to actual weapons. It was as if the roads were built to house the small stands from which these people could sell their wares. Thanks to his identification skill he was able to easily identify everything.

It was clear that these people were a bunch of scammers as the items they were being advertised were mostly different. Even the food was counterfeit as the fish was in actuality only a mud carp that was worth a third of what the peddler was trying to get for it. For some reason he also expected the ones in power to be fine with it.

‘I bet they allow these people to scam the wanderers and the adventurers as long as they pay their taxes. The more they can sell their wares the more money flows into the city.’

The lord could easily ban these scammers from selling counterfeit wares but what would he gain from it? Roland knew how some nobles operated, they would not care if a commoner came complaining to

them that they were cheated of their money. As long as the side of the city that was populated by higher class people was in order, whatever happened on this side was not their problem.

"I don't want anything, let me through."

Luckily his appearance was similar to a knight or a high leveled adventurer. By raising his voice toward the people blocking his way they quickly moved to the side. The reaction was surprising but gave him an idea that this place went through its fair share of problems. Rowdy customers appeared from time to time that could destroy a month's worth of merchandise.

'The guards are patrolling to keep the cities in order...'

When passing through he could see various armored guards standing to the side. While they did look his way after he moved forward they ignored him quickly. It seemed that the lord was aware of the money he could make here. By keeping the merchants safe themselves they would not need to ask any crime syndicates for help. Any money gained from protecting them would line the Valerian noble's pockets instead.

'I can't imagine them patrolling the poorer side of this district though.'

Finally, he arrived at his destination and was greeted by a long street filled with various inns, pubs, and restaurants. It seemed that the entire district was carefully designed so that the people staying at the inns weren't far away from places with food and entertainment. This made him wonder how much money he was losing by having his shop away from the city and the eyes of many potential clients.

The streets were filled with various travelers, not only adventurers who came to this city. Others that saw potential in making it big were also here. Many merchants were interested in a deal of their life so they flocked to cities like this. Almost no one of them was successful though and ended up being a regular peddler like the ones he saw before.

"Hello there sir, could you be searching for a place to stay for the night? Our Inn has the comfiest beds!"

Before he could analyze the surroundings and pick an inn to stay he was interrupted by a young girl of about ten. She was holding a sign with a picture of a black cat. When looking at the building she was standing close by he could see the same black cat moving around on something that looked like a neon sign. This reminded him of some of the motels he stayed at in his old world while going between cities.

"Yes I am, could you show me the way?"

"Yes Sir, please follow me!"

The girl was all smiles after he agreed to visit her Inn. Roland was not picky, he wanted to get a place to rest and have some privacy. There were some items he also wanted to procure before resting for the night. Even though the stores here were open for longer than usual there was not much time left now.

"I heard that you had free rooms."

"That we have, are you traveling by yourself?"

"Yes."

Soon the young girl brought him over to the innkeeper who seems to be the girl's mother. The resemblance was there and the woman quickly found him a room to stay in.

“Will you be staying for the night now or going out?”

“I will return later if that’s fine with you?”

“We are open throughout the entire night, please return whenever you wish. You can get your key from me when you return.”

It seemed that the people here had grown to accommodate their customers. Most of the time even the inns and pubs had a cut-off before they locked their doors. His armored appearance was also seen as normal here. Thus he exchanged some coins for the room and went on his way towards the tool shops.

‘They should have some smithing hammers here, I must repair these degraded runes before the night is over.’

Roland needed to at least remain here for another week. With that in mind, he needed to restore his armor. The runes had degraded after the use of his mending skill. Only with a proper hammer would he be able to use his runecrafting skill without burning through all of his mana reserves. Thus he headed out into the bustling city consumed by greed, if he could get a good price on the items he desired was debatable.

Chapter 224: Ahoy.

“I think this should do it...”

Roland was sitting in a well-lit room through which he could see the sparkling city. Even now he could hear people shouting and talking while having fun. He on the other hand had different things to worry about, after heading out into the night and avoiding a few drunks he had managed to stock up on some smithing tools.

“This hammer cost more than it should, even when you leave a city you can’t get away from those damn scamming dwarves...”

In his hand, he was holding a hammer made from regular metals. While he would prefer to have one made from more resistant deepsteel this was fine. It didn’t need to last for long as he only wanted to repair his armor. The runic structures that had gained blemishes from his skill use could only be replaced by way of rune smithing.

There was an actual way of repairing these runes without using his regular rune smithing skill. He had a skill that allowed him to upgrade lower graded runes. This one he did not use during combat as it was quite mana intensive. That mana he needed to buff the beam of deaths that allowed him to survive.

“In theory, if I combine rune mending with rune upgrade I could continuously restore the runes into the highest grade, that is if I have enough mana for it as it stands I could probably do it at most twice with this armor.”

While Roland had an astonishing amount of mana for his level it would still run out. Using both of the skills on something like a basic runic sword was also different than using them on the complex runic armor that he was wearing. The armor was composed of various runic components that needed to be

precisely aligned with each other. The skills targeted the entire structure and not the smaller components so it would burn through a lot of MP which was needed during his battles.

“I guess the basics are still the best.”

He was in an inn that was not built for what he was about to do. Luckily he only needed to cover the floor with some metal and block the sound from escaping outside. This he did thanks to his old spell he used during his travels. With it on no one would be able to hear the loud hits that the hammer would produce against the runic armor.

‘Let me get to work then.’

After picking up the hammer from the ground he placed one of the gauntlets on a piece of thick steel that he also bought. Without activating the debugging skill he already knew that this piece wasn’t looking too great. The mending skill destroyed a lot of pathways and even some components, it was a miracle that this armor didn’t become just a shiny slab of metal instead.

With one big swing, he gathered the required mana and smacked the gauntlet to insert it into the metal. The unseen pathways started glowing with a blue hue that represented the basic mana in this world as they took shape. The clogged-up traces that have even fused with others started parting and returning to their original shape.

It took him about thirty minutes to get through the first piece of gear and he continued to work through the entirety of the night. Without a proper forge and tools, he was unable to soften the metal and if he tried to do it here with the help of a fire spell he would probably set the whole inn on fire.

“It’s already morning?”

Roland wiped the sweat from his brow after he noticed a ray of light entering through the window. It was a bright and sunny day outside as he had worked through the entire night without taking a rest.

“This should be enough though...”

After giving out a sigh he looked at the spread-out armor pieces on the ground. There was not enough time to get his armor into its original shape. What he could do was repair the most damaged parts that would otherwise cause major issues if he tried casting spells. But this was not the end, he still had his rune upgrade skill with him. While normally there was no reason to use it over basic rune smithing in a situation like this it would shine.

There was a moment of hesitation before using the skill. There was a slight problem with the skill as it could fail. Multiple uses of it could cause the runic structure to degrade even further than they already were. The patch-up job he had done was to protect the most damaged runes.

“Never been a fan of RNG...”

Finally, Roland decided to go through with it, before the attempt he replenished his lost mana with a potion. The armor was one piece of runic equipment and the skill would treat it as one closed system. If it was successful the entire suit of armor would go up a grade. This all depended on various elements which involved his level, stats, and even other skills related to runes along with pure luck.

“I only have a maximum of two attempts...”

Just as any of the magical skills that increased the ranking of anything there was a chance of them backfiring. This skill allowed him to at most get two free shots in with the second also having a very low chance of failure. He had tested it out several times and came to the conclusion that going past two tries would be too dangerous.

“Of course, it fails on the first one...”

Roland had activated the skill which surrounded the whole armor with an orange glow. This color slowly shifted to red which indicated that the skill had failed. Now he had a decision to make, would he risk a second failure that would force him to repair the armor again or go for broke.

With a small nod, he continued with the second try. The runes started glowing orange before the radiance took over the whole suit of armor. Now on the other hand instead of the red color, it turned to green. To someone like him that could see the runic traces and pathways clearly the change was noticeable.

From the high grade that he managed to fix it up, it changed to the highest after being upgraded. This would be the last time that he would be able to use the skill on this armor with such a large possibility of success. There was some kind of hidden counter that would be remembered by this world’s game-like system.

As with every skill that he had, Roland performed several tests. When spacing out the upgrades the timer didn’t seem to vanish and the skill was prone to more failures the more he kept using it. Perhaps if he waited a year or longer it would have been reset but this would be hard to confirm.

After inspecting the armor once more he decided to put it back on. With the sun coming out he was ready to return to the docks. Besides the tools, he had also acquired a replacement for his robe that had seen better days before. His armor made him stand out like always and he could not risk drawing in too many eyes.

With that in mind, he left the inn that he was staying at without eating breakfast. The city was a lot more silent at this time of day. With such an active nightlife in this city, they obviously had a different cycle. The streets were filled with broken bottles and passed out drunks that were being removed by some city workers. Probably before the next party started everything would have been tidied up.

“I think it should be this pier...”

He had noted down where the ship he needed to watch out for would be docking at. But this was not the modern world, the ships didn’t stick to a full timetable. The woman only stated that the ship is due to arrive in the morning but that could very well be a few hours.

While waiting he also remembered his voyage toward this island. It was a first for him to travel out in the sea and they had even encountered monsters. If he was unlucky the ship might not even arrive, it could have been pillaged by pirates or devoured by some sea creature with tentacles.

Thus while he was waiting he spotted a stall at which someone was cooking some fish. He had ignored food due to the armor repairs so he was still hungry. Working through the night burned through a lot of calories that needed to be regained. After eating a proper meal a hidden buff was given that caused some benefits so this would also help him recover any mana that he had previously lost.

It was quite an interesting sight to behold. The fish were set out on skewers that were perfect to carry around. They were being dipped by the vendor in something that resembled oil. If he had to compare it to his old world then it looked like a magical version of a deep fryer. He could not spot any coal or wood being used to heat the large pan up.

'It doesn't feel like a runic item, probably some low-level enchantment.'

Thanks to his mana sense he was able to detect a small amount of mana coming from the stall. It was quite the wondrous source of power that replaced electricity in this world and apparently in cities like this it was cheap enough for even vendors to use it. Thus he just pointed toward one of the skewers to get his fix.

"Please come again!"

The old man smiled after receiving the small silver coin from Roland. While the food wasn't the cheapest, the taste wasn't bad. It was actually better than the regular food that he came across in other inns in this kingdom.

'Can't judge a book by its cover.'

Without much to do, he found himself an empty barrel and started looking towards the sea. Many ships were arriving and the same number were also leaving. It seemed that this place was being managed by whoever was in charge. If the ships were delayed the person that owned the cargo would lose money as they would not be able to continue their trade.

This was a stark contrast to the city that he was living in. There was no order back there, the dwarves and merchants were doing what they pleased. They could bully other businesses into shutting down and make it incredibly hard for anyone else to gain any money. Here on the other hand it looked like everyone was competing with each other for customers. Thanks to this the items they sold had to actually hit a certain standard.

'At least if it comes to the food that might be true but the dwarven shops aren't dropping their prices much.'

Roland was not sure what the union was doing but it was monopolizing this island's weapon and armor trade. He could not spot any shops that weren't under the union's umbrella, their logo was even plastered on the human-run shops. Luckily the dwarves from this city didn't know him so he was able to get the tools to repair his gear.

In the distance, he also saw a gaudy-looking white building. It stuck out like a sore thumb and didn't match the architecture of the other buildings. It was a large white church with golden outlines that represented the sun. It towered over everything that was there and was still placed closer to the commoner districts than the noble ones.

This was of course the temple that belonged to the Solaria church. They had a strategic placement between the poor and the rich so that they could receive donations from both sides. While looking at this temple he started thinking about the cult and how the reaction to their location was awfully fast and convenient.

'It's as if they were waiting for Loreena, they must not have been stationed far from here to arrive this fast.'

Their reaction was far too fast, it would take some time to rally that many high level knights and an inquisitor of that level. In Roland's mind, they had to suspect that the cultists were somewhere in this region and they were waiting for a sign. Perhaps Loreena wasn't the only hidden agent patrolling the lands, she was just the lucky one that managed to live through the cult's illusion trap. Luckily for him, the woman didn't ask too many questions and allowed him to leave.

Now the only problem was her grandfather that could spill the beans to his father if they ever ran into each other. For this fact he needed to get home as fast as he could and go back down into the dungeon. His father or even the cult could come back with a vengeance and he needed to prepare for such an occasion even if it was minuscule.

"Could that be it?"

After finishing his food he finally noticed a ship approaching the pier. It was a medium sized galleon that looked like it went through some hard times. There was some damage here and there as if it had been smacked around by something. Yet it was moving forward and the sails were in working order.

"Wait... haven't I seen that ship somewhere before?"

While sitting there he narrowed his eyes. The ship looked a lot more beaten up but it did fit the one in his memory. When he arrived on this island all those years ago he was carried over by a similar vessel. Could have been the same one or was it just a mass-produced model that shared a resemblance. The other ships in the port had many similarities with each other as well so it was possible.

Yet the moment it docked it became more apparent that this was the ship that carried him over to Albrook. The confirming factor was a certain large bouncy chest that to this day was hard to forget. It belonged to a woman that was wearing a tricorn hat while standing behind a group of sailors that were ready to disembark.

"Move yer asses, I wants all o' this cargo out o' here by the end o' this day."

"But cap'n, everyone be tired how about we allow everyone t' take a wee break?"

A large dark-skinned woman with a cross-shaped scar on her chest was shouting at one of the sailors. From what he picked up she was the captain here, if Roland's memory was correct then she had moved up in the world. Previously she was only the first mate, this meant that either the old captain had retired or had died and she inherited the ship from him.

This also brought back the sexual harassment part of the voyage from before. The woman had a thing for younger men and was quite pushy. Luckily she didn't go too far and he was able to spend the trip to Albrook without getting assaulted. It seemed that he would need to put himself under the line of fire again but perhaps she had matured with age just as anyone else would.

"Excuse me, I've heard that you are accepting passengers, I wish to go to Vita if that's possible?"

While the sailors started unpacking he didn't wait to ask the question. If it turned out that the ship would sail to Vita he would need to alter his plans. With the captain just standing there it was the best way of getting information.

"Who do we 'ave here, an adventurer? Ye wants t' sail on me ship?"

Roland was a large man and the armor only made him bulkier. The dark robe that he was hiding it under made him look like he was looking for trouble. For this reason, he went against one of his rules and decided to not walk around with his helmet on. Instead, he just covered his face with the hood but when in close proximity his face could be clearly seen.

"Yes, how much will it cost..."

"Ye be in luck young scallywag, 'twon't cost ye that much..."

For some reason when the woman caught a glimpse of his face she started smiling. Yet this was not the worst part as suddenly he heard a high-pitched scream coming from the ship which was followed by someone jumping down from it. What he spotted were two young women quite similar to the captain in appearance and upper assets.

"Big sis wha' are ye grinnin' about, let me see."

"Wha' ye two doin' shoutin' about?"

The two homed in on the conversation that he and the ship captain were having and surrounded him from all sides. Their gazes were focused on his partially covered face and his shiny armor.

'Am I in danger?'