

Runesmith 321

Chapter 321: More Tests.

“Are you sure about this Boss?”

“Yeah, just pull the trigger?”

“Maybe I should move a bit further away, what if you can’t dodge?”

“I’m not going to dodge it.”

“Not dodging? What are you testing then? Is there a hidden runic item in your sleeve or something?”

“Not really, stop asking questions and just pull the trigger already.”

“If you say so...”

A confused Bernir was standing ten meters away from Roland with a runic weapon in hand. The weapon in question had the shape of a rifle with a square-shaped spot cut out where a cylinder would usually be. In there a square cube with various runic symbols was resting and was used instead of ammunition. After the class change and acquiring the upgraded version of the rune compression skill, the runic batteries had become much smaller. The need for Bernir to carry a whole backpack as reserve ammunition with him around was not needed anymore.

Not that long ago the upgraded runic rifle was handed down to Bernir who had been the one to actually make it. Roland just needed to infuse it with runes and then slide the upgraded version of the runic battery in. With his rune crafting skill being upgraded to the next tier, working with tier 2 runes became as easy as breathing. With only a couple of taps with his hammer, he was able to inscribe runic pathways.

During the trial, he had to work tirelessly through many nights which also allowed him to level up his skills further. Then thanks to his rune copy skill and increase in stats, he could perform this task on multiple objects throughout the day without even getting tired or receiving a headache. As long as he didn’t let his mana slide below ten percent, he would not feel the usual aftereffects of overusing magic.

This opened up a lot of manufacturing possibilities as he would not need to spend as much time crafting items anymore. While usually higher tier runesmiths focused on creating level-appropriate gear, there was no reason not to earn some change by going with the factory approach. As long as he had someone else create the required items, putting a tier 2 rune on any weapon wouldn’t put a dent in his mana reserves.

This would allow him to create items for his store while still being able to work on other things. Then there was also the contract that he had with Arthur that forced him to put things up at the auction house. There was no need to show his hand yet, before the

Announcement

of his true class was made he needed to prepare. Today he decided to wrap up most of the tests before moving on to the next phase.

“Okay Boss here I go...Huh?”

“Something wrong?”

“It’s not working...”

“Is it now? Try firing at one of the dummies then.”

“Okay?”

The confused Bernir looked at the firearm in his hand and pointed it toward one of the wooden dummies. The moment he pressed the trigger he could see the runic battery flicker for a second before the spell effect took shape. A bolt of blue energy left the gun-shaped barrel and connected with the wood. It was a clean hit that left a large hole in the wooden dummy.

“Is it working? Strange...”

“Good, now try it on me again, just take a few steps back.”

Roland’s assistant finally realized that something was going on. When he took two steps back and tried to fire again, the weapon didn’t go off. Only when he was about fifteen meters away would the weapon activate. The blue bolt of energy traveled in a straight line but connected with what looked to be a shield made of mana.

“Good, that’s enough, I’ve got all the data I need now, you can go back ”

“Was that all? Well, if you need any more help with something just call me over Boss.”

The two nodded at each other before parting ways. The mana shield that was created wasn’t anything new as he had just inscribed a rune onto a bracelet. The new skill that made runes smaller would allow him to actually put tier 2 runes on smaller items like this. Perhaps if it was leveled up even further, then perhaps even greater runes would be feasible.

‘The Rune Authority skill has a range of around fourteen meters but that’s not the tricky part.’

Today he was wrapping up his testing of the skills that he had gained. The less destructive ones were being measured as his weapon testing facility had almost been destroyed during an earlier event. The Rune Authority allowed him to disable other magical devices. There were a few drawbacks, one of them was the limited range. This put this skill in the close-range category, at least until he was able to level it up further.

The second drawback was that he actually needed to know the way the item operated. In this case, where it was a rune that he created himself, it didn’t take much brain power. It was like flipping an on-and-off switch. However, when something he wasn’t familiar with was presented to him, it would not work.

Before he called Bernir over for the ranged test, he performed another one on a magical lamp. It was an old item he got when he was testing his Runic Eye of Truth. It wasn’t a runic item but was enchanted through a different magical language. The test was successful and he was able to disable an item that was created in a different magical language that he was specialized in. Thanks to translating the enchantment into runic and understanding it, he was able to flip the switch off as well.

'I'm not sure if I should activate the eyes during combat though, it will depend on the complexity of the magical item and how much time I have.'

He could see himself being able to analyze other enchanted items through the eye skill. Even during combat, it would be a possibility, yet this would not be something easily performed. Roland needed to gain more practice in this field as he had only now become resistant to the side effects of using this skill. Only now did it become manageable but activating it during a stressful encounter would still not be an easy task.

'I probably won't be able to use it on anything too complex but nevertheless, it is another tool that I can use now. I'd need to run a few tests before using it in actual combat but Bernir wouldn't be a good sparring partner, I also need something that I'm not that familiar with.'

To combine Rune Authority and True Runic Sight in combat he needed a sparring partner equipped with an enchanted weapon or armor. Only if he wasn't aware of what they were using would it be an actual test. However there were two problems with this plan, one was the right person for the job, and the other, the enchanted weapon.

'Should I have Elodia ask one of the kids to go buy one from the dwarves?'

His relationship with the union wasn't the greatest to this day. He couldn't just waltz over to one of their shops to buy an enchanted weapon. Neither could Bernir's or his wife that had been blacklisted from their stores. That left other people whom he would need to ask for favors.

'Or I could just go to the black market, they should have some enchanted weapons there, some that I might have not seen before.'

The black market was here and now after the new dungeon was discovered it would attract more dangerous individuals. Black merchants would probably see this as an opportunity to make a lot of money and soon congregate in this place. Thanks to his craft the high prices down there weren't a problem. Some of the weapons were occult in nature or meant for assassination that usually didn't appear in regular magic smithing shops. If he could gain a blade with such an enchantment and have someone come at him in a controlled way, then it could potentially be a valid testing environment.

'But who could I ask? Bernir doesn't have enough mana to wield an actual magical weapon, neither does his wife... That only leaves them...'

There weren't that many people that he trusted with his business. Of his acquaintances that could perform this task, only a few fit the bill. This was of course the group he went on the gold rank adventurer quest on or Elodia's siblings. Considering that he didn't trust Armand to keep his mouth shut, that shifted it towards Lobelia. The girl was part of the thieves guild as well, having her use some type of poison dagger wouldn't even be strange.

'Grisalde is an option too... but she could babble in a drunken stupor like that idiot too and it's better to not show Senna too much...'

His opinion of that group wasn't made up yet. They had gone through a traumatic adventure but this didn't mean that they wouldn't toss him to the wolves if things got troublesome. Lobelia was his best choice as she was aware of a lot more than the others were already. There was no need to make things

more complicated than they already were. For the time being he decided to visit the black market to see if he could find something worthwhile. That is after he was done with testing all that he wanted to test, the last thing on his agenda was at his old forge.

The runic furnace sprung to life even before he entered the room. The Basic Runic Region skill had advanced into its regular variant and allowed him to control his creations from even further. Perhaps when it was maxed out then the range would be around a hundred meters or even over it if he added all the stats he was receiving.

After gaining the new class the two truly new skills that could be considered smithing ones, were Forgefire Control and Expert Forging. The latter gave him knowledge of some crafting techniques that he wasn't aware of. Thanks to it he would be able to always create something of high quality. It seemed like a reward for attaining a higher form of crafting class.

'It does let me control the flames but I can already do that by altering the runes and magic output, is this really it?'

Roland was somewhat disappointed in this skill. While it would allow him to manipulate the flames inside of a forge or a smelter, it was kind of pointless with the one he had before him. The runic program he infused along with the card system for Bernir was already doing the same thing. This gave him a bit more wiggle room for fine-tuning but would only matter if he worked on a regular furnace without any runes on it.

"Hm... what if I do this..."

This skill didn't appear during the trial so he wasn't acquainted with it. The knowledge was implemented into his brain so that he could use it and after fiddling around he found another use for it. His resistance to flames was quite advanced and with the added enhancements to his skin, he decided to give it a go. Normally putting hands into a glowing furnace wouldn't be advised but to a magical smith like him, it wasn't a big issue.

"It does work...Neat."

The flames from the forge heeded his call. They swirled towards his palm as if drawn to it and remained above it in the form of a twister. After drawing his hand back the orange fire remained burning brightly while using his own mana as fuel. The first thing that he noticed was that the usage was a bit lower than what he needed to insert into the actual runic furnace. It seemed that this skill had some uses to it as the flames could be moved around and even placed on different surfaces for a while.

'This requires a lot of control... it might take some time to get used to...'

Roland looked at the orange ball of flames swirling atop his anvil. The heat that it was giving off was highly concentrated on the inside. Normally this would be enough to make the deep steel anvil heat up and start to go red but the skill kept the heat from escaping into the environment. Then thanks to his Parallel Thinking trait he could focus on crafting while watching over the flames with a secondary mind.

After sticking an iron rod into the flames and watching it start to melt he canceled the skill. The follow-up test brought another thing to the forefront, he could not activate it from regular flames. Even if he created it from a runic item like his armor's gloves, it would just not activate.

'It's probably limited to things that are identified as a type of furnace, will it work at a regular fireplace? or a campfire then?'

Normally making a campfire inside of an underground workshop wouldn't be the best idea but luckily there was a ventilation system here. After gathering some wood and lighting it on fire he continued with the test. To his surprise, the flames were actually not reacting from the campfire only when he assembled something that looked like a furnace would the skill activate.

'Strange limitations...'

To him, this didn't make any sense but at this point, he stopped questioning how this strange world worked. Normally the skill should be compatible with any fire source but it wasn't. Perhaps the world didn't want any magically inclined crafter to use this skill for battle. Otherwise, they could create a concentrated ball of flames from a simple lighter or maybe even a spark.

'Could I make a miniaturized forge to use this skill?'

While he had no intention of using this skill for battle, having a portable forge with him wouldn't be a bad thing. Roland still had the intention of going down into the new dungeon and leveling up his class. The monsters on the inside would probably not pose as much of a threat as they did before. He wouldn't even need to use the cannon anymore, winning with just his battle skills would be possible now.

The idea would be to bring a small enough forge that could activate the skill and then use it to perform rune smithing. It was possible to force the runes into cold metal but considering that he would be moving onto something much harder, the softening of metal process was a requirement. Even with the increase in stats, the process of cold rune crafting wouldn't be easy.

'There is a limit to the Rapid Machine Reassembly skill, it probably won't be that easy to use it when I move on to mithril items. I will have to look into this later but now let's focus on other things.'

Not much time had passed since he returned to his home. He managed to perform some of the tests that he wanted and now the time for advancements was upon him. First of all there was his current project that included assembling spatial runes. On the workbench there was his first creation, as always it looked like an unsuspecting block of metal. Slowly he moved up to it and placed his hand over the surface.

The length of this piece of metal was about thirty centimeters and the width was ten. The thickness was mostly what he was interested in as he was slowly attempting to lower the requirements. At the moment it was too thick to be included in his armor that needed to be made from red mithril.

After injecting a bit of his mana into the runic structure his hand began to sink in. There was no visible change to the block of metal to indicate a spatial pocket. No dark spots, just his hand sinking in as if through a liquid to grab the item that was hidden inside. Soon he took out an apple that seemed to have survived the first spatial item he created.

"It somewhat works like a regular bag but not quite the same..."

Roland nodded at the apple that he quickly cut apart to see if there was a change to it. There were various item bags with multiple functions. Some even provided a space that wouldn't rot food inside of them, while others didn't. The one he copied was just a simple one that would have the fruit inside age

with time. Not enough time had passed since putting it in but he assumed that this would be the case if it was left there for too long.

'Regular bags are always working and open, this runic variant requires me to open it with mana... This probably means that it just stores the coordinates to something like a pocket dimension and when I use it, then the path is open.'

Even though he was a tier 3 class holder and now capable of producing spatial runes, it was still at the copying stage. Perhaps with more time, he would be able to create a full-blown dimensional bag that wouldn't require a jolt of mana to open. The usage was still a bit high and wouldn't allow people with lower classes to activate this runic variant.

"This is still a step in the right direction... and having a spatial bag that can't be opened by anyone else than me isn't bad... Now, what should I do with it..."

After placing the sliced in half apple back into the spatial space he created, his eyes glanced at a pile of rocks to the side. They contained a lot of crimson ores and needed to be processed. Then on the workbench, there was also the old pendant that helped him hide his class, after examining it through his runic eyes he found out its secrets as well. There were so many items he wanted to create but not that much time left to go around. In his mind, trouble would be appearing sooner or later as it always did.

Chapter 322: Trouble Arrives.

'Haven't been here in a while... there weren't this many people before, the race has probably already begun here.'

Roland walked into the large underground chamber filled with hooded figures. The place looked like some occult gathering with how many hoods and robes everyone was wearing. There was almost no one here that wasn't covering their face with something. This was one place where his hidden apparel didn't raise eyebrows as it did in the city.

"Hey, what you looking at?"

"..."

"That's what I thought."

A man spat to the side while walking past him beside some of the market's stands. It was chuckle-worthy to get a look like this from someone that was barely a tier 2 class holder. If Roland decided to give him a smack across the face probably no one would even help this guy out. However, he was not here to cause trouble, instead of causing a scene he wanted to buy some enchanted gear for testing purposes.

'That guy is going to die if he does that to a hidden tier 3.'

While it was impossible to pinpoint a tier 3 class holder in a mass of people, it wouldn't be strange if one or two of them had already arrived in Albrook. With the appearance of the B-rank dungeon, some people would arrive to look for money. Some of the less savory types that appeared would see this as a chance to rob some platinum adventurers or even join them on their adventures.

There were also new merchants coming, ones that sold all sorts of equipment, even cursed items that couldn't be pushed forward on the outside. They required some protection, so moving with tier 3 bodyguards or a large entourage of tier 2's wouldn't be strange. When glancing out in the distance he could see more tunnels being assembled and even a second level down being created. Probably in the future, this would become a much larger marketplace.

'Even if stronger people arrive, they shouldn't be able to tell who I really am. It's nice to be able to customize this thing for a change, not even a skilled mage should be able to tell who I am now...'

Name:

William L 180

Classes:

T3 War Magus L30

T2 Magic Swordsman L50

T2 Battle Mage L50

T1 Mana Warrior L 25

T1 Mage L 25

Roland had managed to analyze the pendant that he was lent by his old boss from Edelgard. The old pendant had certain limitations that made the item jumble up his status screen. After identifying the enchantment that was inside and comparing it to weaker ones, he was quickly able to go through the magical mechanisms that made it work. It took a few days of work but now he could just implement the same effect into his armor.

It would never fall off and he could copy the rune on almost any piece of metal that he was holding. For the time being he went with the common name of William. The choice of War Magus came due to his fighting style which allowed people to cast spells and be good with weapons at the same time. It was a somewhat uncommon profession but known for high combat capabilities as it mixed in fast casting with melee combat. It was a means of scaring people off as there weren't many counter tactics when facing a properly experienced War Magus.

'I could have used this during the gold rank test, they aren't as pedantic about your status screen during the Platinum rank test.'

Now after gaining his new class it wouldn't be strange to go get a new rank. Normally a person expected the test requirements to be even more strenuous than the previous ones but this wasn't always the case. The first requirement was achieving a tier 3 class but identifying it wasn't always required. Instead one could just choose to have their skill tested by the guild master themselves.

This would probably be his fate if he decided to take it in Albrook. Aurdhan was the guild master here and would face him in combat. That is if it would even come that far as tier 3 class holders were already treated as the elite. Due to this fact, it wasn't that hard to gain the new adventurer card. The fact that a person was able to get through their tier 3 ascension ritual was mostly proof enough. Not much more

could be learned by experience past the golden rank, what mattered was more the power a person gained after gaining all those tier 3 enhancements he received.

'I should get this over with, even though I'm stronger it's better not to poke the beehive.'

Soon after glancing around, he noticed a new merchant stand that wasn't there before. It was somewhat eye-catching due to the two muscular bodyguards on the sides. The weapons that were being sold there were the same, they radiated a strange magical aura that he was able to pick up with his mana sense. All of his skills were enhanced so he could already tell that these were items with curses and hexes placed on them.

There were several magical languages in this world, one of them was runic that he used and the other that was the widest spread was enchantments. However, those two were just the two most known and orthodox of them all. Besides those two there also existed divine miracles and demonic curses. They were somewhat lumped into the same category even if the people using them disliked this fact.

These magical objects were usually created by priests or occult leaders. They channeled the divine powers given to them by a higher being. Most of the time this was done by religious factions like the Solarian Church or cultists like the Abyssal cult. In an unknown way, they would infuse weapons or items with their blessings to generate a magical effect. These effects Roland had already attempted to emulate and had achieved mixed results.

Then there were other various hexes, sometimes produced by other means. Sometimes the craftsmen used strange shamanic rituals that were similar to the ones the demonic priests used. Other times they were done through alchemical means that added magical properties to the material in itself.

'I wonder if I can really analyze all of them with my eyes, it worked on the healing spells so, in theory, it should work on the curses and hexes too.'

If it was up to him then he would just try to get his hands on all of those items to try and translate the magic into runic language. Buying up cursed items was a thing that could get a person into trouble though, the same thing went for hexes. They usually had some type of effect that could affect the well-being of the user. The Demons didn't lend power without taking something in return. One theory was that anyone using a cursed item would have their senses muddled by demonic whispers. Others believed that their soul would be slowly siphoned away into the demonic realm where the creator ate them up.

'It'll probably be better if I just get one of the hexes instead, something like venom should be enough, I haven't really worked on anything like that before, it's a bit more rare than the common poison enchantments you see everywhere.'

After making his decision he approached the stand he started recalling the time when he had been cursed by a dagger stab. The pain that he felt that day would never be forgotten and he could already see some blades with similar curses.

Curved Dagger [High]

[Deepsteel 80%] [Necrosium 20%]

Curse of Pain [Common]

Curse of Decay [Common]

Short Sword [High] [Mithril 5%]

[Deepsteel 75%] [Darksteel 20%]

Poison Enchantment [Common]

Bleed Hex [Common]

His skill to analyze objects had ranked up as well. He was able to see what the weapons were made from. The Necrosium metal included in the curved dagger was something that cursed items required. It was a material that mostly went into the hilt to keep the curse from seeping out and afflicting the person wielding it. Darksteel was similar but it could be used on lesser curses and enchantments.

The short sword was a mix of two, poison was one of the go-to enchantments that the thieves guild used. It was something that could be made by regular magic smiths and even Roland was capable of applying the runic version already. The Bleed Hex on the other hand was something he hadn't come across yet. This effect was known to him, it would delude a person's blood and cause hemorrhaging of any wound. It would severely diminish the effects of healing potions as well.

'Whoever made this blade probably had it hexed after the poison enchantment was applied. Potions against poison effects are quite common but not everyone carries specialized remedies to cure that status.'

"How much is that short sword?"

"I see that the gentleman has a keen eye, I'll part with it for a measly ten small gold coins."

"Ten? How about I give you five."

"Five? You must be joking! Just because we are in the thieves' den, don't think I'll let you rob me! Nine!"

"Six then, the craftsmanship isn't even that great and it has been used on something, look at that chipped spot."

"Seven and nine large silvers!"

Even though the two were shouting at each other no one really paid attention. Everyone else was doing the same thing, bartering was a staple of any market and a common occurrence. It wasn't strange for fake items to appear here and no one was getting their money back after a purchase. The prices here were a lot higher than at regular magic shops, most of the tools here were tools meant for assassination that could never be traced back to their original creator.

"Take it or leave it!"

"Fine."

The hooded merchant started angrily shouting but finally gave the weapon away. Roland managed to reduce the price by around twenty-five percent. Luckily he was a craftsman who could spot all the blemishes and faults in the design that continued to drive the price down. He wasn't sure if the addition

of his articulation skill and charisma added to the reduction as the merchant here should have been wearing some magical items preventing such effects from working.

'The bleed effect will come in handy when fighting humans but it won't do much against those skeletons....'

This spell was usually used by assassins as higher-tier monsters either were resistant to it or didn't even have blood in the first place. Humans on the other hand were very susceptible to this effect as it was almost impossible to build up resistance. The only way would be to bleed someone constantly and then heal them up to full health. Perhaps some crazy cults and assassinations guilds went through such means to train their soldiers. Normal people and even regular soldiers did not, the only real counter was enchanted items and potions to counter the effect that cost a lot of money.

'This should be enough but it won't hurt if I look over the new merchandise. Think that one stand had strange rocks on them, maybe I could feed them to Agni but I don't really want him to turn into a demon monster variant...'

This was a new merchant and he wasn't the only one. There were others here waiting to do business and probably if he wanted something like Necrosium, then it would be only sold here. Yet before he advanced further into the black market a beeping sound inside of his helmet started going off.

"What?"

His mind raced as he examined the inside of his display. The beeping sound persisted as he examined the situation unfold. The alert wasn't anything good and he knew this. With haste, he turned around and started running. He was stuck in the underground Black Market that was surrounded by a maze-like structure. It would take some time for him to get back and for some reason, his monitoring system didn't send the signal fast enough for him to react, nothing good could come of this and he knew it.

...

Earlier this day.

"Lieutenant"

"Sir!"

"Take a few men, find anyone that is related to the bastard, and bring them to the old Valerian villa."

"What if they resist, Sir?"

"Use force if you have to, we must make it clear that this city belongs to Lord Theodore Valerian now."

"Yes, Sir!"

A group of knights on their horses was treading along a paved path. They could already see the city walls along with the familiar crest of the Valerian household. The Knight Commander was impatient, they were behind schedule due to the monster attack along the way. He couldn't put his finger on it, but there were some strange things that happened along the way.

The orc attack wasn't the strangest one of the monster attacks but it wasn't the last one. They had a handful of lesser encounters with creatures that shouldn't have been there. It was as if someone had led them there for them to meet. There was even an incident of a collapsed bridge that held them back by half a day and then part of a narrow path had been collapsed.

There were far too many setbacks for this to be a coincidence, Arthur Valerian or someone working for him was trying to buy more time. If there was an attempt at stalling then he needed to be ready for some opposition. Yet he could not see the man that was referred to as the Bastard of the Valerian house to pose much of a threat.

Even if he managed to procure some tier 3 help, they would just end up on the end of his blade. No hired sword would engage in a battle to the death for a noble, Emmerson knew that someone bought through money would never pose a threat to him and his lord.

"You heard the Lord Commander, follow me, we will interrogate the guards first!"

Finally, the group was at the main gate and when they arrived everyone went silent. The sight of heavily armored mounted knights was a cause for concern. The common people knew that nothing good would come of involving themselves with nobles. They identified the crest almost instantly, the fear and respect for the family that ruled them for generations were quite real.

"You there."

"M-me, Sir, Knight?"

"Yes, I wish to have a word with you."

"O-of course, Sir Knight!"

Emmerson glanced at one of his knights approaching the soldier at the main gate. The way they instantly put their head down was a testament to how this place was run. If he was at the old city that belonged to Ivan Valerian then the soldiers would not have been that docile. It was clear that Arthur Valerian was not a true noble, his soldiers were meek and weak. Without a Knight Commander to infuse them with some bravery and dedication toward their master, they would quickly abandon them.

The moment he arrived it was already over. Emmerson could see that the soldiers in this city had no true loyalty towards their own lord. The moment they all realized that he was an actual Knight Commander, someone with true power they decided to back away. Even though he brought armored soldiers into the city they could do nothing more than let him waltz through it and directly head toward the main house.

These people would not pose a problem to him or his lord. They were just a bunch of leaderless pawns that just adhered to anyone more powerful than them. After Arthur Valerian joined his lord they would swear their loyalty to their new master instantly. They could not be trusted but had their place inside the war machine.

What he was only worried about were the stalling tactics that were used. If he excluded Arthur from being the problem, then perhaps one of the other lord's had something to do with it. Each and every one of them had their hidden troops, skilled assassins wouldn't have problems blowing up a bridge.

Though due to the fact that the rogue didn't attempt to blow up the bridge while they were passing through it, told him of their inexperience and cowardness.

'Who could it be... Could Ivan be trying to regain some ground by interfering? Or could it be Tybalt... The first Lord would probably not interfere in such a small matter but the other two wouldn't be above it.'

The man thought about the true enemy that he was up against. If there were hidden masters around here then perhaps this whole place would turn into a bloodbath. His hand gripped the reins harder to quickly push his horse forward. He had been ordered to take this place over and as one of the new Knight Commanders, failure was not an option.

Before receiving this chance he was forced to spend his days out on the battlefield. His skill grew exponentially with the years but that life was filled with hardships. Being allowed to swear himself to a proper duke household was his crown achievement. He would not let this chance slide and do everything in his power to remain in this position for the rest of his life.