

Runesmith 41

[Chapter 41 Getting a better deal.](#)

Roland spent the rest of the night in a cold cell. The people in this world apparently didn't care much about their prisoners. The place he had to be was infested with rats, was cold and uncomfortable. There wasn't even a bed or a chair to sit on, he had to lean against the wall. Luckily they let him keep his clothes that were thick enough to get him through this chilly night.

He wondered if these guards would be punished if it came to light that he was an actual noble's son. There were laws in place that forbid imprisonment of nobles in places like this before a trial. Even then, most sentences would at most strip some of the noble's status, or they just had to pay a fine and take a blow to their reputation.

The aristocrats took things like this very seriously here. Some would even rather die than be stripped of their titles and lands. They would fight with all their might against things like that ever happening, even if it got bloody.

He couldn't really sleep so he had some time to think. He was worried that someone would ransack his workshop and even steal his money. He had most of his possessions in his spatial bag that was confiscated on the way here. He had to give it away as he didn't really have any other option.

He didn't think anyone would want this magic paddle design. The magic scrolls that he had were another thing, he even had some that were meant for the store. Roland frowned at his lack of power, he needed to improve himself faster if he ever wished to be self-sufficient.

He was lucky that the assassin didn't take him seriously. Otherwise, he would probably be dead. The person he was going against was a tier 2 and probably proficient at assassination. Hiding his true abilities was apparently the smart choice. Until he reached a certain threshold it would probably be unwise to show off more of his skills.

The night continued and in the morning someone finally decided to show up. It was another guard that came to pick him up and he looked a bit apprehensive while opening his cell.

"You may leave."

He said while prompting Roland to go outside. This was a surprise, the other guards told him that he would be questioned in the morning. For some reason he was free to go, could they really have figured out his true identity. Roland's heart rate increased at that thought as he really didn't want to go back to his cozy family.

"I'm free to go? Why?"

He asked while hoping for the best.

"Yes, someone vouched for you."

The guard replied while the two started going out. He didn't look like a person that would know much so Roland decided to leave it at this. He was brought to another room and was handed his bag of holding. He instantly checked if nothing was taken and if all of the coins, items, and scrolls were there.

Only after doing this, he decided to leave. Outside he received the answer to why he was allowed to leave without much hassle. There was a co-worker from the Exeor company there to greet him.

The store he was working for was called Exeor's Magic Emporium but the whole company was just named by the owner. There were various other chain stores, you could even find some restaurants in some other cities. This company was even a notch above the other merchant council members.

The person he was looking at wasn't someone that he was particularly familiar with. He had seen him around the store and he mostly took care of some odd jobs. He was of the halfling race and he was also an aspiring alchemist working in the store. Their ages were similar but the halfling here was just in his first tier 1 class. This was also why he needed to do cumbersome work. He was one of those people that signed one of the less stellar contracts.

"Fosco was it? Why are you here?"

Roland asked while walking out of the guardpost he was imprisoned in. Buildings like this were spread throughout the city and used as temporary holding for criminals. The person would await the decision of an officer before getting transferred to a larger jail or let go. Things like trials weren't a thing for common people with no money. An officer had enough power to take care of such things instead of a judge. The city lords would only care if the person getting accused was someone with money or friends in high places.

Fasco looked up to Roland with a slight frown on his face. The two started work at about the same time but the human was getting a lot more attention. This made the halfling youth a bit jealous.

"Not like I wanted to come here, the boss just told me to give the guard captain a letter in the morning."

"Is that so... anything else?"

Roland replied while asking.

"No."

Fasco was also ordered to wait for Roland and tend to any of his needs. He didn't want to reveal that part though. Roland figured this out as the youth remained in place even though he should be done with his assignment.

"You can leave, I don't need anything else from you, I'll go talk to the manager myself."

The halfling flinched after Roland somehow found out about his ploy. He was now slightly worried that the human would tell this to his boss and he would be punished. Roland on the other hand didn't care and didn't want the halfling to bother him anymore.

After some back and forth Fasco and Roland finally went their own ways. The human youth needed to go talk with his supervisor. He had a suspicion that the thieves weren't there to rob him but just to assassinate him instead. He didn't recall offending anyone in the city, he mostly kept to himself for the time he spent here.

The only person who could be after his life would be someone from his own family that he left behind. Though it was a bit far fetched that he was found here or that they would risk making moves in the territory of a count. The possibility was still there, but the probability was quite low.

The more plausible theory was that it was related to Exeor. They suspiciously bailed him out from the prison without him even having to ask for it. He also knew that there were some shady things happening in the background. He heard rumors about shipments getting robbed and increased thief activity.

He needed more information, the gnome manager was probably informed about what was happening here. Before that, he returned to his humble workshop. When he arrived he spotted a guard, he was also a worker from Exeor's Emporium. This was a bit surprising, either the company cherished him as a worker or they were just defending their asset. There were even some men checking out the blown-up window and the trashed room.

He didn't really talk with them much before going inside. He was sure to hide the runic equipment he was making in his spatial bag, but he didn't have enough time to hide every little thing yesterday night. Some information leaks could have happened and his boss might already know that he could craft runes. That is if he didn't already know the moment he changed classes just like last time.

Roland needed to make another decision. His life was at stake yet again, he could either run away or somehow work it through. The only people that he could realistically rely on here were the people from the company that hired him. It at least seemed that they were willing to help him by the fact that they bailed him out of jail. They were even fixing his workshop, he also hoped it was free of charge. He wasn't sure if he wanted to live there anymore after what happened.

Before making a final decision he needed to have a talk with the gnome manager. He didn't really want to leave the city, everything he needed to train his smithing class was already here. Starting from the bottom in a new place would be tiring but if he needed to leave then he wouldn't hesitate. He had done it successfully before and he could do it once more.

There was one thing he thought about making now, a bicycle. After going back and forth so many times he was thinking about crafting one. With his current skills, it would be difficult. The hardest thing would probably be the chain along with the chain ring. He also would probably have to make one without tires which would bring the comfort down quite a bit. There were things like airless tires, he could probably go in that direction if he found the right material.

While thinking about the validity of a bicycle-powered by runes and with speed buffs he arrived at the store. He entered as usual and headed up to the second floor. No one stopped him and he didn't need the sun elf woman to guide him there either as everyone knew him here already.

He even saw her going out of the gnome's office. She had a less than stellar look on her face, Roland wouldn't ask her about it though. It was slightly strange, she always did bother him with the big sister nonsense whenever he saw her. This time around she looked preoccupied with her own thoughts.

Roland wasn't one to bother others so he just knocked on the door and waited. After a few seconds, he got a reply.

"Who is it, I'm busy!"

He heard the grumpy voice of the gnome that he still didn't know the name of.

"It's me, Roland. I'm Here to talk about what happened last night."

He replied while still waiting outside.

“Already? Fine, come in and close the door behind you.”

So he did, the manager was just sitting there with his pipe in his mouth. He didn't seem to be that busy but he did have a solemn look on his face. After a moment of silence, the older man was the first one to speak up.

“You alright kid? It's not easy to kill someone that is a tier above you.”

“So, you've already heard of it? What else do you know...”

The youth quickly asked while moving closer to the manager. The old gnome just blew out some smoke through his nose. He looked at Roland while thinking about his next sentence.

“I guess I should tell you about this, you've probably figured out that this wasn't simple burglary...”

Roland raised his brow slightly, it looked like the gnome was willing to talk. He expected him to dance around the problem and maybe giving him some snippets of information here and there. The whole thing was indeed suspicious.

Why would a tier 2 thief try to rob an old warehouse with a tier 1 blacksmith inside? They moved for profit and there was none to get there, even the runic equipment he made wasn't worth the hassle.

“Yeah... those guys weren't there to rob me. They went straight to my room...”

“Oh? You saw them go to your room?”

The manager cut Roland off before he could continue. Clearly interested in the fact that the youth somehow saw the burglars go into his house. Then he was even able to somehow evade their detection to witness them go into his room.

“I... yes I saw them, I hid my presence with one of my runic scrolls.”

Roland didn't feel like denying his abilities in this instance mattered much. The person here knew that he was able to make runic scrolls and he only used one of them to hide in the shadows.

“Interesting... but how did you know that they were there?”

Somehow the conversation shifted to the manager asking Roland about the previous night while the youth answered. He gave him a shortened version including the detection spell usage along with the other spell that allowed him to hide in the shadows. He didn't mention that the life detection spell was inscribed on metal though.

“Hoh? Not bad there kid, not bad at all.”

The manager nodded at the explanation but he was fast to point out the inconsistencies within it.

“Detect life? That spell has a limited range, to use scrolls for it would be a bit costly...”

Roland remained silent and didn't really confirm his new class choice. His boss didn't really need to know everything as he didn't know if he could trust him with everything.

“Think we went off-topic there. So, do you know why they came to that warehouse for a no-name blacksmith or scribe like me? There is nothing there of value to steal either.”

He finally got fed up with the questions and asked directly.

“There isn’t?”

The gnome smirked a bit which caused Roland to think that he knew something. The manager finally decided to reply to the question after seeing the youth’s face scrunching up.

“We’ve been having problems recently, things going missing, shipments misplaced, customers complaining...”

The gnome started listing some things that were going wrong. He also mentioned that this wasn’t an isolated incident and that other stores and establishments that didn’t belong to him were getting attacked by an unknown force.

“Do you know who it is? Are they going to do it again? Shouldn’t the city lord get involved in something like this?”

Roland naturally asked as he still feared for his life. There was no guarantee that someone wouldn’t come for him during the night again.

“The city lord... Don’t count on the nobles to do anything kid. You can stop worrying, I had someone look into it. Nothing like this will happen again, I can guarantee you this.”

The manager said while blowing out some smoke from his mouth.

“You can guarantee it?”

Roland replied while tilting his head to the side and slightly frowning. He still wasn’t sure if he could trust the old man. He didn’t interact with him that much even though he had been working for him for over a year now.

“We will also install a safety barrier around that wareho... workshop of yours... So stop worrying and get back to work. Also, you can have these...”

The gnome turned to the side and threw two books towards Roland. The youth grabbed them nicely thanks to his high dexterity stat. He looked at the two books wondering what this was about. His eyebrow shot up slightly the moment he read the titles of these books.

The first one contained the knowledge of runesmith skills he already knew. It was a ‘Runecraft’ Skill book that would be something blacksmiths with a mana scribe class would want to get their hands on. After learning it they would be allowed to change their classes to runesmith. Normally he would be happy about this but he already had learned this skill.

The other one was more interesting though, the title was ‘Runic ethereal pathways and how to use them in rune smithing.’ This one was more of a brow raiser, from the long name of this skill book he had an idea what it was about. This felt like it was a more intricate skill that runesmiths should only be able to get.

Roland looked to the gnome, his eyes going a bit wider along with his mouth. He was speechless for a moment but he kind of knew that the gnome was giving him this as a sort of apology and also a bribe. Before he could voice a question the manager spoke out first.

“I was saving the first one till you were in the later levels but it doesn’t seem that you will be needing it anymore. It will still increase your skill progress so you should read it.”

“...So you knew?”

Roland asked while grasping the accessory that was supposed to keep his status hidden. The guards had taken it away while he was in the jail cell. He had put it back during the way here, did someone check his status before he got there, or did the manager search his warehouse?

“I have my ways, no use hiding your skills from me kid, I’m not your enemy. I’ll give you a good price for everything you make, remember that well!”

Roland looked at the two skill books. He could throw them back and have the gnome owe him for not being able to protect him. He realised that his boss knew something but would probably not give him detailed information. The new skill that he received was tempting though a skill book like this would cost many golden coins if he tried buying it himself.

The company he was working for seemed to be increasing the defensive measures at his workshop. It would probably be still a gamble to remain there, moving to a safer district would be more appropriate. The gnome also never mentioned his noble status so the Arden estate probably wasn’t involved. This only left a few other options, one being that it was a feud between this company and another force.

It would probably be better for him if it was only that. Otherwise, it meant that someone hated him enough to send assassins after him. That possibility was low if he took out his noble status from the equation.

“Can I get a guarantee on a contract?”

He asked while the gnome clenched his jaw tightly and wanted to shout out some profanities at the youth.

“You smelly brat, just because you have a prestige class don’t get too cocky!”

“It is because of it that I am though. I’d sleep better knowing I have a nice contract protecting my life. Someone once told me that my class was unique and worth a lot. Would be sad if someone with a rare class like that just walked away, wouldn’t it?”

Roland quickly replied while the manager’s expression got quite ugly. His nose was really scrunched up and the hand that was holding the pipe was shaking around furiously.

Roland actually felt some kind of strange pressure coming from that small body. He wasn’t sure how strong this gnome was but he was probably a tier 3. The small body started looking really huge the more he continued to stare at him.

“Look at this cheeky brat...”

The gnome started laughing uncomfortably before giving another reply.

“You want a contract, very well! But it won’t be as one-sided as you want it to be!

The manager's eyes showed a strange glint as he busted out some paper and a pen. A strenuous reevaluation of his old contract awaited him. He knew he was in for a different kind of battle, he needed to see if the new contract clauses didn't screw him over in the long run. Luckily he had gone through a lot of books and knew how to handle these types of situations. He at least had to get a new location for his workshop that wasn't so close to the slums.

[Chapter 42 Hidden trouble and a new yet old workshop.](#)

Two pale crescent moons shone like silvery claws in the night sky. The sky was free of clouds which let everyone see a blanket of bright stars that seemed to stretch into infinity.

A certain person was sitting in a room, the candlelight danced in a gentle wind making the person's shadow sway. The person looked to be a man in his twenties and he was wearing an exquisite tunic. There were various precious gems sewed into it and the person was also wearing a costly looking necklace.

He wore a kind of large padded shoes of black leather, the toes were round and gored over the foot with colored material. The sleeves on his tunic were puffed and there was a kind of cap to the side with a white feather in it. On one of the man's hands a large ring was worn with what looked to be an insignia.

It was clear from the man's appearance that he was some kind of noble. He was busy reading a long letter and was already on the last page. The moment he finished he crumbled it up and pointed his finger at it. The parchment quickly went up in flames after a surge of fire mana assaulted it.

"The thieves guild won't cooperate anymore, damn idiots got caught. Those peasants dare resist? I need to acquire those assets at a lower cost before it is too late..."

The man rubbed his chin while looking at the piece of paper that was going up in flames. He continued to stare at it till it finally turned into dust. The moment it did a knock was heard on the door.

"Enter."

The man that entered was wearing a shiny suit of armor. The candlelight was bouncing off the chest plate that had some intricate designs on it. The person that was wearing the armor put his hand on his chest as a greeting. He had the same insignia on his chest piece that the man had on his ring, it was clearly a noble house emblem that they both belonged to.

"My lord, the merchant council has now become more aware of our movements. We are also unable to proceed with the plan as the guild refuses to cooperate. "

The man sitting there just nodded as the knight continued talking. He raised his hand making him stop, he already read a more thorough report from other sources so he didn't need to listen to this.

"I know. We must alter it, pull out for now, and let them think that they were successful. Not like they can do anything even if they know that we were responsible. They have no valid proof or the rank to call for a court hearing. Commoners will always be peasants with no actual power. "

The man stood up and went to the side. The knight remained in place, his posture straight. The nobleman slowly walked over to a large cabinet filled with various liquors. He took his time in picking

out one before sitting himself back in a more comfortable chair. The man in the shiny armor remained standing without uttering a word.

He waited through the whole ordeal. The man poured himself some of that liquid into a tall glass and started to slowly sip it.

“They know their place, they won’t be foolish enough to act against me. If that guild doesn’t want to act we will just hire someone else, get in touch with... them...”

The knight’s eyebrows quivered slightly as he listened to his lord talking.

“My Lord, do you mean?”

The knight asked while being taken aback slightly.

“Yes, their methods might be brutal but they get the job done and they won’t abandon their mission like those useless thieves. I still have some time before he can return from the border, three... no two years... this city’s assets have to belong to me by then.”

The man stopped himself from talking further and then looked at the knight that was just standing there. The man frowned and in a fit tossed the half-drunk glass filled with red liquor at the knight. The man didn’t doze and glass shattered all over his suit of armor.

“What are you waiting for!”

“Yes my lord, it shall be done!”

The knight did his salute and walked out of the room. After leaving he made sure to call up some maids to clean up the mess in the lord’s study. He didn’t like what his young master was planning but he couldn’t go against him. He had sworn an oath and he had to carry out his knightly duties.

The two silver moons continued to brighten the sky like two crescent daggers. Soon a new day dawned bringing new events with it.

Roland had his work cut out for him, the manager was very serious about his contracts. Its re-evaluation took some time to process. The gnome needed a good reason to invest more resources into Roland. This reason would be his third class as some of his runic items were already discovered during the burglary attempt. Roland wasn’t sure when his boss found out but it was no use hiding his increased worth anymore.

The gnome manager was happy to hear about the Runic Blacksmith variant. Due to this, he agreed to more funding and protection. He would be moved to a different location where he could train his craft in peace. The only downside of this, he needed to actually produce usable runic equipment. What came with it, was a big raise and a slight drop in the percentages he needed to pay for his items to the store.

Crafting runes wasn’t all that hard for him. Most of the problems came from the exorbitant amount of mana he burned during the crafting process. The hard part was the smithing as he was barely able to make passable smithing tools. Even something like nails were hard to produce.

He also agreed to an extension of the contract by a year. From what he calculated it would probably take him years to max out this class. He gained meager amounts of experience from making metal tools

or weapons. The only thing that gave him a lot of experience was runecrafting. The number of points he gained for making runic scrolls went down after his promotion. If you wanted to level up with a specialized class you needed to focus on its skills and proficiencies. The only other way would be getting a lot of rune schematics.

Even if he got all the way up to a runesmith, it would be good to have a working smithy to continue. There was no reason for him to leave if the assassination attempts stopped. The contract stated that the company would pay a fine and Roland would be able to cancel it. This was only if harm came to him due to his involvement with Exeor's company.

He barely got used to living in the shady warehouse and he would already be moving somewhere else. Of course, it was another unused warehouse with a similar layout but with fewer cobwebs this time around. After the new contract went through the company abandoned the repairs on the other one and outfitted his new workshop with better tools.

Roland was now sitting in his new office. It looked strangely similar to the old one, this really was just a less run-down version of the older building. He placed the two skill books that he received as compensation on his desk. After some time his runesmithing went up to level 2 but this wasn't enough to make crafting comfortable.

He grabbed the corresponding skill book and began reading it. It was similar to the one he read during his class change quest but not quite. A person could somehow increase their skill level after reading skill books but it wasn't by a set point. Due to this there was no reason to save it till he got his skill up to level 8. The reader would get a hidden number of experience points towards the given skill and if it was enough it would just go up.

The skill book he read while changing his class went together with a lesser fire resistance rune. This one also came together with a basic diagram, the one here would be quite useful for his current class. It came with a 'Lesser Fortitude' Rune. This rune would increase the user's endurance by a flat amount up by 5 if he got it into the 'highest' rating.

He already knew that he couldn't stack too many pieces of equipment like that onto one person. Armor that raised the user's stats like that came at a cost. It would temporarily lower the maximum number of mana by a set number.

For instance, if someone had 1000 points of mana and decided to use magical gloves with that fortitude enchantment. Their mana pool would be lowered by a 100 points. This meant that a person with that amount of mana could theoretically have 10 such runes on his equipment.

The same debuffs applied though. A person would start feeling a strain if their mana went below 30%. That was the usual cutoff at which the cons outweigh the pros. Of course, there were some ways to lower the mana costs, one was monster cores the other was skills. Thanks to Roland's 'Runic Master' skill he could wear more runic equipment than your regular adventurer.

Due to these conditions, most runesmiths didn't put more than one or two enchantments on a given piece of armor. You'd mostly see sets divided into; Gloves, boots, helmets, chest armor, and pants or skirts. To this, you could throw in a belt and some accessories.

This segregated the type of enchantments into two categories. First were the self-sufficient ones that didn't require the user's mana. Second, the less desired ones that came at the price of limiting your capabilities slightly. Even with there only being those two types there were further subcategories of them. Like ones that could be charged at special runic shops and worked for a limited time without the user powering it.

The type that cost the most was the one that could recharge themselves with the ambient mana in the air. They were also the hardest to make, from what Roland knew you somehow had to integrate a sufficiently large mana core into the item. Such a process was kept secret by the more advanced runesmiths. The only rumor he heard was that you somehow melted the mana stones into the items. How you did it he didn't know, if he switched classes he might get such a skill for free.

Runecraft Skill level 3 reached.

After finishing the first skill book he heard the world's system pronounce that it had leveled up. This would make things easier to craft from now on. Now came the second skill book, he grabbed it from the desk and began reading.

This one was about 'Ethereal Pathways' and was also a skill that runesmiths could attain. If he could nab it was still up to debate though as he was only a Runic Blacksmith and not a Runesmith.

He continued reading the skill book. The system rules this world worked on somehow aided people in gaining skills that were used by their classes. The person going through it would somehow get it as long as their attributes allowed it. There was some kind of hidden counter that if achieved would allow this.

Just as he had thought this skill would allow him to connect his runes on parts that weren't one large piece of metal. The brigandine armor was a good example, it consisted of many metallic plates riveted to fabric. With this skill, he would only need to inscribe the rune on one of those plates and then connect them via these Ethereal traces. Those pathways existed on some kind of different wavelength and weren't impacted by world physics that much.

There was of course a limit on how far the different pieces could be from each other. He couldn't make a connection from a boot to a glove. The craftsman could at most get in a few centimeters otherwise the whole runic structure would become unstable. This technique also made it possible to inscribe runes on some softer materials like cloth.

Ethereal Pathway Skill L 1 has been learned. Intelligence +1

It took him a couple of hours to go through this book. He had even gained a bonus point to intelligence along with the new skill. He had all the requirements to produce runic weapons and armor, the only problem was that he still sucked at making anything besides the runes.

He thought about one way to go around this issue and make a large sum of money in the process. Did he really have to be the one to craft swords or shields by himself? He could go to an armorsmith or weaponsmith and get himself a regular steel sword. He could then put his runes on it and sell it for a good amount of money.

He wasn't sure if there were any copyright or trademark laws against things like that though. Would a weaponsmith come knocking on his door if they spotted their sword being resold with an attached rune

to it? There was a way for a craftsman to identify his own weapon. He knew this as he could easily identify his own creations. Other people couldn't see the craftsman's name but the creator could.

'I should probably ask the company about this, they could probably procure me items that won't offend anyone.'

He thought to himself while grabbing a mug filled with warm black tea. If he went through Exeor network they would probably supply him something worthwhile. They owned various businesses around the city, they didn't really have a runesmith on their payroll but that would be changing soon.

Even with this, he wouldn't abandon his smithing class. He still needed to work on his tool masteries, he was very keen on crafting his own weapons. He knew that a person required vast amounts of resources to do this. Making a magic sword would probably bring him in a lot more money than making runic scrolls. He could only create weapons with limited charges and ones that lowered the user's mana by a fixed amount. Still, there was a market for it and it was booming.

Roland turned to the window and looked outside, the workers were almost done with carrying everything inside. He would become busy once again. The biggest thing holding him back was his mana usage. He needed to lower the strain on himself, he needed to get some better crafting equipment. He would achieve this by getting something that increased his mana regeneration or its amount.

He had already managed to get a lesser mana regeneration magic ring from his boss. It was one of the things that he managed to insert into his contract. Even the lesser ones cost a huge number of coins so it was worth signing a one year extension just for this. With it on, he could increase his production rate by about 15%. He wanted to earn enough money to get similar products and increase his mana abilities even further.

The workers were still setting up his new workshop so he took out some magical paper and his quill. Time was off the essence and he could use it to practice his scribing strokes. It was a drag that he couldn't level up his basic skill further due to not being a tier 2 class yet.

The more he crafted the more experience he got and the faster he could get his advanced class. What it would be in the end was still unknown to him but he hoped it would also be a unique one. So he went to work, the new workshop would soon be very busy. He would also be getting a part-time assistant, finally, he would have an employee under himself to order around.

So the next day came. His new workshop looked exactly the same as the old one, the walls were slightly more sturdy though and the catwalk would probably not give out under his weight anymore. The person that was going to help him out with some chores was supposed to be here now. They were already late which didn't bode well.

"Hello? I'm from the guild. I'm here to work part-time..."

He heard someone call out from outside. The voice sounded familiar and high pitched which indicated that the person was probably a woman. This wasn't much of a problem as spatial bags existed and he only needed someone to help him clean and do some odd jobs here and there.

"Yes, could you start by clean...What are you doing here?"

Roland opened the door and saw a familiar half-gnome girl standing before him. She was wearing better adventurer gear and looked less pouty.

“Roland?”

It was one of his old party members, Helci and she was apparently going to be his new assistant.