

Runesmith 243

Chapter 243: Time for the hammer.

“Level 129, it’s close to 130...”

Roland muttered to himself while looking at his status screen which hasn’t changed much since his last level up. His new tier 2 Runic Engineer class hasn’t seen much use since he got it and it was only level 4 and soon to be 5. Due to all the work, he did prepare the new runic items he was gaining experience but not at a rate that would matter.

There were a few skills that he acquired that had gone through rapid growth. His Stress Resistance skill that he just acquired after gaining his new class was already level 4, it was the same for his Resilience skill. The two were getting a lot of usage during his latest endeavor, the latter saw a boost each time he activated his eye of true skill. He had also gained a follow-up skill that made things easier.

Pain Resistance L2

Increases resistance to pain.

The Pain Resistance skill was actually something that wasn’t easy to unlock. A person needed to put their body through a lot of continuous pain and suffering. It was mostly acquired by intended means by putting people through torture or found in victims like prisoners.

‘If someone peeked at my skills they might think that I’m some kind of budding masochist...’

Thanks to pain resistance he could not force himself to last through the runic eye of truth. Along with Resilience, his recovery was boosted and he could quickly recover to restart the process faster. Thanks to leveling up these skills he was able to go through the divine enchantments without a problem and even attempt to work on the spatial rune.

His main goal now was to get to level 150 and for that reason, he needed to abuse his body. With the real threat of the abyssal cult peeking over his shoulder, a need to advance further was there. However there was a problem, should he wait to reach the level cap of his current class or attempt a tier 3 change instantly after he reached the minimum requirement?

Due to him using up 75 levels on three tier 1 classes to unlock his Runesmith Lord class he had some wiggle room. Getting the higher tier 3 stat multiplier would make him a lot stronger and he would also be given even more stat points for each level up. Yet he would be giving up the potential rare skill of the Runic Engineer.

This class was an unknown factor and something probably unique to his situation. It gave him the vibe of being something that he brought over from his original world. In this new one that was filled with fantasy beings and magical contraptions, Engineers didn’t really exist. They were replaced by craftsmen or artisans, the class names were closer to the medieval times.

‘But perhaps I’m just overthinking things...’

The only true out-of-place term that he had was the debugging skill that was clearly only possible by someone that had access to modern-day computers and programming languages. If he was right then

perhaps the special level 50 skill at the end of his new class would be quite worthwhile, the one that he received from the Runesmith Lord was really worth the wait.

'I guess I should focus on getting to 150 first and then I'll decide. To level up faster I need to go down to the dungeon, luckily Bernir said that he finished the pathway while I was out.'

"Hey, Bossman here it is!"

"Thank you Dyana."

"No problem, that's what you pay me for, I just wonder if Agni will really want to wear this."

Dyana brought over a lot of various pieces of equipment, it was a silver barding made for his Dire Ruby Wolf. After the increase in size, he had enough strength to finally wear some protective gear. It was made from durasteel and would cover all the critical parts like the underbelly that was prone to injuries. It would also be outfitted with some runic spells to augment Agni's fighting style.

"Also, here."

"What's this?"

"It's from Lobelia, she said to pass it on and to not peek inside. I hope these aren't love letters from someone..."

"I'm not Bernir."

"Good, wouldn't want to beat up my boss for Elodia's sake!"

Dyana laughed which also brought a small twitch to his face. He didn't know if he should just be glad that people were relaxed enough around him to make jokes like this or cry that he wasn't taken seriously anymore. This envelope contained information from an underground intelligence guild that existed along with the thieves guild. After paying a lot of money he intended to get all the information about the current events in Reeka and any cult movement that he could. He had received some basic information but he required a detailed report of the whole situation so that he could finally put all of this to rest.

"Then I'll go make those golem parts, I also have some blades for you to go through boss, I'll leave them at the usual spot."

The large cow-girl made her way out while her oversized chest bounced around with each movement. Even Roland had to make an active effort not to look, with the help of his parallel thinking trait, he was actually able to peek without his eyes moving to give it away. It was the perfect ability for a peeping Tom and probably better suited for the trio degenerates that now roamed Albrook together.

'Are they getting bigger? Could she be ... '

Roland shook his head to get the unnecessary thoughts out of his head. The family life of his workers was not something he should concern himself with. He would also support them with proper parental leave. What he needed to focus on now was the new information that he was given, he quickly popped the seal on the thick envelope and started reading. Only after he was finished was the letter thrown into the furnace for disposal.

'Good... They shouldn't know about my involvement...'

His heart was pounding while he was going through the letter. What he wanted it to focus on was the Solarian Inquisitors and the Golden Order. It seemed that both Loreena and her grandfather that was one of the few High Inquisitors had survived. With them not falling into enemy hands, they could not be brainwashed to reveal his secret.

There was nothing specific in the information about the battle that took place only about the aftermath. Most of the flying ships that the church used had been destroyed after a massive magical explosion. The intelligence guild believed that the cultists somehow blew up the entire area after victory was not possible. Some strange occult magical circle was spotted that produced a pillar that reached the sky.

'So they really did it... perhaps that monolith had some sort of self-destructing feature?'

Roland wasn't sure, if the relic could have been destroyed from a distance, why didn't they just do it? Perhaps there was some kind of limit on the range of the church and figured out a way to block it? The cult could have also attempted to get it back and only went with the atomic option after a defeat.

'The important thing is that Loreena was spotted later in Reeka, they had managed to get everything under control and are now examining the underground where the thieves guild is... but that's about it for the report...'

After their escape and the massive explosion the golden order apparently pulled out from the forest. They had suffered a lot of casualties and only the strongest members had survived. With the help of the tier 3 paladins, it wasn't hard to quell the monster uprising in the city but at that point, the damage was already done. It would probably take years to recover losses, and get new workers and merchants on board. Most of them would probably flee to other cities and perhaps even to the mainland.

'This might even affect the whole Valerian Household... the duke allowed a cult to exist under his nose, the other dukes will see this as a chance. Though Arthurs's brother will take the brunt of this attack, if he was competing for the duke position this will probably exclude him from the competition...'

Roland knew that Duke Alexander Valerian had many offsprings. These young lords would be forced to compete against each other for the duke's spot in the future. With a blunder like this and all the bad press, whoever was stationed in Reeka would have a hard time bouncing back.

'His biggest mistake was abandoning the common quarters... even with the nobles and merchants surviving, if there is no labor force to work they can't do anything.'

Would commoners answer the call to come back to work when they were treated as disposable goods? Even if the merchants tried to entice people with money and good contracts, everyone would think twice before going to a danger zone like that. It would probably take some time before anyone decided to risk it.

Roland shrugged while looking at the smoke coming out from his furnace. After hearing that his acquaintances from the golden order had survived another problem arose. While the cult would probably shift their targets toward Loreena as the person responsible for this debacle. This didn't put him in the clear just yet. The woman knew that he was able to somehow go around the relic and he had

proposed using runic mages to investigate it. It wouldn't be strange if he was on the church watchlist now.

'That inquisitor is a problem too...'

He recalled the person that knew his own father. The old man was strong and apparently related to Loreena as he referred to her as his granddaughter. Roland had no idea of knowing what these two individuals would decide to do. Would they just shrug him off as being lucky or turn to him for help? If they used magic for questioning he would not be able to lie and have to reveal his special skill. He would then be turned into a human detection device to disable cult relics.

'The problems only keep increasing...'

For the time being, he decided to not worry about the small things. The city he was in was slowly preparing to counter the abyssal cultists. Even a priest of Sister Kassia's level would be able to tell if any strange rituals were taking place so they couldn't do anything in the open.

The thieves guild was already combing the underground tunnels for any potential secret lairs and giving information to their associates. With some luck, this would go away without him needing to involve himself anymore. He only needed to act as a normal craftsman and develop new divine runes that might aid him and others later.

'This shouldn't take too long...'

His mind went back to the wolf armor that Dyana delivered. Before leaving on his rank-up test he had already created a schematic for the doggy armor. While it would not be comparable to his own it would give Agni some spell variety. The material was Aether durasteel, it would lower the usage for fire spells while also ad buffing spells, just like Roland's armor did.

Thus he grabbed his hammer and after organizing the various parts, he turned on the forge. After grabbing large tongs from the side he inserted what would be the chest plate for Agni's barding. It was angular for the purpose of deflecting blows to the side by making them slide. This piece in particular would be able to generate a mana shield, either a regular one or a fire one.

He was not sure how his wolf would handle the activation requirements so for now, he decided to inscribe spells to different parts. The only thing Agni would need to do was to send a jolt of mana down a specific part. This would be a true test for his partner's intelligence, would he be smarter than the average wolf or just activate each spell effect at the same time and cause a mess?

'Hm... I should probably lower the output to the minimum for the test.'

Roland's hammer swung continuously down on the heated breastplate and the runes started to quickly take shape. With his current skill level, he didn't really need much time to perform his work. Yet while his runesmithing skills were constantly advancing, his regular blacksmithing techniques were not. Since getting two competent helpers he started to get less and less need to prepare the various parts himself.

Yet he had not totally given up on his life as a craftsman. He had actually been getting ready to create his new weapon. After going through his recent adventure, the constant switching between his metallic rod for spell usage and his sword was suboptimal. He decided to combine a weapon with a magician's staff into one. For this he needed the large bulky metal clump that was heating up in his smelter.

This would be the base for his next multi-purpose tool, a large runic warhammer. The design of this runic weapon would have one side of it being flat while the other would have a spike. This rear spike would be great for penetrating hard armor while the flat one for bludgeoning damage. Both sides would have their own runic effects to augment them.

The biggest downside of this construction would be the weight but thanks to his armor that was already boosting his stats, he would have no problems with that part. The shaft would be close in length to the magical rod that he used. It would allow him to perform two-handed strikes if he so chose. Then with the help of his enhanced strength, he would also be able to hold a shield in his left hand if the need arose.

'Hope the retractable shaft won't compromise the weapon, the Mythril should be enough to keep it from snapping.'

Roland would be finally including more exotic metals into the mix. By going into this new field some of the old smithing knowledge could be ignored. It was possible to go around the constraints of traditional metals. Something made from Mythril could be made paper-thin but it would still protect a person from a bullet shot more than something made from regular steel. Yet even if it wouldn't break due to the weight, he still needed to balance it out by taking his armor into consideration while holding it.

The giant slab of metal was quickly getting liquified in the runic smelter. The base would of course be made from aether durasteel but there would be some additives. After a long grueling process of testing, he had finally figured out the correct ratio between the various metals. Etherium would be one of the components along with the red Mythril that he had excavated from the dungeon.

Most of the expensive parts would be gathered in the top part of this war hammer. The shaft would be wedged through the hammerhead as a separate part. While it would be an important component of the weapon it didn't require Etherium as most of the spell effects would go through the hammer's head.

After the smelting process was done, he would use the usual blacksmithing techniques to hammer the large slab into shape. With his increased stats and techniques he was already miles away from any conventional or modern blacksmith even if they used power tools. This would be the next creation that he hoped would last him all the way until he reached tier 3. Then perhaps with increased knowledge, he would create an improved version worthy of tier 3 magical rune user.

"Well then, this will be very therapeutic... after this is finished I should get to the dungeon and start leveling up."

While the metallic concoction was mixing up he decided to peek towards another corner of his workshop. There he opened a secret door that looked like a part of the wall. He did so by infusing a small five-square-centimeter tile with his mana fingerprint. The moment the password was given the wall started to shift to the side.

What he was greeted with was a pitch-black tunnel that slowly started to light up. It had been clearly reinforced by mana but also worked by hand by an experienced miner. The lights continued to flicker up to reveal quite the length that this tunnel had.

"I hope it was worth digging this whole place up, it took years but its mostly finished now..."

After a little look, he decided to close the door. First, he needed to get his weapons in order, and then it was time to level up.

Chapter 244: Something for smashing.

“Come in.”

“Lord Arthur.”

A smiling cat maid named Mary went into the city lord’s office. The door was opened by an armored man that she was familiar with as always. On the inside, the usual sight of Arthur Valerian buried under piles of papers greeted her. Mary could only give out a sigh while going for a stack of papers that was blocking her way.

“Mary, please don’t move those documents. I’m not finished with them.”

She could only give out a sigh while placing the pile back down. Luckily not many people entered this room besides her, if some saw the disorganized room of the city lord they could start spreading rumors. It was already troublesome to shove the ledgers and records to the side when the Runesmith appeared.

“Lord Arthur, perhaps you should take a break, you haven’t left the office for some time now...”

“Mary, you know well that I can’t do that, this is a chance to get some support, luckily my idiot brother estranged a large chunk of his residents. If I am able to get them to migrate here, we’ll be able to increase the budget for the coming year.”

The maid placed a teacup for her lord and was sure to push in some food as well. He had deemed this whole fiasco with the cult as an opportunity for growth. Arthur’s older brother prioritized the nobles and rich merchant side of the city which had a lot fewer citizens. Due to this blunder, the city of Reeka would have a hard time recovering after its workforce had been diminished.

“I must thank him the next time we meet, but perhaps father will order him back to the estate after what he did... but then one of the others will get that city instead...”

She gave out a chuckle after Arthur suddenly started getting depressed. It was a possibility that one of the other Valerian brothers could absorb Reeka into their side but the possibility was minor. While the city had suffered greatly, most of the moguls had survived and new workers could probably be enticed with better wages. This didn’t mean that he wouldn’t suffer a decline.

“Lord Arthur, I have come to make my report.”

“Ah yes... Please go on.”

Finally, she could speak up about the reason she had come here. She was trained in espionage and already had multiple ‘faces’ in the city. Thanks to her disguises she could mingle with the people in the city and get the uncensored scoop.

“First, our friend has a knack for getting involved.”

“Wayland did?”

“Yes, after his little story I went to the church to confirm everything. The person that was afflicted with the abyssal larvae came from the thieves guild and is a friend with one of his acquaintances.”

“Oh? Well, we already knew that he dabbled with the underground world but isn’t he only a black market merchant?”

“Yes but I managed to identify one of his associates, she is a member of the underground guild and probably the way he got in.”

“As long as he doesn’t go overboard with the black market it should be fine...”

Arthur shrugged a bit as he didn’t really care if the runesmith he was working with was an underground merchant. There was a limit to what he would allow, if the runic items were all sold on the black market he would not be able to make any money with his auction house.

“Ever since he started his work with you my Lord, he hasn’t been frequenting the black market but instead contacted me for any resources.”

Mary didn’t have anything specific to go off of, the underground didn’t like it if people asked many questions. Through various ways and rumors, she pieced a few things together to make an educated guess of how Wayland managed to survive through the feud with the union. Now that he had access to their merchant contacts there was no use to sell his items on the black market.

“Have you made sure to not get noticed? I don’t think Mr. Wayland would do anything drastic but those characters from the underground guilds can not be trusted.”

Arthur finally placed the piece of paper to the side while looking into Mary’s eyes. It was clear that he was concerned about the snooping that his little spy was performing. Even if she worked under the city lord, the thieves guild wouldn’t care. They would probably send her body parts to the estate if she stuck her nose where she shouldn’t.

“Are you worried about my safety my lord?”

Mary chuckled while performing a little bow of appreciation.

“Don’t worry, I won’t risk my life, I’m aware that it wouldn’t be wise to underestimate the underground guild leaders or their enforcers.”

“Good, then let's switch to the main topic, how are our Runesmith’s devices working, have there been any more cases?”

“Yes, they have been surprisingly helpful and quite easy to use even for the guards. Still there have been three more afflicted that have been discovered!”

“Three more? Did they have anything in common?”

Arthur furrowed his eyebrows, if it was just one person then it could have just been a coincidence. Now on the other hand, with three more people getting sick it was clear that he had a problem. The news of this affliction couldn’t be contained for long, only thanks to Wayland was he able to react this fast.

“One was a merchant, another one was an adventurer and the third one was an escort. At first glance, it didn’t look like they did but of course, I investigated further!”

“And what did you discover?”

Arthur rolled his eyes slightly as Mary started swinging her hands around to pronounce her speech. It was as if she was some kind of game host that was trying to rile up the crowd.

“While the adventurer and the lady escort were clean, the merchant was actually part of the black market!”

“Is that so... is the guild doing anything about it?”

This was the second person that visited the thieves guild that had been afflicted by the parasite. The escort could have also had dealings with the underground trade as the redlight district was controlled by the underground organizations. This wasn’t a coincidence anymore, a pattern had emerged, and the cultists could be gathering underground.

“Yes, the guild leader is aware and as we speak they are searching through the tunnels.”

“Could they have infiltrated even a small city like this one?”

Arthur became solemn instantly. He knew that things weren’t good if a cult like this was spreading through the kingdom this fast. After the outbreak in Reeka nothing seemed safe, even the capital of the dukedom could have already fallen.

“I’m not sure Lord Arthur, but we have been able to stall the threat. We have placed the magical devices Mr. Wayland created in critical locations just as you commanded. No one will be able to enter the city without being examined. This is the same for the underground guilds.”

“So you have been able to deliver it to them?”

“Yes, my lord. Although that worked itself out on its own. ”

Mary nodded as she didn't need to smuggle the divine device in herself, Wayland's friend by the name of Lobelia carried this out instead. They were now informed about what the city lord was doing and started checking their own people. The infected would not be able to leave the underground without being treated by the runic devices.

Arthur hoped to have the thieves guild take care of their own mess as they certainly didn’t want the cult to control their members. If the underground merchants heard about the potential plague and outbreak like in Reeka they would quickly flee from the city. The guild would do everything to not lose their money and combating the cultists was one of them.

“Good, I think I need to get my speech ready, it won’t be long now...”

...

“So, it’s finally out? I guess it was only a matter of time...”

“Aye, I heard people whispering about strange creatures, the city lord had to make a statement too! I wasn’t there but he gave a heartwarming speech about unity or something, at least that’s what my wifey said.”

Bernir took a swig from a mug filled with alcohol while talking with Roland. Both of them were taking a break from work and discussing the current events. The information about the evil cultists was now mainstream, they had become the boogiemen of the dukedom. The outbreak in Reeka had become widespread news. It was spread by various refugees and survivors from that day. He was one of them and the main reason that the city lord could get everything under control this fast.

‘Did he start preparing after I brought the bad news?’

“Hey boss, I’ve seen you’ve been turning the smelter on, you don’t need to bother yourself with that, I can make whatever you want!”

“Hah, thanks but I want to make this one myself but you can go ahead and prepare the shaft.”

It took quite some time for the large ingot for his new weapon to be produced. This was mostly due to the red mythrill that he included in the mix that had an increased melting point. He really needed to crank up the smelter and actually boost it with his own mana. Only after spending many hours together with his concoction was he able to finalize the product.

“Wouldn’t it have been better to use a cast if you’re using mythrill? It won’t be that easy to forge that thing into shape...”

“It should be fine, I did all the calculations.”

While casting the melted metal into a mold would be an easier process it also could bring some problems. First of all, in most cases forging the weapon would produce a tougher item. There was more wiggle room when shaping it with the hammer and some blacksmith skills could increase the quality of the produced item.

“If you say so, just don’t burn down the place!”

“I’ll try not to.” After the break the two parted ways, he had the rest of the day to finish the hammerhead, and perhaps if he hurried up he wouldn’t get Elodia angry. Ever since returning to the city he had been sleeping for three to four hours and staying up for the rest of the day. Surprisingly he wasn’t feeling tired at all, his body was young and strong. The only problem was his girlfriend who was constantly worried.

Luckily down in his workshop, she would not be able to complain. Due to the heat generated by the smelter and forge, someone without the constitution of a blacksmith would have a tough time lasting five minutes in a room with him. From the side, he grabbed a thick leather smithing apron and placed it over his body for added protection. Together with smithing gloves and his hammer he was ready to tackle that large ingot that would be the base for his Warhammer.

The slab of metal was now a rectangular shape with some sharp edges on the side. The coloring was a silvery blue. Even though he mixed in the red mythrill, together with the other various metals it produced this color. The runes would light up quite nicely to produce a nice effect on this silvery surface and perhaps take his enemy's attention away from the fight.

Finally, with the help of his tongs, he inserted the large piece into the furnace. On the bottom there was a spot for his feet, through them he could guide more mana inside of it to augment the flames. It would be impossible to work without this runic furnace, reaching the temperature needed with wood or coal would be close to impossible.

On the wall, he had a set of various blacksmithing hammers. Various Forming Hammers with domed faces that were good for producing curved surfaces. Planishing hammers with round and square faces, with curved and flat surfaces. These were more for the finishing touches so he ignored them for now. Instead, he looked to the cross pein hammer section to get himself the best for the job.

He took a moment to appreciate the variety of tools that he had. Some of these were hand-made by him while others by Bernir or his wife. Some were polished down by the runic tools that were in another section of the smithy. Roland was reminded of his progress and the ladle that was his first test when he joined the blacksmith ranks. Even now he vividly recalled how tiresome it was to make and how barely he made it, mostly due to the lack of training.

Then there was the anvil that had lasted him for years now. Without a proper anvil with a horn, rounded edges, and a sturdy face, it would be impossible to fashion anything. This would be the final test for this tool. However, with a proper heated-up ingot, even this anvil would be able to survive through the shaping process.

'This is taking a while...'

A lot of time had passed since he inserted the alloy into the furnace. Regular low-carbon or medium-carbon steel would be softened up within minutes. But this chunk was taking forever, it was trouly resisting the heat due to the exotic metal he added. Yet, even it wouldn't be able to last forever and soon it was ready for some pounding.

While to his past self the shaping process might be difficult it wouldn't be a problem for the current Roland. Even though he left a lot of the busy work up to Bernir and his wife he still continued to train his smithing skills. There was a small workaround when leveling up these skills.

He would be given a bonus after finishing hard-to-construct creations like the golems, even his regular smithing skills would be pushed forward. After several high-quality products were assembled he found himself leveling up his smithing skills faster than he was accustomed to. Each level added to his skills per usual, it was as if months or years of smithing experience flowed into his body just by leveling up a skill.

Thanks to this effect he was feeling great when making this large hammer. The thicker frontside was quickly taking shape. The face started to take on a box-like shape while the rear end was more cylindrical.

To balance out the front part he needed to make the rear spike a bit lengthy. When fighting larger monsters it needed to have enough penetrating power to pierce through-hardened skin and scales. He deliberated on shaping the rear end to be more similar to an axe but this shape somehow fit a hammer more in his opinion.

Soon minutes turned to hours and the day was coming to an end. He did not even notice Bernir knocking on the door to clock out. Everyone had left while he was busy applying the finishing touches.

He could not allow the metal to cool down too much, the more he needed to heat it up the longer it would take.

“There...”

With one last hit, he looked at his creation which was slowly getting cooler. The front part was larger than his own fist and the rear end could easily pierce through a grown man’s chest. For the finishing touches, the top required some polishing and then the runes could be added. While the red mythrill would normally make it hard to inscribe runes, thanks to the added etherium the process could be made manageable even for him.

His new creation was partially done but this was not the end. While he had decided on the shape he was not quite sure what spells were needed. An impact rune to control the weight was a must but some other ones to augment his new fighting style needed looking into.

‘After I finish this, I need to test it out on something and I already know who.’

Roland continued to add the finishing touches while thinking of the underground dungeon. He hadn’t seen his old friend in a while and it would be the perfect test dummy for his new weapon.