

Runesmith 253

Chapter 253: Unsatisfying options.

"Are you sure Mr. Wayland? Surely it would help you with that bad reputation of yours if you made an appearance during the event..."

"I'm not very good with things like that Lord Arthur, I'll have to decline the offer..."

"Well if you change your mind then be sure to inform me, we still have some time before it starts."

"I will, Lord Arthur."

"You may leave then, thank you for your continued work."

Roland bowed before the City Lord while quickly walking out of his Auction House office. He had been delivering some items for the auction while he was called up. Arthur was organizing a big event to ease the minds of the people. They had managed to clear up the Abyssal Cult's presence before any substantial damage was taken.

Lobelia had informed Roland about the thieves guild dealings. He knew that the hidden lair was discovered and the cultists were now probably dead. News of smaller outbreaks was going around the whole island and even the mainland which still caused some panic. He had been invited as the person that created the divine devices.

As Arthur stated this would be a good publicity stunt for him. All he needed to do was to show up and wave at the people while others did the talking. His reputation was still not that great after the dwarven union painted him as a crook. They made sure to try and discredit his works so that no one would buy them. Only when dropping his price and getting a few adventurers to advertise his work was he able to get out of the slump.

Yet as the introverted person that he was, it was difficult. Even though he knew it would be good for business, it was difficult to advertise his face so loosely. There was always a chance that he would be recognized by someone or even attacked by some vengeful cultists. Due to this being an official outing where the City Lord showed up he would be able to gear up.

Most of his weapons would need to remain outside the venue that they were using which didn't sit too well with him. Even though Arthur seemed to trust him, his people didn't. Mary his true bodyguard, would not allow him to come fully armed.

'It would be a good place for some networking, the vast majority of the merchants are still weary of doing business with me. It would show that I have the backing of the city leader, it would be strange if they came up to me and offered some deals by themselves...'

Even though he was free to buy up resources from the more trusted hands, he was not offered that many trading offers. While he had a contract with Arthur that didn't mean that he couldn't do business with other people. What he needed to do was just deliver the minimum required creations to the auction. After that, he was free to do whatever he wanted with his free time.

'Though at this time I don't really need or want any more work, so might as well wait a bit more until the offers pile up.'

Roland decided to play the waiting game for now. He did not like the attention and at this moment didn't really need it. Money was flowing in from multiple sources. The minerals and rare ores that he got from the dungeon were slowly piling up. He was preparing to create a new set of armor when he attained enough red mythril. Together with some of the exotic blends, he would probably be able to make something that would last him for a while.

Money was not an issue and he didn't have enough time for his current project. This was to level up to tier 3 which he was already able to achieve. His level had reached the minimum requirement and he was heading home for the big reveal. His Runic Engineering was only at level twenty-five and he had gained another useful skill.

Basic Runic Region L1

Skill Active

Allows the control of runic structures from a distance, the distance is dependent on the skills level and user's intelligence stat.

The name was quite peculiar and at first, he wasn't sure what he should make of it. He had already researched a technique that allowed him to control his golems via exterior devices. This he demonstrated during his first mining expedition. Yet after going through some tests he realized that this was much handier than whatever he could produce.

With this skill, he could 'connect' to exterior runic devices that were within his range. At level 1 he was limited to something over seven meters. This was a strange number but it seemed that for every hundred points in intelligence he was gaining a twenty percent increase in area size. Now he only needed to gain a level in the skill to see how much it would be expanded.

He assumed it would be a five-meter increase with each level, this would put it at over fifty meters if he adjusted it to his current stats. It didn't use that much mana which allowed him to be connected for long periods of time. Runic items that were created by other runesmiths would be more demanding and an increase in quality would actually lower the requirement instead of increasing it.

First of all, it allowed him to control his golems without the need for voice commands. It was possible to connect to their golemic eyes directly and allow the image to slip into his own field of vision. The first time he used the skill in that way it was truly surprising. Roland didn't feel that he would be able to use it well if he didn't possess his parallel thinking trait. Controlling things that he wasn't touching while trying to move his own body wasn't that easy. This skill would require some getting used to but it would probably enhance his combat abilities.

'It's not limited to golems either, I wonder if Runesmith classes focused on golems get the same skill that is just limited to golems...'

This was a possibility and the main reason that he decided to go with this class instead. Even though it lacked some of the golem-focused skills and buffs, those could still be gotten by him with the help of some skill books. The only reason that he hadn't been buying those up was the uncertainty of what he would be getting from this class of his.

If he received a skill that he spent fifty small gold coins on the previous month, he would feel like a fool. Yet after gaining twenty-five levels in this class he wasn't seeing any golem-specific skills yet. This made his theory that this was a somewhat unique class with its own unique skills a possibility.

Then there was another, a bit less useful skill that he had also achieved on his way to level hundred fifty. Just as the name stated it allowed him to instantly create copies of schematics and blueprints. As the previous skills, it wasn't limited to runes and he could actually draw up a schematic of something like a golem.

Basic Blueprint Fabrication

Skill Active

When this skill is used it allows an instantaneous creation of blueprints of anything that the user had created before.

He was really getting a lot of new and interesting skills, more than he gained with the Runesmith Lord class. Yet from his point of view the reason was probably due to some overlap from his old Runic Blacksmith class, that one generated lesser versions of skills that could be then leveled up further with the higher version of the class. This one on the other hand had a new set of unique skills that even started at their basic levels. There was a large possibility that they would turn to their regular version which could also be leveled up later.

'The auction house catalog didn't really have anything that I wanted, if I want to get more golem-related skills I'll probably have to order them from the outside or through other means...'

Tier 2 skills weren't as easy to come by as tier 1 skills. First of all crafting related skill books were controlled by the dwarven union. They would buy anything related to crafting and also frown upon people that tried selling them. The best way of earning money was to constrict the knowledge and not allow blacksmiths that didn't sign up to gain manufacturing knowledge or skills.

'Still, some people don't care and will sell them if they need money, those types of skill books appear on the black market a lot too...'

While he had stopped going to the underground market this didn't mean that there weren't items there that he wanted. Just as the upper city was expanding, so was the lower city. Apparently with time their own version of an auction house would be created. There new never before seen wares would be placed, some with forbidden knowledge and perhaps something to give him an edge against the competition.

But that would have to wait as he had more pressing things to do. Only because of the tight schedule he had to rush towards the Auction House after returning from the last dungeon run. Now it was time to reorganize his thoughts and see if his luck was good. However, before he reached his home he was spotted by some people that recognized him. These were not ones that he knew but instead a side effect of his recent reputation boost.

"Is that Mr. Wayland? Please, you must visit my store!"

"Here have these fresh apples!"

“Hey, isn’t that the Runesmith?”

Some people pointed from afar while others approached him to give him gifts and invite him to their establishments. Someone had spilled the beans on his involvement in the checkpoint establishment. The only thing he could do was deny the fact that he was the one that developed the blueprint for the divine device. For the time being it was only known that he had been the one manufacturing them as he still didn’t want to appear too competent to bring in unwanted company.

“Uh, not this... I have enough food at my house...”

As always he tried to ignore everyone while hiding behind his hood. It started to become annoying to come to the city where previously people were apprehensive about interacting with the strange magical craftsman. With how he was working with the city lord it seemed that everyone wanted to profit off his good name.

This didn’t fly with him that well as these were the same people that ignored him a few years ago when the Dwarven Union was trying to put him out of business. Now when the boot was on the other foot they started crawling back. Even the guild master was trying to invite him for another business talk which he was informed by Elodia.

“Excuse me but I need to get back to work... please give this to someone that needs it.”

As a rule of thumb, he didn’t accept any gifts that could potentially force him to return the favor later. There was no need for him getting any help from the regular business owners as his earning potential had increased by a lot. The only person that he couldn’t really ignore was the guild master of the adventurer guild. He had torn up the contract but he did guide him towards the black market that allowed him to survive until this day.

‘I can always refuse any business offers now but I still need to meet up with him...’

“Are you alright? You’ve been sighing a lot lately, have you thought about resting?”

Roland was now back at his house and at the entrance, he ran into Elodia that was packing up for the day. For some reason, he felt somewhat refreshed after seeing her face. It did really change things up when there were people that were concerned about him. Perhaps without her and the others that were relying on him in some way, he might have decided to scale down the whole business.

“I’m fine, don’t worry I don’t need much sleep and I don’t really get tired anymore.”

Elodia reacted with quite a weary smile before closing the shop door behind her. Roland had entered through the main gate that now looked like an entrance to some kind of prison. He had placed a fence around it so that even if someone managed to get through it they would have a second barrier to contend with. This was mostly made for the couriers that could drop the package there instead of leaving it in front of the gate.

“Well don’t stay up too late and remember about that thing, it would probably mean a lot to the kids if you were there too, some of them look up to you.”

“They do? I guess I need to wear my good shirt then.”

“That would be nice.”

His joke went past his girlfriend as she gave him a peck on the cheek. After about an hour she was heading back to her main home. The orphanage was still in the city and the vast majority of the kids she brought over here were still living there. He had promised to join them for a little event the next day which was quite important for the ever-growing munchkins.

Finally, the time had come, he was alone in his office with a class change crystal right before him. To this day he had no idea what these things were and how they were created. They were supposedly only created at large temples through some rituals but there was nothing substantial to confirm the rumors.

Within a moment he found himself at the old apartment building. In the past, this place used to feel like home but the longer he stayed away the more it felt alien to him. It was as if the previous world that he came from had been some kind of fever dream and this place he was in now was his actual home. Even though his intelligence stat had increased he had trouble remembering his past family, their faces were fading away into obscurity.

“Are the memories being abandoned or forcefully removed?”

He looked at a picture frame of himself and his parents. He was an average-looking person with the only outstanding thing being his height. Besides that, he wasn't much different and blended in with the crowd.

“I should probably not linger here for too long...”

Just as always he turned on his old PC and was greeted by the loading screen which led to the class selection screen. There he would have the option to go through the classes. Luckily the choice didn't need to be taken, there was a go-back button. There were ways of going back from class change rituals and they had been already well documented. They varied depending on the person taking them and would lead to a penalty of not being able to take the trial again for a short while.

“What do we have here...”

There were a few classes that he hadn't seen before and they were all tier 3 classes. Yet they weren't the only ones, a few different tier 2 classes had shown up while some others became grayed out. He was not really interested in getting another tier 2 class though so his focus was still on the tier 3 section.

“Let's see... Advanced Runesmith, this should be the most basic Runesmith class...”

Right at the start was a sprite of a slightly more advanced-looking Runesmith and right further down the line was the Master Runesmith class that was usually taken. Then there was a plethora of runic variants of advanced smithing classes.

“Runic Master Weaponsmith... Runic Master Battlesmith... Advanced Warsmith?”

The classes that started with 'advanced' could be ignored. As a rule of thumb, they were lesser versions of the Master ones. People that were unable to reach the master variants did it mostly by not having the minimal stats required for the job. This was quite surprising as in reality Roland only had seventy-five levels of proper tier 2 classes and still managed to reach the threshold.

“Master Runesmith is there but nothing really eye-catching...”

While that class was his original goal before he set out on his adventure, now things had changed. After getting the Runesmith Lord class he was searching for a higher version of it but nothing that had a noble title appeared as the screen was filled with the usual classes.

“Some rare classes sometimes require a hundred levels of tier 2 classes, I might have to wait... also my skills aren’t fully leveled up.”

There could be many reasons why he wasn’t seeing any prestige classes. His fast growth in levels caused his skills to lag behind. The one that he received after attaining the fiftieth level of Runesmith Lord was not yet maxed out. He would at least need to get it to level nine before he came back here.

“This is what I kind of expected...”

Everything was still going according to plan, there were twenty-five levels of Runic Engineer to go and he intended to get them all before the next switch. If nothing eye-catching showed even after that, he would need to focus on the rare skills. Only when he was out of options would he decide to go with a more regular class. If nothing worked then he would go with the Master Runesmith which was still a somewhat rare job not practiced by many.

“Well then, I guess it’s back to the dungeon.”

With that, he clicked out of the class selection screen for the first time. His eyes glanced at the old apartment that he had begun to forget.

“Hm... so how do I get out of here again? The records showed that there should be some kind of exit that isn’t always too obvious...”

Roland gave out a sigh and started going through this recreation of his living space. He needed to get out but there wasn’t really an instruction manual about these things, it was time to investigate this place further.

Chapter 254: Angry Skeleton.

Congratulations, your Basic Runic Region skill has leveled up.

‘Level four already?’

Roland was surprised by the prompt after a certain sword dinosaur had been defeated. He was standing on the side with his hammer being used as a long ranged weapon. Close to the dead monster was Agni who was still ferociously biting into the dead creature’s neck. While he was still behind in levels the monster’s fighting pattern was already known to everyone here.

Agni had watched Roland and the golems clear up this monster several times and was even here during the first expedition. He only trailed behind by around ten levels now and was strong enough to cause a lot of damage. Together with Roland’s ranged support, there was no way for the sword-tailed monster to win.

The new skill that he attained not so long ago was rapidly leveling up even while going against weaker enemies. Just as he speculated, the range increased by five meters for each level up and it allowed him to control all of his golems at a much faster pace.

Without the need for spoken commands, the magical machines were directly reacting to his input that he implemented with the help of his parallel thinking trait. The two were tailor-made for each other and the more he used both of them the more he felt that his trait was becoming better.

It was as if he was close to actually leveling up this trait which usually didn't happen. Traits were normally attained by fulfilling hidden achievements like killing special monsters or attaining special classes.

Yet there were things like growth-type traits, ones that could be pushed further by fulfilling the same achievements. Parallel Thinking was gained by pushing himself into a hectic work schedule in which he was trying to multitask. Perhaps controlling golems through the skill would continue to level it up.

“Good boy, yes you can eat the mana stone this time but only if you promise not to eat any more of those divine crystals anymore.”

“Woof!”

Name :

Mystical Ruby Dire Wolf

[L 115] [Ex 3%]

Type :

Fire/Earth/Beast

HP

4358/4358

MP

5524/5524

SP

6262/6262

Strength

144

Agility

204

Dexterity

95

Vitality

168

Endurance**185****Intelligence****167****Willpower****158****Charisma****18****Luck****15**

While his furry companion started to make a mess by digging out the mana stone from within the monster's neck, Roland glanced at Agni's stats. There he could see that he was making quick progress yet not as fast as his master. Some of the experience between them was shared but it seemed that he wasn't getting as much from the tier 3 monster kills as Roland was.

'Perhaps he is standing too far away from the kill?'

Roland wasn't sure but it was worth it to instruct Agni to hang out closer to the cave wall. Yet he still feared that he would toss himself at any monster that tried to get through it.

"Are you done? Let's go."

The golems were ordered to cut the tailbone down with the help of their mining tools. With his skill at work, he could manipulate all six of them but he still needed to spread his mind between every single one. At a moment like that the voiced commands were still better.

Unless he managed to split his mind into six parts it would be impossible to control them all at once. Instead, he needed to jump through each and everyone to give the command. This came down to a two-second lag between the first and the last golem.

'Hm... Perhaps if I implement a central control unit that just relays the commands automatically. I could probably get around it like that, it would also be better to not give voiced commands during a fight...'

The golems had something similar to an artificial intelligence unit. It was usually a bulk copy of code taken from actual monster golems. Some smart craftsmen had managed to take it apart when they were creating the first golemic products. This had later on been expanded and some improvements have been made.

However, this was protected knowledge so what made up the golemic brain was kept secret. The components that he was working with were just something regular runesmiths could easily come by. Even though Roland was slowly altering this program it wasn't that easy. This magical AI had been simplified through centuries of research and alteration. If he actually wanted to get his hands on a more

intricate version of it, he would either need to spend a huge amount of money or sign up with the people that were keeping the knowledge a secret.

'I could also go with option three and make my own from scratch... I might be able to copy a golem core with the help of the Runic Eye of Truth...'

The more he used the eye the less it hurt and now that he was approaching tier 3 the pain was becoming bearable. His progress on the spatial runes was slowly advancing but it wasn't quite there. The focus was on gaining his tier 3 class which would require him to get another twenty-five levels. This progress would soon be reaching a limit as the monsters in the dungeon rarely went past a certain level.

'It's probably going to be harder to get those last ten levels but that's something I'll decide on later.'

Roland went into the usual spot as before and prepared his cannon while the golems started drilling into the secret spot on the wall. While this was the only entrance that he knew of it might not have been the only one. For this reason, he instructed a few of his spider drones to begin digging out some smaller side paths. If he was lucky then he would discover a better grinding spot than this one.

These golems were modified with the dungeon in mind. While the whole place was riddled with magic the rocks and ground were still somewhat part of the environment. They could be affected by earth magic just as regular structures that existed outside. For this reason, he inserted something that looked like pincers onto his golem's front parts.

These were just modified magical wands with runic inscriptions, one of them would send out a jolt of mana that would soften the rocky walls. The other one would slowly shove the now soft soil to the sides and back and allow the golem to go further inside. Heavy drills were not needed anymore as everything could be just done by magic instead.

Thus while the golems were working on a separate entrance that could be useful down the line, Roland hopped back to his oversized cannon. Thanks to his new area of control skill he would be able to remain connected to the wall digging units. He had around twenty-nine meters to work with, there was a safety measure in place so the golem would retreat the moment he pierced into the next dungeon.

"Okay Agni, just keep watch for any salamanders as always."

"Woof!"

...

The small green flames that were inside its eyes lit up the moment it felt that familiar mana. Just for a moment, it could sense a change to that wall through which the torrent of energy always went through. It had been watching closely from this vantage point while the others continued to get slaughtered.

It wanted to move forwards as well, the voice in its head continued to instruct it. Yet for some reason, it was able to resist the shouting that continued. It recalled the moment this all began, it was the first time it came in contact with the strange mana pattern. There were two distinguished markers coming from that place, one was very similar to the one the Lich's environment was filled with.

Yet there was another one, a third one that was totally different and very unique, after its bones absorbed some of it everything began. The commanding voice that it used to listen to started getting

quieter. The more of the rare mana it absorbed the less the grip on its functions became, it could even sit here patiently and take it in without the need of going through the usual path.

The creature was slowly becoming aware of its surroundings. Everyone from its brethren were moving at a strange set pattern, nothing ever changed and nothing happened. They would walk around the same locations, stay in the same spot for hours and then move to the next destination like clockwork. The voice inside its head forced this path upon it and it was only able to break through it recently.

The Lich continued to watch and absorb the blue light from the side while the others were eradicated. For some reason, it was able to take in this energy while the others couldn't, even when they came back they would not remember anything. It even started trying to interact with its brothers but they would only ignore it. The monster could only come to one conclusion, it was different from the others and perhaps there was something out there for it, something that it required to know the truth of this world.

Just as on the other days it looked as the beam of blue light collided with one of the larger skeletons. It drilled into the wall and left behind a mark that was larger than before. Sometimes the other skeletons would not be killed instantly but that became increasingly rarer, it was as if the beam of light was evolving like it.

Yet the more of that strange unique mana that the beam had the less of the voice's grip was on this Lich. Even now the monster was compelled to at least go through the assigned path, the only thing it was able to do was to change it slightly. Only when the beam was firing off was it able to stop here and wait. There wasn't enough of it, it needed more of that mana to truly be free and perhaps then it would be able to know the truth.

Then it noticed something, a strange sound appeared not that far away from it. When looking at that spot it could see some falling rocks. Quickly after a strange thing pushed through that was quite similar to something it had previously seen before. To the monster's dismay, this thing quickly retreated and vanished from sight. Even though the strange creature was there for a moment the Lich's enhanced mana sense could pinpoint its origin.

The eye sockets became deep green as it plunged itself on the spot in the wall. Yet just like with the main opening it could not go through. Something was keeping it from proceeding to the other side. It knew that this wall was fake, the small being was able to go through it but for some reason, it was not allowed.

Green flames filled the entire area as the Lich became furious. Why was it not allowed to leave? What was on the other side? What was the voice that was calling out to it and why did it have to listen to it. Its bony fists started smacking the spot that the small thing tried to crawl through. Yet even though it was a tier 3 creature the spot wasn't budging at all, something was keeping it here and it wanted out.

This was something new, the monster didn't even know that it could produce emotions before. It wasn't sure what this was but this feeling was something that it didn't like. The only way it felt that it could appease this feeling was if it was able to get through this damn wall. It grabbed the staff it used to cast its spells and started running.

The small area through which the beam was coming through started being covered in the blue flames. Just like before the Lich aimed for the hidden spot but as previously all of its magical energy was

bounced off. It wanted to toss itself at the hidden wall once more but as it was starting to run forward the beam of blue appeared.

The Lich was a being of magic and surrounded itself with a shield made of green flames. This beam of mana collided with it and the energy started splashing to the sides. Then the monster noticed something, the concentration of that unique mana was tremendous, what would happen if it just accepted it?

In the skewed view of the monster this all made sense, why should he reject the mana that was keeping the strange voice at bay? The barrier was removed promptly with only the core being protected. This it shifted towards its own head which with some quick planning was flung to a safe location where the monster usually stood by and watched.

Even though the other monsters like it always came back to life they continued to be absorbed by the environment. The Lich feared that whatever was keeping the voice away would be cleansed if it actually died.

There was no problem in letting its body crumble to dust. As long as its core remained it could assemble itself back and this process was already starting. The bones that had been shattered started to slowly wiggle towards the skeletal head that was tossed to a safe location.

Just as it had planned the mana had infused with the bones that were not destroyed. Its being was getting showered by this special mana and the strange voice that was commanding it had disappeared...

...

“What is that monster doing?”

Roland was cooling down his cannon while feeling perplexed. One of his spider drones had managed to dig through to the other side. Thanks to his new skill he was able to watch everything in real-time through the golemic eye. The drone was ordered to quickly move back as a monster to its left side was standing there and almost instantly attacked.

This wasn't the strange part as the other monsters acted in a similar fashion. What was peculiar came after that as the Lich started attacking the spot in which the golem was hiding. The spells could not go through nor could its fist but the thing still continued.

Then it suddenly abandoned that area and burst towards the main one in which he was ready to attack. It was as if this monster could feel where he was and was trying to get through the wall, the others would have gone back to their usual program by that point. Thus to be on the safe side he decided to fire a shot but he was unable to kill the monster. The thing was even able to shield itself for a moment which made his heart skip a beat.

‘There is no way of it getting over here... right?’

Roland asked himself while becoming nervous. While he had attained another level through killing one of the previous skeletons, the flaming Lich was still above him. If he managed to get out here there wouldn't be much else than running on his agenda. The golems were already ready to stall the monster while he and Agni retreated into the secret area,

'It was not able to get to the golem either... it can't get through the wall, I need to calm down.'

After the digging golem retreated to his side he tried accessing the recording of what had happened there. This didn't help as much as the quality was as always abysmal. He could only note this down in his head and be wary around the Lich monsters. Perhaps due to it being a creature that was based around a mage, it was more alert to his magical creations and attacks.

Hence while cooling down his weapon he got ready to shoot the monster again. It had been tossed against the wall but it wasn't dead. From his experience, he knew that Liches had regenerative capabilities and could only die when their core was damaged. However, even after some time had passed the monster never appeared again.

'Did its agro reset and it went the other way?'

Roland could only speculate but nothing that he saw indicated that he was in danger of being flooded by monsters. With the appearance of the usual Infernal Skeleton warrior variants, he was back to the usual grind. Even after a day had passed the Lich had never appeared again as if it was back to its usual path.