

Runesmith 245

Chapter 245: Hastening the process.

“That should do it...”

Finally, after many hours of work, his battle hammer was mostly ready. After wedging the shaft into the hammer-head, it was mostly complete. By utilizing some more advanced techniques the shaft would expand at the top slightly for a tight fit. This weapon was closer in shape to a polearm but it was much bulkier to accommodate its user's enhanced strength.

The face of the hammer had a more traditional war-hammer shape, while the rear end consisted of a spike. Roland had thought of making a pole-ax but for the time being, he decided to go with this shape for better penetration. A sharp spike required less force to get through armor than a wider axe blade that delivered a wider cut. There were pros and cons to every design and he felt that this would work better on the larger creatures.

‘There aren’t many creatures that are resistant to both blunt physical attacks and piercing attacks, most of the monster hide and armor is good against slashing weapons.’

A heavy weapon like this would do quite well against armored opponents. Together with the added magical runes, he couldn’t see any human below tier 3 resisting a fully swung blow. The only problem would be with large monsters that possessed a thick layer of fat to absorb the shock. Even the spike wouldn’t do any good if he couldn’t get to the vital organs even after piercing through a tough hide.

‘Well, that’s when magic comes in...’

Roland smiled while polishing the large rear spike of his new hammer. This item would be a multipurpose magical tool and not only a big dumb weapon swung by brutes. He had the advantage of being able to access the runic operating system. Making changes to suit the environment wouldn’t be a problem, he just needed to insert the most common spells first. Just by executing a previously prepared section of the code, he would be able to quickly generate the desired spell effect.

‘Though making the multi-purpose spell matrix takes a while...’

The only downside to making weapons like this would be the time spent. Even he wasn’t perfect and going through everything without making any errors was difficult. Then there was also another problem, he didn’t have enough hours in the day to focus.

“Hey Boss, are you finished?”

“Bernir? ... Well not really, is there a problem?”

While he was examining his new item his assistant walked in. He was carrying a wooden crate with various metallic items.

“Since you had a break, the backlog for runic repairs has been growing and we need to restock some of the usual...”

Bernir started getting the various items out, on one side he placed the weapons and armor pieces that needed their runes to be repaired. Then on the other side the ones that he and his wife produced. These were made from either durasteel or deepsteel, both the most commonly used materials in the shop.

“Fine... this shouldn’t take long.”

“Take your time boss but it would be better if you did the repairs first, the recent adventurers have been ill-tempered, must be ‘cuz of all this fuss about the cultists.”

Roland saw Bernir frown when recalling some kind of memory. It wouldn’t be strange for some of the customers to berate the craftsmen. The union still continued to spread bad rumors about him and his shop. Probably if he wasn’t the only runesmith in town, he wouldn’t get any attention at all. Only after Arthur appeared did his name stop being dragged through the mud, at least in the open.

After sorting out the weapons from the armor pieces he got to work. Thanks to his new class this part of his work could be done in a blink of an eye. Runic Restructuring was the skill that he would be using. It allowed him to instantly alter the runic structure of his choosing.

There were also another skill that could do the job, which was Rune Mending. There was one downside to this skill though. While it would repair the runic structure it would not correct the faulty pathways. If the rune was an intermediate one it would not upgrade it to a high or highest rune. Yet this was not the case for Runic Restructuring, he could mold it to any structure that he had previously created.

“Hm... Wish there was a way to automate this process, would a golem be able to repair runes?”

He was now looking at a regular longsword that had a damaged ice mist rune. It was a common rune that would produce an icy vapor when swung. It would lower the temperature in the designated area dramatically and was adequate for fighting low-level fire monsters like the salamanders. This would be enough to make the creature sluggish and easy to kill.

‘There is a mana stone in the hilt, the rune was intermediate but it degraded to low already.’

Normally craftsmen would not improve the runic structure. Instead, they would usually use the rune mending skill for a quick fix. Most of the time the customer would need to pay extra for a proper runesmithing treatment that didn’t degrade the blade any further. Roland on the other hand needed to try a bit harder as his standing in the city wasn’t that great.

He had attracted customers by going the extra mile and even improving the runic structures while performing the repairs. This would normally only be possible by restarting the runecrafting process and correcting all of the traces and various components manually. However, with the latest restructuring skill, he could do it almost instantly.

‘Good that I’ve practiced all of these runes before.’

The only requirement for him to use it was to have previously made the rune himself. The higher the quality of the rune that he previously created, the better the chance of success. Thus he grabbed his blacksmithing hammer while the sword’s blade was quickly heated up in the forge. After a few moments, his hammer was already colliding with the damaged structures that started glowing.

'It's kind of a waste to use it on something like this, I could easily upgrade it to something like ice burst instead...'

While the runic structures were being molded into a fully functional ice mist spell of the high rating, Roland thought back to some experiments that he performed after getting his new class. This skill was far handier than he originally assumed. It could actually produce higher grade runes from lower grade ones quickly.

For instance when looking at this ice mist rune that just created a burst of freezing air. The base structure was similar to a higher-tier spell. Ice burst spell could create the same cold haze with an addition of sharp ice crystals forming to damage the enemy and a much stronger freezing effect. Both of the spells were tier 2 common ones but the latter was among the end of the spectrum.

It was possible to cheat the system a bit with this skill. After inscribing the easiest lesser or common rune, it was possible to alter it with this skill. The mana usage went up but it was possible to cut the time needed for work when working with single rune structures. Through this method, he could cut his workload by more than half when making simple weapons for his shop. Thanks to his ever-increasing mana reserves, it was not much of a problem.

There was still a limit on how much he could handle a day. Only with a steady supply of mana potions was he able to finish everything this fast. Yet this was a double-edged sword, there was always a limit of how many of those potions a person could drink without suffering side effects. Only thanks to his willpower stat that was extraordinarily high was he able to counter that effect.

'Glad the lordling is on my side, those free potions are enough to get the job done.'

After gulping the last mana potion he resumed his work. For the items that Bernir and his wife made, the rune duplication skill was enough. By just copying his old runes onto the previously created blades he could finish work in a matter of moments. The large pile of armaments that would have taken him normally a whole day, was finished in less than an hour.

'I don't even feel any migraines now.'

Roland glanced at this mana pool that was at around twenty percent. At such a low amount he would be forced to take a rest or some pain medication. Now, on the other hand, he could go down to about fifteen percent without suffering a backlash. His body was getting used to working hard and the pain was not a problem.

'The discomfort might be gone but this doesn't mean that it's healthy.'

Roland didn't fool himself into believing that he was fine. The mitigating effect of his skills didn't do anything about the damage. It only allowed him to power through it, his body was still suffering but he couldn't feel it. While he was young now, he wouldn't be surprised that there could be long-lasting aftereffects of pushing his body to the limit.

However, this wasn't necessarily a bad thing either. It wasn't surprising to get some skills after going through harsh training. Perhaps like with the pain resistance skill, he would be given something to reward him for the hardships. He could only hope that his body would last without any long-lasting damage before he got those skills.

“That should be enough.”

After finishing up his tasks he pushed a button on the wall.

“Hey Bernir, I’m done.”

He leaned close to an outstretched cord with a hand-sized oval iron plate. A rune was glowing on this sheet of metal that allowed him to talk with his workers from inside his workplace. It was similar to old cord phones that connected to specific parts of his home. There was a corresponding button for each specific room that for now was limited to a couple of them.

“Already? Aye, I’ll be right there.”

There was a quick reply followed by some static. Using magic to converse with other people wasn’t anything new. His system was just something he stole from the old world that he came from. For others to use this, they would need many years to build up the infrastructure. It would not be a small task but a wise leader would probably see the value in instantaneous information exchange.

‘That is if someone smarter than me comes up with some encrypting technology...’

As someone that had ‘borrowed’ the idea from one of the research papers from the academy, he knew the downsides. It was easy to intercept the mana signals going through the lines and hear what people were talking about. People in this world were still motivated by wars, unless this technology aided them in their conquest, it would not be worth the risk.

‘I should probably cover the rune up with something or someone will scratch it.’

When looking at a cut-out plate of metal welded together to a cord he frowned. His proclivity to make everything with the least amount of effort still continued to this day. Even though plastic didn’t exist in this world, there were some substances that could mimic its properties. It wouldn’t be hard to turn this into an old phone handle, making an outer shell from wood could also work.

“Keep up the good work, boss.”

Roland waved to Bernir that came in to pick up the runic items. Now he could focus back on his new hammer, after that came Agni’s armor that would need some testing. With some luck, by the end of the week, he would have enough weapons to make a quick run to the dungeon. There were also other parts that he needed to get in order like the mining golems that were down by two.

‘There should be some parts to assemble more drones, Bernir should be able to get it done...’

It seemed that his workload was only increasing, while sighing he wondered if there was a possibility of expanding. Now that the dwarven union was taken care of thanks to Arthur, perhaps he could get more help.

Refugees from Reeka were also everywhere, perhaps he could lure someone in with a mild contract. His two workers could take care of the training as the new employees would be there to lessen their workload. Then the two could focus on more important assignments like golems and magical turrets.

“This might take a while, better get to it...”

Roland grabbed the large war hammer that he made. By injecting a tiny bit of his own mana the shorter shaft quickly shot out to double in length. The weapon was better suited for handling with both hands but for someone like him that had enhanced strength, it wasn't a problem to one-hand it.

"Hm?"

While he was playing with the grip and swinging his new toy around to see if it was handled correctly, he heard a sound coming from his speaker.

"Wayland, your adventurer friends are here to see you."

"My friends?"

It was Elodia informing him that he had visitors, this was a first as he did not actually remember having that many friends. But he remembered a group of four that followed him here after the fiasco in Reeka. An image of an oversized woman popped into his head. A promise was made and it needed to be kept.

"I'll be right there... oh and it will be better if you don't talk to Orson."

"Which one is that?"

"The one with the stupid look on his face, quite similar to Armand"

"Oh, that one..."

'I guess this is the downside of having friends?' While this interrupted his work it was also a good moment to get some news. He had secluded himself in his workshop without going outside for days and somewhat forgotten about his four new acquaintances. It seemed that they had become bored of waiting for him and decided to visit on their own accord.

Within a few minutes, he found himself outside. The sound of large fan blades was quite noticeable and probably peculiar to anyone that was invited inside. His backyard had many wind generators that produced electricity. Their size was a problem, they limited his workspace to the underground workshop. Yet there weren't that many ways of generating energy otherwise, that is, besides one other that he wished to implement in the future.

"There you are, Wayland!"

"Yes, here I am."

The whole team was there, Senna was looking through the store's dagger section. Griscalde had a large bastard sword in one of her hands and swung it as if it didn't weigh anything. Dalrak was glancing at some of the large tower shields while his closest friend was doing something that he didn't appreciate.

"Woof!"

"Hey, calm down! Sheesh, can't even have some fun."

The last member was being growled at by Agni. It seemed that he was shooting some glances at Elodia whose chest was a bit more pronounced in the store uniform than usual. Everything was hidden and it was proper but this didn't stop the man from ogling her.

“Sorry about that knucklehead, I think he is still a bit drunk.”

“I see...”

Senna was the one to start the conversation while everyone else finally noticed him. The store was sectioned off by classes. Where Senna came from was specifically stocked with items that agility-based jobs would flock to. Short swords, daggers, and even bows were all there and they were outfitted with runes. There was not a single item that was not runic. This of course heightened the price and also kept people with low amounts of coins away.

“Hey Wayland, I hope you didn’t forget about our little talk.”

“No, I remember.”

Grisalde appeared next, she placed the large sword to the side while dragging her mangled axe. Everyone had a strange look in their eyes when looking at all of these weapons and armor. It looked like a bunch of kids stuck in a candy store. They were all noticeably holding themselves back from touching the more expensive runic items.

“They won’t be free though.”

“Don’t be so stingy, a successful runesmith like you must be swimming in money.”

“That would be nice if it was true...”

Most of his earnings went right back into producing more weapons and expanding his knowledge. What he earned he instantly spent with some side cash being placed to the side if any problems arose. He would probably not gain much money by outfitting these four but he would also not lose any. By just using them and spreading the word they could generate interest in his shop which was slowly building more momentum.

“Go ahead, see if you like something but please don’t activate the spell effects here.”

“You’re the best, Wayland!”

Senna for some reason was awfully happy when glancing through the various items but so were the rest. His intent was to just replace their weapons instead of repairing them. Grisalde's axe that was bent, Dalrak's mangled shield, Orson's two-handed blade that was all chipped up. They all needed tending to but with a lack of time, it would be easier to just replace them.

“Just don’t break anything, or you’ll have to pay for it.”

He shouted while the grown adventures rummaged through his wares. Perhaps by increasing the logos on the weapons that he gave them, he could attract more attention to his store which would lessen the blow of just charging his new friends for the material cost.

Chapter 246: Weapon testing.

“Haaa!”

“Hyaaa!”

After a flash of green light, a large log descended down to the ground. It looked like it was sliced apart by something sharp but the person performing the attack was quite a bit away. Next to it, another log was engulfed in flames which caused a large pillar of smoke to emerge.

“Wayland, these weapons are interesting... let me just try this out...”

A halfling woman was standing with a dagger in her hand. It was glowing green for the moment but after a few seconds passed it changed color to blue. When activating the spell effect this time around, instead of the green blade of wind one of ice replaced it. The previously sliced apart log was cut again but this time, it was also covered by a layer of ice.

To the halfling's side, there was a human holding a large two-handed sword that had previously been engulfed in flames. Yet after a moment, the flames started changing color to switch to deep blue frost instead.

“Hey, this thing really works... and it's not that hard to use!”

“If the blockhead can use it, then everyone can use it.”

“Hey, I heard that, screw you Senna!”

An angry Orson fired off a blast of ice energy towards the burning target. After performing this magical attack his head started spinning and he had to catch himself from falling.

“Take it easy, you're a warrior and your MP pool isn't that high. It's better if you don't use that many magical attacks in succession.”

The voice of the craftsman that inscribed these weapons with runes came from the side. He was watching his four adventurer friends playing around with his simplified products. It was a new line of runic gear that was designed for adventurers without mana-related skills.

“Hah, leave that idiot be Wayland, he learns better this way.”

Senna laughed while he glanced over towards Grivalde and Dalrak. While the dwarf didn't have trouble exchanging the basic mana shield for one made from the earth element, the big barbarian woman was confused. Her weapon was changing colors from red to different shades of blue before going back to the red one.

“Want me to explain it again, Grivalde?”

“N-no... I can handle this myself...”

She replied in a meek voice while turning her head to the side. All of them were gathered in a specially made testing area. It was made so that his clients could get used to some of the more innovative weapons. These testing weapons were made of simpler materials but were enough to show off what the costlier ones were capable of.

“Is that so... anyway let me demonstrate again...”

He decided to grab a large axe from the side that was similar to what the muscle-bound woman was holding. After holding it out with one hand so that she could see what he was doing, he started to talk.

"It's simple, if you place your thumb into this groove here and start injecting mana, you'll notice that the color is changing right?"

"Yeah?"

She nodded while looking at the metal axe blade lighting up faintly.

"It's hard to see because it's daylight but when you're in the dungeon it will be easier. What you want to do is stop letting your mana into the weapon after you get to the elemental color you want, see it stopped at green. There is a second when the color won't change so make your decision fast and remember to remove your thumb from the groove."

"I see..."

Grisalde continued to nod while looking at her own weapon that was changing colors. After shifting her hand to a more comfortable position the color solidified into a red one.

"Each of the weapons comes with elemental variations of the same spell and one basic non-elemental spell."

Roland performed a side swing with the axe and directed it towards a log in the distance. A blade of green energy left the weapon, it was much bigger than the one previously released from Senna's dagger. When it collided with the log it sliced it diagonally before ramming into the stone wall behind it.

"How about you try it?"

"No problem!"

Grisalde started injecting her mana into the axe and stopped the moment it switched to green. She was an experienced warrior so it wasn't hard to reproduce Roland's more sluggish movements. Yet the blade that she created was about half the size and traveled in a wide arc into the sky.

"Shit... Hey, why was that green blade so much smaller? Is this axe worse than yours?"

"No, they are exactly the same."

"Pff..."

From the side, a squeaky voice escaped from a smaller halfling that overheard the conversation. Quickly the giant of a woman turned toward her nemesis with a frown.

"What are you laughing at pipsqueak!"

"Oh, nothing."

Senna laughed which brought a few veins to appear on Grisalde's forehead. Before the two started fighting Roland quickly chimed in with another explanation.

"I have a lot more mana than you, magical weapons will always be better in the hands of mages."

Roland's high intelligence stat boosted the power of every runic spell. He also had various other buffs which allowed him to raise the power of runic weapons. A regular warrior like Grisalde could not feel

mana in her surroundings, she could only use it. This was the same for the other non-mage denizens in the world, they only had an on and off switch when it came to mana.

There weren't that many people like Roland that had a mana sense, some even died due to mana sickness as the previous owner of this body. However, there were ways of getting that skill later in life. Some advanced classes could unlock it later, there were also things like magical elixirs that could produce it.

There were also less virtuous ways of getting them, red-colored crystals that were sometimes sold at the black market auctions were the usual way. They were gotten from fallen mages that had their skills extracted during their deaths. These were quite rare so they didn't reach the usual black market and were hidden away in the thieves guild that hosted auctions to gain more money.

From time to time a tier 3 class holder would attempt to get a mana-related skill after gathering enough money. Raising the mana pool was a clear enhancement of one's skill and capabilities. After reaching a high enough tier, magical equipment became far more affordable and a good quick way of bolstering all-around strength.

"And that's about it, the base effect for the axe is the impact rune, it uses the least amount of mana."

After the demonstration was over Griscalde began to play around with the new toy. Just as he had explained it went through a set of spells in order. The weapons had one varied elemental spell that could be switched to fit a monster's weakness and then a basic effect like sharpening or impact.

Through experience, he had discovered that most adventurers weren't that good at handling runic weapons with multiple uses. At most he could add two different spells before it became too confusing for them to use. They could not change the mana frequency or output at all, only turn it on and off.

Thus he decided to try this new system of selecting spells on a timer. By introducing mana into the systems the selection process would start. It was then represented by a faint outside color to make it easier. After the spell was selected it would be the active one and the only one that could be activated.

'While you can't switch the effects fast, it should not be needed.'

These weapons were meant to be multi-purpose and for dungeons. In the Albrook dungeon where the monsters were fire-based, ice was the desired weakness. Before even entering the dungeon a person could switch to this effect and be prepared for the flaming creatures inside.

Then when the adventurer decided to go to another dungeon they could switch the spell effect again without having to get a whole new weapon. While the runic components were altered even other runesmiths could repair it with the help of their automatic skills like Rune Mending.

To change the spell the person needed to hold the weapon in a specific way. It would be hard to activate the changing effect mid-battle which was intentional. It was still possible to do it during a pause in combat as long as the enemy didn't pursue.

This was all achieved by changes to the runic operating system. The hardware components of the spells it circled through were very similar. An executable was activated to change into the desired effect to make it all work. Someone like him was able to activate the desired spell without going through all of them. But for people without rune-related skills, this was a simple process to go through.

“These are great but how much will this cost?”

Senna and the others gathered together after testing out the weapons. It was clear to them that the weapons were worth a lot. One of them in particular didn't have any money.

“I sell them around the market price for common rune weapons, they are all of the highest grade too, so that increases the price slightly...”

All of them headed back to the shop to discuss the price and Elodia was quick to calculate everything along with the friendly discount. They would need some smaller gold coins to cover the manufacturing and material costs but all in all he didn't think it was a bad price.

“Hmm... this isn't bad, I'll take it. With those cult nuts running around it's better to have a good weapon, do you have any of those divine artifacts though?”

“Those are still in the testing phase, I would also need to get permission from the church if I wanted to actually sell them.”

“You mean... if you wanted to sell them in the open, that is.”

Senna winked toward Roland as she knew what he was leading on to. While it was possible to buy the divine mana crystals from many locations, it was better to announce getting a proper permit at the church. Everything that involved the holy energy of their gods had to go through the temples.

This was clearly in place to pad out the church pockets with money. They wanted to control the market when their items were involved. There also wasn't really a way around it as all of the magical items either required constant recharging from a priest or an empyrean crystal.

“Aye, it's a good price, give 'em my share.”

Dalrak together with Orson agreed to get themselves some upgrades. After getting his shield damaged during the escape he was in need of a replacement. Dalrak decided to get a sturdy shield of a similar shape. It could produce a magical barrier as well as a repelling effect.

Orson on the other hand found himself a replacement sword. Every item they got was made from aether durasteel but there was one person that didn't look happy. Grisalde was holding a battle axe that was probably heavier than the war hammer he recently made.

“What can't afford it? Want me to lend you some money? It'll cost you though~”

Senna started grinning while shaking around her coin purse. Part of the money inside of it had originally belonged to Grisalde. She had lost it due to a couple lost bets. Roland was still surprised that the woman didn't realize that her opponent was a professional swindler. While she didn't cheat outright, Senna would only take bets that were in her favor.

“I don't need your help, I can pay for it myself!”

Grisalde stormed over towards where Elodia was standing which caused Agni to raise his head. Even though he was a dire wolf, the large woman would probably be able to wrestle him down to the ground. Thus he remained wary while showcasing his sharp teeth.

“P-put it on my tab!”

After dropping the axe on the counter Grisalde nodded. It was as simple as that for her.

“Hey you big oaf, this isn’t a tavern...”

Senna started grabbing her sides while trying not to laugh. On the other hand, Roland wasn’t sure if this was such a bad idea.

“How about you work for me instead?”

“Work for you? I don’t know much about blacksmithing though...”

“No, I mean as a guard.”

Today was one of the days that they were without any protection. With Roland being around they didn’t really need anyone else to stand watch besides Agni. Yet a highly skilled thief would be able to grab something and still make a run for it. For that reason, they needed someone to be outside and block the only exit.

“As a guard?”

“Yes, I usually contact someone from the adventurer guild but since the cult incident a lot of them aren’t willing to stay out in the woods.”

It wasn’t a bad deal for him, the barbarian woman was a high level tier 2 class holder. There weren’t that many other adventurers that compared to her. She was also someone that he somewhat trusted not to make off with the items or attack Elodia.

“The store isn’t open every day, so you could still go to the dungeon to earn more if you want. You’ll also be given two meals per day and something to drink but no alcohol.”

“Hmm....”

Grisalde pondered this proposal for a moment. Roland wasn’t sure if she would take it as it wouldn’t be that hard for someone of her level to just go to the dungeon. Any adventurer team would be fine with taking a combatant like here down there. After a month or two she would probably be able to afford this weapon.

‘I guess she will refuse...’

At least that is what he was thinking, for some reason when Grisalde looked towards Senna who was just grinning there, she nodded to agree.

“Fine, I’ll be a guard now give me the weapon!”

“Wait, not so fast.”

While Grisalde was trying to get to her new weapon she was stopped by the store owner.

“Huh?”

“Here, sign this first.”

“What is this?”

What was presented to her was a standard contract that he created himself. It stated the usual terms of the deal and that she needed to work five days a week, for eight hours per day. While they could go through the guild to make this transaction, they could just do it directly like this.

“Um...”

“It’s a standard document, if you fail to meet the terms you’ll be subjected to the usual debuff.”

“Debuff?”

Roland was a bit confused but then remembered that adventurers didn’t really go through the hassle of signing work contracts. They just delivered items to the guild and only got paid for that, they weren’t on the clock so there was no need for them. Only regular people needed to be coerced to sign them as motivation for work.

“Let me explain...”

In the shortest amount of time, he started explaining. The curse that she would be subjected to would place a debuff that lowered her main stats by a set percentage. For someone that worked as an adventurer, it would be a devastating setback.

“That’s about it, if you do your work nothing will happen and as you can see, this contract is just for one month...”

“I’m not sure she gets it...”

Elodia that was behind the counter whispered into his ear while looking at the large woman’s head getting redder. It seemed that the words that Roland was using were sometimes too difficult for her to understand.

‘It’s a miracle that she survived for this long. It’s not surprising that she gets taken advantage of this easily.’

After a little back and forth he managed to get the contract signed. Elodia took over by explaining the working hours and her duties. For the coming month, he had managed to organize a competent guard for the store. This would ease his nerves as he was intending to go down to gain some levels.

While the cultist situation wasn’t resolved, it was being handled by the City Lord. His own house and shop were already equipped with the same divine boxes to check for any potential corruption. What now remained was for him to finish up his new main weapon and assemble more golems, it was time to start his grind.