

Runesmith 39

[Chapter 39 Into the sewers.](#)

There was quite a commotion in Southtown. In the middle of the night, a loud explosion was heard from one of the warehouses. It was loud enough to wake up the people living there. The guards arrived at the scene quite late as always. They were expecting to find some kind of unregistered alchemist lab accident but instead, they were greeted by a dead burglar's body.

Next to this body was a youth dressed in a dark robe. There was also a tied-up person on the ground in front of the warehouse. One of the windows was missing and smoke was coming out of it. It looked like someone tried jumping through it outside.

The guards could see that the two people on the ground had the usual rogue esthetic. The one that was alive was tied up really well and had a rag shoved into his burned mouth. He was also not looking too good, one of his arms was mangled up. The clothes he was wearing were also ripped apart and also burnt as if he was getting roasted on a fire.

"Took you long enough, these two tried robbing me."

The youth moved his hood down from his head and spoke out. He had dark hair and somewhat gloomy expressions. The two guards that got here first looked at each other and then at the supposed thieves.

"We'll need you to come with us and explain everything..."

It was about 2 am at night and some other people had also gathered here. This world didn't have something like a police station, instead, it was the city guards that were responsible for the order. Even though Roland was the person that was almost killed, there was no evidence for it yet. They needed to take him back to the guard post and question him along with the witnesses.

Roland gave out a sigh, he was already tired and now he needed to go with these two idiots. He didn't want to get in trouble so he just nodded. Going against the city guards was considered a felony, it was better to get this over with. From the looks of things, he would be spending the night in the brig as he didn't think they would really question him at this late hour. The whole 'questioning' process was carried out by higher officials but these two were just common guards.

While Roland was mumbling profanities under his nose someone else arrived at the scene of the crime. This person remained unnoticed while keeping to the shadows. The guards couldn't even see as the person sneaked into the building. The intruder blended into the shadows as if they were a part of it.

There was no one else inside. The figure of the person emerged from the shadows, it looked like a cloud of pitch-black smoke. The smoke took shape into the figure of a woman. The woman was wearing black cloth armor that covered all of her body that was quite curvaceous.

She was standing in the room where everything happened, the blood was still fresh. She could tell that someone used a similar skill that she performed just now. She could feel the darkness element in the air which piqued her interest.

"Did the boy use one of his scrolls?"

Her face was covered by a mask, she had a similar roguish look as the attackers had. The only thing that could be seen under her hood were her bright silver eyes. She started quickly going through the warehouse, with her enhanced skills she could tell through where the thieves came inside. She could also tell more or less that the thieves were caught off guard.

The woman faded back into the shadows and left soon afterward. While traveling through the night her stats were enhanced which let her reach her destination fast. The place she was going towards was the richest district in this town called Hightown.

From the outside, this building looked very elegant. It was built with grey stones and had yellow pine wood decorations. Tall, large windows allowed enough light to enter the home and had been added to the house in a very symmetric way. The building had a rounded shape and a small garden outside of it. The roof was high, triangular, and was covered with brown roof tiles. One small chimney sat at the side of the house and some smoke was coming out from it.

One of the windows was slightly opened and a dim light was coming out from it. The woman with the use of her shadow traveling ability made her way inside. The moment she entered she could see a shadow bouncing off from that light. It was a figure of a person, this person was sitting at a desk and looking through some parchments.

“Zilyana is that you? Told you not to sneak up on me like that, you can use the door like a normal person.”

The voice of the gnome that Rolan worked sounded in the residence. The woman’s form emerged from the shadows as she made herself noticeable. She looked slightly different from what she normally did. Her golden hair was now pure white and her skin color was dark brown. This was the usual appearance that a moon elf possessed.

“But it’s more fun this way~”

She giggled while the manager stopped writing, he fixed his glasses and pushed the stack of papers to the side before asking.

“Did you find anything?”

He was curious as his ‘assistant’ rarely returned in the middle of the night without a good reason, something must have happened.

“Perhaps...It’s a bit complicated.”

The gnome’s eyebrow rose but he remained silent waiting for her to continue.

“There was a small incident in Southtown.”

“In Southtown? We don’t really have many assets there.”

The manager interrupted Zilyana, his store mostly operated in the better parts of the city. He had some real estate bought out in the slums but only because it was cheap. Its cheapness stemmed from how bad the living conditions there were.

“Stop interrupting and let me finish! It’s about the kid, you know your favorite scribe.”

“Roland? Did something happen? Is he dead?”

The gnome rubbed his chin, when this woman was involved death wasn't far away. It wasn't really far fetched if the boy got involved with her.

“No, not him. Though someone did die by his hand...”

Zilyana started describing the situation. That Roland had slain a tier 2 thief and captured another one that was close to a high level steel adventurer. She also gave the info about him using some spells similar to her skills. This part wasn't much of a surprise to the gnome as Roland had even asked him to supply him with all sorts of spell scrolls. The surprising part was that the child that wasn't even 13 years of age could take out a tier 2 rogue.

“Damn bastards!”

The gnome smacked the table with his hand, a vein pulsating over his eyebrow was clearly visible.

“First someone tries to undermine my business and now this.”

He paused for a moment before turning to his moon elf assistant.

“Do you know who is responsible, you said that one of the thieves survived? Do you know who they are?”

Zilyana smirked a bit before answering.

“They were clearly a party from the guild, that rogue was probably the leader. Haven't been there in a while, should I pay them a visit?”

The woman smiled even wider, this smile made the manager shiver slightly as he knew what she was asking him about. He thought for a moment and nodded, he needed to show that he and his employees couldn't be trifled with. The people from the thieves guild were strong but he had his own connections and he wasn't afraid of the consequences.

“Take Ziron with you, if they don't give you the information, you know what to do...”

“What about the kid?”

The woman asked while turning around and ready to leave.

“Send someone to pick him up in the morning, that brat will probably chew me out in the morning.No respect for his elders.”

The woman nodded and left, the manager sighed while thinking about what was going to happen. He knew how this woman operated but they dared to attack one of his assets that he was cultivating. He knew that Roland had a bright future ahead of him, he was even making enchanted equipment already.

He knew that if he managed to strike a deal with him, he would earn a lot of money. Promising runesmiths wasn't something that came across everyday. The ones that weren't dwarves were even rarer. He was progressing a lot faster than expected, which made him fear for what the kid would expect in the next contract.

This would need to wait as there were more important matters to look into. Mainly the problem with someone trying to sabotage his stores. It started with some bogus claims about faulty products, then some thefts and shipments getting sacked. Now they even tried to kill one of his workers by using the thieves guilds assassins. This had to stop as soon as possible, the guild would need to give up the names of the person responsible or suffer the consequences.

The gnome moved from his chair and moved to a different room. In it was a round decorative mirror with some crystals around it. The gnome couldn't see his reflection in this mirror as this was a magic artifact meant for a different purpose. He reached out to one of the crystals and injected some of his mana into it. The moment he did the crystals started glowing blue.

After a few minutes, the glowing crystals changed the color from blue to green. The moment they did a vague outline of a figure appeared in the mirror. The figure's appearance was blurry at first but it slowly became sharper.

"Did something happen? You rarely call."

The person that was on the other end of the magical device asked. The manager didn't stall as this magic item burned through magic crystals like nothing.

"Yes, I need you to..."

It pained the gnome that he needed to make this call. He would need to spend some of that hard-earned cash but it had to be done. The talk continued for a minute, the person on the other side vanished as the conversation ended.

"This should do it..."

The old gnome headed back to his room while the night continued. This wasn't yet over as the main part of the evening had just begun. The elven woman that was in Hightown was already going towards a certain place, where a certain man would probably be. The area that he mostly stayed at was somewhere that she didn't like venturing to.

This was the very cutely named flower district, it didn't really have anything to do with them though. This was the red light district and where all the whorehouses were, they were owned by one of the members from the council.

Zilyana appeared at one of the brothels that her co-worker frequented and was lucky enough to find him. As always he was naked with two ladies from different races around his neck. She barged into the room while they were already doing the deed, to the brothel owners' dismay. The moon elf woman was well known in these parts so they didn't stop her. The moment the man saw her enter he greeted her with a smile.

"Welcome, did you finally change your mind?"

The man named Ziron asked while not doing much to cover his nether regions. He even sensually pointed his 'spear' towards the dark-skinned elven woman that just furrowed her brows.

"Get dressed, we have a job to do. I'll wait outside, you have one minute."

She wasn't in the mood to argue with this guy as he would just tease her as always. She didn't like working with him but she knew that his skill was comparable to her own. Back on the outside, Ziron finally showed up. His shirt was unbuttoned and you could see some lipstick marks over his toned body.

The man had a similar appearance to Zilyana as he was also a moon elf. Just like her, he had long silver hair and dark skin, some people sometimes mistook them for siblings.

"M'lady, did I keep you waiting?"

He did a courteous bow while sniggering to himself. The man was slightly above 180 cm in height and had a slimmer toned build. He was also a moon elf with silver hair and brownish skin but it was slightly lighter than Zilyana's. His eyes were golden in contrast to the female's silver ones.

"We have work, we are going to pay the guild a visit so get dressed and take this seriously..."

She narrowed her eyes at the man who didn't have his battle gear on. Ziron nodded and his smile changed into a frown, there was time for pleasure but now it was the time for work.

"Cold as always. Aye, give me a minute..."

The two walked away from the brothel and moved towards one of the dark alleys. Just as the woman, the man's figure turned blacker as it faded into the shadows. Soon the two were running next to each other. Ziron's face was now covered by a hood and a lower mask, his gear was similar to his female companions. His armor looked to be some kind of black leather, some intricate inscriptions were visible and indicated that this was enchanted armor of the runic kind. His weapons of choice were two long curved short swords that he held in his hands. The two continued towards their destination at high speeds.

The place they were going towards wasn't in any of the districts in the city. No, it was located beneath it, somewhere where normal residents wouldn't even want to venture to.

"I hate going to the Rat Plaza, it always smells like shit there..."

The man complained while looking at the entrance to the so-called plaza. It was a large sewer opening that would take them to the city sewers. The sewers were composed of a large array of corridors filled with various waste products. They weren't going there for the rats and bad smell though, there was another place that you could only access through these passages.

The two dove inside and could quickly make their way through the dark corridors thanks to their shadow walking skills. They followed the usual path and ended up at a certain wall. If someone didn't know any better he would think that this was just your everyday piece of rock. The two on the other hand knew what they needed to do.

"Will the beautiful lady do the honors?"

Zirion smiled while grinning, the elven woman just rolled her eyes and squatted down. She moved her hand into the sewage water and after a moment managed to find the lever. The moment she shifted it, the wall started moving. The mechanism was slow and it made the whole wall go in a circle.

"One day I'll kill the bastard that placed that damn lever in a spot like that."

Zilyana pulled out a bottle of water from her storage bag and started rinsing her hand with it. The two then stepped through the now opened up passage. The slow-moving wall didn't stop until it was sealed. On the other side, they were greeted by another corridor this time with magical torches leading the way.

They could already hear some people talking inside as they had arrived in the hidden part of the city of Edelgard. This was the place where all the thieves and bandits spent their time, some of them even lived here while rarely coming outside. The thieves guild that they were going after was also here.

The two walked inside, past the torch-lit corridor was a large open space. There were various merchants stands here, the people here weren't selling food though. This was what most people would call a black market. Various stolen items were placed on display, people could even get body parts of humans and monsters that were forbidden for various reasons.

The two walked past those merchants, everyone was covering their faces in one way or another. The whole Rat Plaza spread through the cities underground like a spiderweb. There were various larger junctions and pockets like this black market. Those larger areas were occupied by separate shady organizations. Ones dealt in slaves, others in assassinations and then there was the thieves guild.

It operated in a similar way to the adventurer's guild and also had other branches in different cities. It was a group that wasn't very tightly knit like the adventurers though, fights for the guild master position broke out occasionally. The guilds from other cities wouldn't really get involved with each other unless the payment was good. This also meant that they wouldn't help other guilds retaliate if something happened. Unless someone made it worthwhile.

This was also why these two elves were quite confident in the task that was given to them. They vanished from the large underground space into one of the many underground corridors. Their destination, the zone where the guild had their headquarters, it was time to get blood on their hands.

[Chapter 40 Thieves Guild](#)

Edelgard's thieves guild. It was hidden underground along with all the other unconventional businesses. The only way of reaching it was having a thievery related class. This was mostly considered to be either a thief class or a bandit class.

The first one was your usual pickpocket and someone primed for stealthy operations. The second one was more of a thug, closer to a warrior in stat distribution. The only difference was mostly in some passives while fighting in a less honorable way. The way you achieved it was by stealing, robbing, or even killing other human beings.

Just like the adventurers guild it had a notice board where the guild members could take on tasks. They ranged from your typical fetch quests where someone petitioned a certain item from someone's house be taken. All the way to assassination missions and even brutal robberies with no witnesses.

Some thief guilds outright forbade missions like those, leaving it up to other more dark organizations like the assassination guilds. This depended on the guild leader and the one in Edelgard had no problem with getting his guild members' hands bloody.

The man running the show here was called Reinald the Razor. This was mostly due to his fondness of cutting up his target's throat with his daggers. He was a high leveled person that had taken over the job just a few years ago after the previous guild leader died during one of the job runs. He was the one that brought in some changes to the guild that refrained from the more bloody deeds.

The guild now was considered weaker than it was while the old guild master was around. Mostly due to the fact that the previous one was a high level tier 3 and an owner of a prestige class. His replacement was just a regular Master Blade-Rogue without any strong skills in particular. Still, he was the strongest person here and no one could go against his daggers.

The night was slowly winding down and some of the guild members were returning after carrying out some missions. This brought in a small commotion as the party that had tried to ransack Roland's workshop had returned with two of their members missing. News soon started spreading about the encounter and that one of the more experienced members was killed.

"Hey did you hear, that old idiot Rawson got himself killed."

"What? But he was a tier 2? Did he try to fuck the count's wife or something?"

One of the talking thieves laughed while the other took things a bit more seriously.

"It's even worse, they even caught that idiot Bryan. I bet old Reinald will skin the rest of their party alive."

The thieves knew that getting caught was close to a death sentence. Either you got hung at the gallows by the city guards, or if you gave out any information implicating the guild you'd have to worry about them chasing you down. Anyone betraying the guild would be marked for death depending on the guild master. The one that was here liked to put out hits on people like handing out cookies.

"Maybe he will be in a good mood today? We have been getting a lot of work for the past few months."

The guild had been busy lately, someone was spending big time and they were carrying out various tasks.

A party of adventurers would mostly win against one composed of thieves and thugs. That was only in an outright brawl. The thieves guild members never played fair, always waiting for the right time to strike. They played dirty using poison and only attacked at night, some of them even used monster attacks as cover.

There had been a couple of blunders through this period but the people outside couldn't really distinguish between a guild member and a regular person. No one would talk about it out of fear of retaliation either. The event that happened today was quite a problem as an assassination attempt was considered a big deal.

The two thieves that returned here after escaping out of fear were now getting questioned by the guild master. They were now kneeling down in a dim-lit room, the guild master was sitting behind his desk while playing around with a sharp crimson knife.

The two men had their hoods down and their faces were clearly revealed. They both were regular humans as the party was very uniform in their race. They weren't alone in this room with only the guild master, there were four other people here.

Two were beast men from an undisclosed feline tribe, another one was a halfling that was leaning up against a wall and skillfully playing around with some throwing knives. The fourth one was quite large and his skin was pale green. He didn't have the look of a rogue and clearly followed more of the bandit route with his class, he belonged to the half-orc race.

"So you are trying to tell me that that idiot got killed by some brat blacksmith?"

The two nodded in panic as they didn't hide any details from the operation. They were sure to not leave out any details. The only problem was that they didn't really see what really happened as they were the lookouts. None of them expected their experienced leader to be killed by an underage blacksmith. They even knew that he was only a steel adventurer, how could he go against a tier 2 rogue at night?

"Did that idiot step into some magic trap?"

The guild master had a hard time believing this report. The man that died wasn't much but he still was a tier 2 class holder. He smelled a conspiracy, did someone snitch? These two escaped the moment their leader's dead body shot out from the window impaled on the gale arrow.

Reinald didn't think that these two were lying, the spell that did their party leader in was apparently a green arrow. This he could clearly identify as something a higher mage could use but a magic scroll could also have been used.

He had no reason to not believe these two so they were allowed to leave. They didn't do anything wrong and the guild master thought that someone must have given out information. When they found the one responsible they would pay dearly.

"Have someone go to the guardhouse, either buy out that idiot or silence him for good. This has to be done tonight."

The one listening was the halfling that nodded and left right after the two other thieves. Some of the guards in the city were on their payroll so they could try paying for their guild members' freedom. This would be something that the man would have to pay off with interest. If they failed they would need to get him removed before he could reveal the guilds hiding place.

None of the thieves would actually speak out on their own volition but there were certain skills that forced people to talk. There were special inquisitor classes that could force people to speak the truth. There were also special magic spells or even potions that could be used instead. This was a hit related to the council of merchants and business owners. They had enough money to order a specialized potion or even hire a mage.

"One more thing."

The guild master spoke out while the halfling and one of the beastmen was ready to go and carry out the mission.

"That blacksmith brat that was involved, kill him, no loose ends."

He needed to silence both sides, the person from his camp could live if he was set free but this unknown person needed to die. They also already accepted the mission by the customer and needed to carry out the request. Otherwise, they would just have their good name tarnished.

The two people nodded while smirking but before they even left the room a certain thing happened. They two were already tier 2 and even close to level hundred but even they couldn't react in time.

The magic candlelight flickered for just a moment and the guild master could slightly see the shadows expanding. He was the only one in the room that saw what was happening. A shadowy hand reached out as his two guild members were walking out.

The hand looked like it wasn't part of this plane of existence. It looked like it was composed of black smoke as it flickered in the candlelight. The shade hand was holding a very real looking dagger. It probably felt more real when it was pushed into the cat man's back. The halfling was a bit luckier as thanks to his small stature he was hard to hit.

He rolled to the side after seeing a pointed tip going through one of his guild buddies. He quickly tried flinging his throwing knives at the shadowy hand but before he could he felt something piercing him from behind. The two men were dead in a flash and no one could even react, the assailants soon revealed themselves while all dressed up in black leather.

"Reinald the Razor? More like the idiot. Your greed will be your downfall."

A woman's voice came out from under the hood. The person that had backstabbed the halfling sunk back into the shadows ready to strike. The other two guards that were in the room stepped forward. The Half-Orc was huge and had a giant mace in his hand, the other bestman a regular long-sword.

"Who are you, what do you want?"

Reinald's eyes went red as he took out his enchanted set of daggers and was ready for a fight. From the display of power he knew that this woman wasn't someone that he should take lightly. She also wasn't alone, he could feel someone else moving through the shadows. The dim candlelight was working against him.

Zilyana and Zirion had snuck in thanks to their shadow bending skills during the conversation and were just waiting to strike. The thieves guild was something they had visited before and even taken some missions before this man was the guild leader. It was easy to evade detection thanks to their previous knowledge and advanced hiding skills that were rarely seen.

"What do we want? For starters, you could tell us who ordered you to attack that warehouse in Southtown tonight"

The guild master and his goon remained in place while talking to the woman. Reinald caught on fast and realized why this person was here and also who they were working for.

"You really want to start a fight with the guild over something like this? Does that gnome have a deathwish?"

Even though Reinald was considered a bloodthirsty brute he was a lot more intelligent than people gave him credit. He knew what that team of four had done today and by who they were hired. He also knew

who the warehouse belonged to, it was one of Exeor's assets. Thus he came to the conclusion that the gnome had to be the one sending these people here. The other option would be a third party.

"Do you? You don't even know how big our company is, it wouldn't be hard to make your little guild disappear..."

The woman approached with her weapons drawn, apparently, the threat didn't work. The woman didn't even try to keep her boss' identity secret. It looked as if they were comfortable in starting a war with the thieves guild over this matter.

Reinald wasn't someone that used the diplomatic way to get things done. Still, he wasn't sure that he would get out of this alive if he fought now. His two bodyguards were weaker than him and this woman was close to him in levels. The problem was that she wasn't alone and he knew that they were the types that could kill him before any reinforcements came.

"Wait!"

He moved his hand out and the woman stopped. He didn't want to risk his life against this person, they were clearly seasoned killers. There was a small problem though, he had signed a magical contract similar to the one Roland signed when he was hired. The curse that the thief guild master would receive was quite more deadly than a small mana penalty though.

"You know how it works, I can't say anything, I'd as well just kill myself right now... but..."

The man's eyes trailed to a painting on the wall that was to the side. This gave the woman assassin enough info for the next step. She walked over and moved the painting to the side, underneath was a medium-sized safe with a combination lock.

"8752309567"

He said the combination while still looking at the shadows. His two guards were surprised that their leader didn't give him the order to attack yet. Their buddies were dead but the woman responsible was now going towards his personal safe. Before she put in the code she turned to face the cat man.

"You, enter the combination..."

She didn't trust the guild master. Some of these safes were magical, a wrong combination could very well make the thing explode or fire off some poison mist instead. They were the ones with the upper hand as the thieves were below their skills. Reinald just gave out a sigh and nodded to his henchman.

"The right code is 8752309569, hey don't blame me for trying..."

He shrugged while glad that the woman didn't react in anger and just let this slide. The beastman managed to open up the safe without it blowing up in his face or destroying any evidence. She also realized why he wouldn't really be willing to blow it up as there were a lot of gold coins and costly documents inside.

After going through them she found a certain black book with the names of customers. With more digging, she found what she was looking for. The thieves guild kept a record of everyone they were working with and for. They did it mostly to have evidence to blackmail anyone that had a change of mind and snitched.

“T-this isn’t good...”

She looked at the name of the person that ordered the hit. The name was also visible on other missions like the ones that used poison in the restaurants or the ones that targeted the caravans of other council members. Reinald couldn’t disclose the information himself but if someone found any evidence themselves he wouldn’t suffer any consequences. Luckily he managed to have a backdoor in the contract as he was working with people that weren’t very familiar with how things worked in the shadows.

“Now you know, not like you’ll be able to do much with that knowledge. Now fuck off!”

Zilyana took a moment to digest the information that she received. It was true, the person responsible would be hard to go against if what the book said was true.

“If you send any more of your men after our workers, you’ll find yourself with a dagger in your back.”

Zilyana threw the book back at the guild master while giving him a warning. Soon the two assassins faded into the shadows to make their escape. The thief guild leader roared out in rage and smashed his desk in half with his fist. The two intruders wouldn’t witness his meltdown as they were busy with retreating.

Zirion emerged from the shadows to have a small chat while they were running.

“That was boring, wouldn’t it have been better to just finish them off?”

Zilyana looked at her partner in crime like she was looking at an idiot. There was a line that you shouldn’t cross. If they assassinated the guild leader, the other guilds might get involved. It was unknown if they would but they had some powerful individuals on their payroll, it was better to leave them alone unless it was absolutely necessary. This way the guilds would remain neutral for sure.

“No, as long as we don’t go overboard they won’t either, we sent a message, they won’t be sending any more hits out for a while.”

The guild master would probably cease any operations for a while as the whole council of merchants will now know who was behind this. The problem was that the real mastermind wasn’t someone that regular people could touch.

“So, who is it? You got awfully quiet after reading those notes.”

Zilyana stopped in her tracks and looked at the moon elf companion.

“We should split up here, I need to go do my report and then check up on the kid, I’ll call you when I need you.”

The woman said before vanishing, Ziron just shrugged while also disappearing. He didn’t really care who it was they were going against; he was only interested in money and pleasure. If it got too tiresome he could always just ditch and find someone else to give him money. There were many rich people in this world happy to hire someone with his unique set of skills.

The night was finally coming to an end, the ending wasn’t as bloody as expected as Zilyana handled it with only two people getting killed. She sped towards the manager’s house to do her report.

The person that was entangled in this whole mess was leaning up against a cold stone wall. He was cold and couldn't sleep, the guards had pushed him inside one of the prison cells like a common criminal. He was awaiting someone that would be here at 8 am, he hoped that he could explain himself and go back to his workshop.

He needed to also contact his boss as he had a sinking suspicion that the company that he was working for was the real target of this attack and not he. He would still need to wait a few hours as it was only four in the morning. There were a myriad of thoughts going through this head, mostly about how he could prepare his workshop against forced entry in the future.

He felt like he could have done better but it wasn't a total disaster. He managed to get away without an injury and slew a tier 2 burglar. He had also gained a title that he would rather not have, namely the 'Manslayer'. This was something you got after killing a human being. He took part in slaying the fencer that was after him that one time but he wasn't the one that performed the last hit. He wasn't sure if it was because of him already having killed so many humanoid monsters like goblins that he wasn't feeling bad about it. Did he get used to killing already?

After thinking about new contingencies and what went wrong he finally managed to get tired enough to doze off. What transpired in the shadows would remain unknown to him for some time.