

Runesmith 251

Chapter 251: Quick progress.

“Agni, why are you still sulking?”

“Woorf...”

Roland managed to return to his secret underground lair after almost a week of grinding. He had lost himself in the leveling-up phase due to how fast he was progressing. It only took a few days to get ten whole levels. While this rapid pace was also quickly declining he could see himself achieving level hundred fifty in under a month.

‘Could probably do it faster if I could just focus on leveling up...’

One of the reasons that he couldn’t just continue leveling until he got closer to the monster’s levels was his job. He had gained a couple of responsibilities that could not be ignored. The cannon that he created also needed to be repaired, it was mostly scrapped metal that would be thrown into the smelter now.

“Hey, boss you’re back, made it out in one piece I see.”

Bernir greeted him the moment he returned. There was a special indicator signaling if someone was going down the tunnel. A light would go off in his own workshop as well as in Bernir’s. If it was green then it meant that it was him but if it was red then it was an enemy. His assistant had a few options of defending himself and also video footage via a few golemic eyes that were spread out in the tunnel.

“I see that you brought the whole backlog in already?”

Roland nodded at the greeting but instantly knew that it was work-related. He could see some brand new weapons and armor pieces that needed runes inscribed. There were also some old ones that needed to be repaired.

“Hm? Hasn’t the number increased since last time?”

“Aye, so you’ve noticed? I think it's because of those cultists, everyone is on edge. The adventurers are spending a lot more coin to get the best weapons available.”

He nodded again as this was a plausible reason. With the real danger of monsters appearing even inside the growing city everyone was preparing for the worst. Thanks to this, businesses were booming and it was not only the people that made armaments that were getting rich.

The city was evolving into something bigger. Arthur Valerian was certainly using this opportunity to grow his influence. With a cult around the city, he could implement martial law and veto a lot of decisions. Getting the help of merchant investors was now easier, pumping gold into training more guards and building larger walls was a given.

‘If people see that Albrook is largely unaffected by the infection, then more money and people will flow in...’

“The city lord also sent more of those shiny crystals, he wants you to create more of those boxes and also other weapons, wait a moment I’ll be right back.”

It was a bit much to take in right after he was back, but he was also in an agreement with the city lord. If he asked for something he needed to prioritize the request. The money was also good and the dwarves were taken care of.

It was in his interest to cultivate this relationship as it would allow him to leave in peace as long as Arthur stayed in power. There was a need to not let him get replaced at least not before he actually had enough personal power to live without worries.

“That’s a lot of longswords...”

“Aye, it will probably take some time even for you boss but this isn’t all...”

Bernir returned after a minute with a barrel filled with longswords and quickly departed to bring in more items. There were spears and also shields that were in need of runic inscriptions. This was quite the large order that he was given right after he returned from the dungeon. It seemed that his leveling drive would need to be placed on the backburner yet again.

Longsword [High Quality] [Durasteel 85%] [Deepsteel 10%] [Brightiron 5%]

Roland grabbed one of the swords that were delivered to examine it. It was a good blade made by someone that knew what they were doing. The inclusion of Brightiron was interesting as this metal was usually included in weapons that paladins used. By itself, it wasn’t very resistant but in small doses, it would enhance divine spells.

“Does he want me to inscribe divine runes on these?”

“Aye boss, here is the order in detail.”

After going through the letter he confirmed his theory. All of these weapons were supposed to get divine runes. The main one would be the lesser divine smite spell. It was a more powerful variant of the smite evil spell that packed in more holy energy. It would probably be very effective against the abyssal creatures that were a potential threat.

‘He even included a rune schematic for all of the divine runes...’

“Well boss, I’ll leave you to it.”

While going through the paperwork he lazily waved his hand towards Bernir that left. The shields would be given the hallowed ground spell. This created an area of divine energy around the caster that produced several benefitting effects for people in it.

Roland wasn’t sure how these wide-range buffing spells worked. For some reason, it would automatically pick up the people that the caster considered as friendly and give the effect to them. It was as if a hidden party system was at play here that was similar to the one that distributed experience.

‘His really investing into this, did he find some loyal knights or something?’

It was interesting to see the noble with no real power trying to gain it. Not much time had passed since Arthur got here but he was quickly building up a power base. Some of the corrupt officials had been removed and replaced already.

'I wonder what he really wants?'

Roland couldn't truly trust Arthur Valerian. He had already seen firsthand how most nobles were. They were always working from some kind of angle while engaging with others. It was rare to see them interacting with anyone if there wasn't something they could gain in return.

It was all about making connections and gaining power, things like family or friends never mattered. If they could use the people that were closest to them to gain that higher rank they mostly would.

"I should eat something first... taking a four-hour nap should be enough..."

After placing the longsword down he glanced back to his own status screen. There he could see his high level of one hundred of forty. This coupled with his prestige class stat multiplier made him believe that he would have no competition in his level range.

The levels weren't the only thing that he had received. At level six of his tier 2 Runic Engineer class, he finally gained another skill. Then further down the road when he reached the fifteenth level he gained yet another one.

Basic Machinery Affinity L1

Skill Passive

Gives bonuses to any instruments or mechanisms that the user creates. Bonuses could include an increase in ranks or a flat statistical boost.

This was an interesting skill and the name was also peculiar. In this world devoid of modern machines this term wasn't used. Instead of machines that ran on electricity or steam, people used magic. Thus they mostly referred to them as magical constructs or golemic products.

'Was that class really affected by my previous life or is this something that others could also gain?'

He wasn't sure but most of the crafting classes went with the usual game terms. While pondering the naming scheme of his new class he glanced towards his other skill.

Basic Rapid Assembly L1

Skill Active

Boost the speed of assembling tools or machinery.

It seemed that this class was really poised to make him into a factory worker. This one implied that he would be able to assemble all his gadgets at a quicker pace. As with all the others skills that were gained by leveling up he somewhat knew how to activate it.

'One skill lets me craft things faster and the other one will randomly increase the Sub-ranks?'

If he understood this correctly then there was a chance of creating a high-level sword when normally it would only be an intermediate one. Then there was also the addition of bonus stats. Roland had heard of rare weapons and armor that had flat increases in basic stats that didn't require buffing spells. It was quite rare to find a craftsman with a skill that could create this effect.

'I guess it was worthwhile to get this class for this skill alone but there are at least ten more levels left...'

His current level was hundred forty and while glancing on this status screen he was conflicted. Tier 3 would become unlocked within the next ten levels and leveling up to it would be easy. With the current rate and even the added workload, he could see himself reaching it within a month or two. But would it be wise to change classes before finishing Runic Engineer?

Twenty-five levels of it would be gone and couldn't be recovered. It was impossible to regain an old class once it was changed. Tier 2 classes always gave out a skill when they were maxed out at fifty and he would clearly lose out on it. After seeing the two new skills he was certain that this class would improve his manufacturing capabilities by a lot.

'These skills aren't rune specific either, can they work on runes too?'

Some skills worked in mysterious ways but this would probably be too much of a cheat. It was possible for him to insert many tiny runes into weapons without taking up much space. If each of them could get a +1 to a random stat then his items would get overpowered fast. It was probably limited to actual finished products but he would need to get some tests done first.

Classes:

T2 Runesmith Lord L50 [Secondary]

T2 Runic Engineer L15 [Primary]

T1 Mage L25 [Tertiary]

T1 Runic Mana Scribe L 25 [X]

T1 Runic Blacksmith L 25 [X]

HP

6829/6829

MP

8943/16234

SP

8243/10135

Strength

177

Agility

140

Dexterity

223

Vitality

183

Endurance

203

Intelligence

256

Willpower

239

Charisma

18

Luck

11

His Endurance managed to go past 200 points which also rewarded him with another nice bonus reward. Now he was only missing 3 of the bonus achievements as only his Strength, Agility, and Vitality were lagging behind.

Fortitude I

Boosts Stamina recovery and lowers stamina usage in certain situations.

“Hm... is there something else I need...”

The mule golem was to the side while he didn't even feel like unloading the materials that were inside. It was filled with various ores that needed to be processed but that could be left up to Bernir. He was one of the few people that also knew about the secret chamber in the dungeon. Roland didn't explain it throughout but it was obvious that he was getting them from within the dungeon.

‘First I'll take a small break and then start with those divine runes...’

While thinking about resting and then his next task a problem arose. The problem was big and covered in ruby mane.

“Agni... spit it out!”

“Awooo...”

His wolf had been denied high-quality mana stones for a while now. Roland even noticed that he didn't really want to eat any that belonged to a tier 1 monster. It was as if he knew that they wouldn't help him with his next evolution anymore.

The tier 3 stones that were dropped by the skeletons could also not be taken back. His cannon had to kind of blast through them as they were in the monster's weak spot. Then even if parts of it survived

they would be scattered in all directions. With the added danger of potential death when getting closer for the time being he abandoned the thought of getting any.

“Hey, where do you think you’re going, spit out that crystal, that’s not even a mana stone Agni!”

Agni had devoured an empyrean crystal that had been delivered by Bernir. It was something provided by Arthur and it was needed for the divine boxes that he was making. The moment that Roland noticed it he could already hear a gulping noise.

“Do you know how much that thing costs?”

“Woof!”

Roland started moving closer but that only spooked Agni who started running for the exit through which Bernir came through. It seemed that his tamed beast had grown quite the ego, he was not even listening to straight commands. He did not have any tamer-related skills so their relationship was a bit purer. Agni was more like a real dog than a tamed creature that could be affected by magical skills.

“Woah, what’s happening?”

Bernir shouted as he was shoved to the side by a large dire wolf. He was just opening the automatic door that led to his own workshop. Luck was on Agni’s side as he would not be able to open these doors without a person present. Now on the other hand he was already making his escape while Roland was chasing behind him while shaking his fist.

“Hey get back here you stupid wolf!”

In Roland’s mind, there was still time to make Agni vomit the crystal out before it was digested. With a paddle going down his throat he would be forced to gag and the precious material could be retrieved in but a moment.

“Grab him!”

“W-what are you doing...?”

He called out to Dyana that clumsily attempted to grab the fleeing Agni. She was too slow though and just fell down on her face while the chase continued. The sound of metal tools falling down and various shouts could be even heard by the people inside the shop.

“What’s all that noise?”

“Was that a wolf howl?”

“Um... Grisalde could you watch the counter for a moment?”

“Sure thing.”

Elodia was surprised by all of this chaos unfolding. She could clearly tell that it was Roland that was shouting. After opening the back door she was met with a bizarre scene. The famous Runesmith was running after his large wolf with parts of his armor missing.

“Hey get back here!”

“Wooooorf!”

At first, she was startled and worried but after she saw the scene unfolding a smile appeared on her face. It reminded her of the young boys at the orphanage. Many times they would roughhouse with each other and then even chase through the house or the city while laughing.

This scene wasn't much different, the one being chased even seemed to be enjoying himself. Soon the two reached the wind generators and started chasing each other around them. It was quite the high-speed chase that she had trouble following with her more than ordinary class and stats.

Yet finally Roland had outsmarted the ruby wolf. While Agni was circling around the wind generator he just stopped and waited for him to go around it. There he fell into his hands and both of them went down to the ground. Even now she had no idea what it was about, did he swallow something poisonous? Roland was even trying to stick his fingers down the wolf's muzzle but only ended up with more slobber after several sneezes.

“What are you two doing... calm down, did he ingest something that he shouldn't have?”

She finally made her way towards the two idiots that were wrestling with each other on the ground.

“He swallowed an empyrean crystal!”

“An empyrean crystal? Doesn't he swallow crystals every day?”

From her perspective, there was nothing wrong. She knew that Agni's physiology allowed him to eat crystallized minerals and digest them. Even diamonds could be chomped down and after some time they would be digested. Empyrean crystals weren't that resistant so there was no problem that she could spot here.

“Those things cost a lot!”

“Hah? Is it only that? ... There is some food in the runic fridge also I think you need a bath... I need to go back to the shop, you two need to stop making so much noise, you're bothering the customers.”

After giving out a sigh she decided to leave. The two continued to thrash around the ground before Roland finally gave up. From how Agni's tail was flailing around it seemed that he was enjoying the skinship.

“Awoof!”

“What are you looking at?”

After sitting up Roland narrowed his eyes at the disorderly Agni that was still jumping back and forth.

“That's it, no more mana stones for a week!”

“AWoooWooo!?”

A loud noise echoed through the entire compound and even caused some of the windows to rattle. Soon enough the grumpy runesmith dusted himself off to sulk inside of his home. His wolf on the other hand continued to bark around in indignation at the unreasonable master that was now withholding his snacks from him.

Chapter 252: Fast progression yet again.

'This Rapid Assembly skill is actually quite nice...'

Roland thought to himself while looking at the skill that had already leveled up to the second level. While it seemed it was poised for assembling things like golems or machinery with moving parts it also worked on his runes. It didn't even use up that much mana but made the process of runesmithing faster by around ten percent.

'The level up added another five percent, that would boost it up to fifty percent when I max it out...'

An increase of fifty percent was quite a large boost. This would allow him to substantially hasten the production process of all of his tools. The skill seemed to work on everything he was working on, even creating tools and weapons was included.

It was an active skill that worked in quite an interesting way. It felt as if time was slowing down around him while he concentrated on his work. He had to go through all the usual steps to create everything. Yet at the end, he would finish everything faster as if he was stopping time for a few moments.

There were similar battle skills that were like this one. It was alike bullet time in the old video games that he used to play in his old world. However this skill could not be used during combat, he actually needed to focus on crafting something. If he turned his attention elsewhere the skill would instantly be canceled.

'I wonder... there might be a way to actually use this skill during combat...'

Roland remembered one of his traits that he could potentially use together with the assembly skill. There was a small possibility of it working but he would need to make some preparations before using it.

Then there was his other skill, Machinery Affinity which also happened to work on runic structures. Apparently, the system that ruled this reality was seeing runes as some kind of machinery or just adapting to the skills' modern naming scheme.

This one was a bit more tricky as it had a random chance to trigger. Luckily for him, he had been given ample materials to work with. All the divine swords and spears that Arthur commissioned to be inscribed with runes were used by him for testing purposes. Perhaps it was due to the skill's low level but only one of the items he worked on had been enhanced.

Longsword of Lesser Divine Smite [High Quality] [Highest +]

The highest value corresponded to the rune that he inscribed and it had an additional plus symbol. This was an indication that the rune had gone above its limitation and would achieve some kind of bonus. Regretfully he could not really test it out as these weapons were charge based.

They needed to be powered up by a priest before the smite spell started working. Roland was researching the crystal side of divine weaponry and the two weren't interchangeable. He would need a whole different runic structure for it to work together with a divine crystal. If he attempted to do that he would erase a large chunk of the old rune and lose the plus bonus.

'It should probably be more powerful or efficient in some way... I'll need to see if I can get the same result on the regular magical runes.'

The order was now finished and the weapons only needed to be picked up by Arthur's people. For two days he was cooped up in his workshop after returning from the underground dungeon. His workload for the entire week had been finished and his new skills and levels made it a lot faster. The constant increase in stats made things easy but this was always what happened when he reached the threshold of another tier.

Even though his level was only one hundred and forty, tier 3 was around the corner. Usually, things became easy at this point before crashing down. He was already apprehensive about the next test that he would be given. The last one made him spend multiple weeks creating strange contraptions while the one before it made him fight multiple monsters at once.

It was a given that the next trial would be the most difficult challenge that he ever faced and he needed to get ready. He was still undecided but not quite sure if he should really progress further without maxing out his current class.

'I'll leave that for later... now, should I prioritize leveling or do something about those turrets outside.'

It hasn't been that long since the Abyssal Cult problem arose. While he had constructed a large wall around his house and placed defensive measures around it, there were ways of improving them. With his recent advancements in both skills and levels, his brain continued to work faster. Ideas were flooding in and perhaps now was the right time to organize everything.

The safety of his home and the people around it was important, perhaps more important than gaining levels fast. There was also a problem with his paranoia, that didn't let him function normally. Roland didn't want to make it too obvious for everyone and so made the dungeon visits sparse. Even with the hidden tunnel, there was a possibility that his secret grinding spot was discovered. It could be a reason for him to lose his adventurer license or be fined.

It wouldn't even be strange to go to jail. The dungeon still belonged to the kingdom and the nobles that ran it. This discovery would fill out the Valerian household's pockets and Arthur's the most. If he knew that he could safely farm tier 3 monsters from a distance to gain materials then perhaps his status as a Runesmith wouldn't protect him.

Roland was sure that the Adventurer guild would create an outpost in that secret location. They would start milking the entrance and even tier 3 adventurers would start to appear. He was in a way blocking the city from expanding further for his own selfish reasons. Yet this was the fastest way of gaining levels and valuable metals. Without proper backing, he just could not let such a chance be wasted.

'Arthur can wait a few years before I'm done with that location...'

The metals that he gained wouldn't be wasted as he would be making valuable items for the auction house. Arthur was still making money from the sales that he was presenting. Then he was also giving him quite the deal when inscribing runes on these divine weapons. Then there were the boxes that identified any infection that in Roland's head justified his deception.

'Not like anyone else wouldn't just use that location for themselves.'

It was a cutthroat world without that many rules, he needed to look out for himself and his loved ones first. A lot of people depended on him remaining successful and running this shop and as it seemed, that number would only increase. Some of the orphans would soon be picking up some of the workload.

They would start off by doing some of the easy chores like cleaning and delivering letters but if he continued expanding then perhaps they could also start working as craftsmen. This all depended on the kid's future classes which would be given to them at the age of ten. It would be very fortunate for them if they could be trained into blacksmiths from a young age. Even if they received a worse production class after leveling to twenty-five they could become part of his workshop if they so desired.

"Hey boss, I've assembled one of the new prototypes, it's ready to go on the wall."

"Already?"

"He he, don't think that you're the only one that can work for long hours! I've put in some work back at the wifey's workshop, it's not as good as this one but gets the job done."

Roland smiled but didn't know if he felt happy about his assistant picking up his bad habits. At least he had superior stats and vitality that allowed him to work long hours without destroying his body. Bernir on the other hand lacked in that department but he was also probably not working as much as his boss.

"Don't overdo it."

"Aye."

Soon the two went outside while tugging the somewhat large assembled turret with them. There they met a rather sad-looking Ruby Wolf. After swallowing the empyrean crystal he was banned from entering the workshop. Until the next time that Roland headed into the dungeon Agni would remain outside.

"Don't give me those eyes, you know what you did."

"Worf!"

It seemed that the punishment was working but if he stopped swallowing crystals remained to be seen. The turret that he prepared was indeed a bit larger and bulkier than the other ones. Long gone were the cactus-like turrets that fired bolts of energy when something entered the line of sight. This one would be able to follow movements independently while also analyzing its opponents. It was more similar to an actual golem.

Roland actually had a lot of freedom with these devices as they weren't limited by something like guns. The cannon part didn't need to be that long and most of the runic structures could be integrated into the main body. There was no ammunition or a magazine that needed to be supplied as long as it remained connected to the generators or a battery it would continue to function.

The golemic turret had a thicker circular base with six latches around it. Through those large screws would be inserted to attach it firmly to the wall pillars. The turret would be able to move almost in all directions with the cannon's maximal upper angle being at ninety degrees. If something managed to get behind it, the turret would need to spin its body around to continue to fire.

Its canon wasn't all that long and to the sides, it was surrounded by thick angular blocks. On them, there were several runic inscriptions that would allow it to use various other spells. It was not just a device that spammed homing mana arrows like its predecessors. There were several options that would work on various types of enemies. A divine energy option was also in the works but Roland had still not been able to figure out a way to emulate the godly energy.

Everything had been tested before attaching this bulky defensive machine to the wall. Thus after placing it onto the wall it only took a few minutes to get it up and running. It was still a feeling that he wasn't fully used to. With only a touch he was connected to the whole structure and even though the code was confusing he understood it all. Everything became a bit easier with his new class that was focused on the crafting part a lot more than the previous one.

"That looks a bit imposing, boss..."

"Yeah, one blast could critically injure a high-level tier 2. It should even give a tier 3 a run for their money if we create enough."

"A tier 3? Are you sure boss?"

Roland just nodded at Bernir, who wasn't that convinced. It wasn't strange as he did not really have a reference point. Being a blacksmith didn't give him much insight into the fighting capabilities of such powerful class holders. For Roland on the other hand it became less and less difficult. He had already hunted the Infernal Skeletons and was becoming used to it. The moving cannons would certainly not be able to one-shot any of those skeletons but they could not be ignored either.

'I think that these wind generators will reach their limit soon...'

The biggest problem with the design came from the powering issue. Down in the dungeon, he could just grab the crystalized Elokin's fluid and use it as a main power source. Here on the other hand he was reliant on his wind turbine farm. There was a limit of how many of these turrets could be used at the same time.

For that reason he had already created a backup generated that was composed of his runic batteries. If for some reason the turrets needed more juice it would be supplied from there. Yet that was just a bandaid for a bigger issue, of ever-increasing runic quality. When he actually reached tier 3 then the generators would probably not be able to support any tier 3 enhancements to the equipment.

There were two ways of getting over this energy deficiency. One of them was to make more wind generators. He had bought some of the unfertile lands behind his current workshop and could just use it as a power plant instead. This wasn't the optimal choice as the wind generators took up a lot of space but didn't generate that much electricity to be converted.

Then there was the other option which was to expand into different fields of energy generation. He had always seen the underground lava dungeon as a potential resource. It generated a massive amount of heat that when harnessed could be changed into geothermal energy.

This was the biggest reason that he had created the underground tunnel, not to have a shortcut to the dungeon but to have unlimited access to the heating it produced. He had already confirmed that it was

possible to insert pipes through the dungeon walls without them being damaged. What he just needed to do was to extract all of that heated energy and turn it then to steam that would power the generator.

Yet this was easier said than done. The easiest way of producing one would be with a naturally existing water well. The steam that would be extracted from this heated pocket of underground water would make the turbine spin. Afterward, it would cool down and be sent back to the basin that would reheat and turn it back into steam.

If he didn't discover any natural pockets of water then he would need to create something by himself. Water wasn't really required; he only needed to heat up a liquid that could turn to vapor and have enough pressure to spin the generator around to produce energy. There were some chambers in the upper dungeon filled with smaller lava pits close to the edge where he could potentially create something like that.

'I should probably get my tier 3 class before trying... disclosing the mining spot to Arthur at that point might be wiser, everything will become much easier with a proper permit.'

While he could try to be secretive about everything, there wasn't really a need for it. Living under the constant stress of being discovered wasn't his cup of tea. If he could use that spot to achieve a few things it was enough. There was no need to take the secret to the grave as there were many other ways to earn money. Roland believed that Arthur would allow him to build a few generators and it would also be a good chance to propose a business offer.

Finally, after the day came to an end he had a few minutes to himself. Even though his body wasn't much older than twenty he felt like an old man. His wish of becoming a business owner had come true but it came with a lot more trouble than he expected. Yet he would not give it up even though he was working many more hours.

It was a much different feeling when a person worked for their own dream for a change and not for the dreams of others. It gave him the motivation to go on and suffer through the growing pains of his little shop.

Time began passing and the days turned into weeks. The city was quite peaceful at this point in time, even though a threat lingered in the air people continued to move forward. The city was showing a lot of growth while others around it continued to fail.

Thanks to the city runesmith the hidden threat had been taken out and proven to the people. The citizens began to feel at ease with their lives as the necessary steps were taken for their protection. More checkpoints appeared, guards with better weapons that would work even against evil creatures.

The person that had come in close contact with this threat on several occasions continued to prepare for the worst outcome. Producing weapons, improving his armor, and setting up defensive structures while also pushing himself to the limit for his levels to rise.

"So this is it, level hundred fifty... I should probably call it a day."

Roland continued to grow at a rapid pace and finally, he had hit that threshold. This could be potentially a new start for him or just a stopgap for the real thing later.

'I should see what classes I can take and decide later...'

He looked at the dead skeleton that he had defeated as many else before it. For some reason, it felt as if something was observing him. However, when checking his radar he could not spot anything out of the ordinary there. Yet from within that second dungeon, he could see a faint green light. It had continued to appear whenever he visited this place and was a big reason for the unusual feeling.

'It's probably a torch... or maybe some kind of trap that activates after a skeleton is killed...'

Without being sure what to make of it he returned home, there he would visit the place where it all started.