

Runesmith 95

[Chapter 95 Weighting the options.](#)

Adolescent Volcanic Wolf

[Fire/Earth/Beast]

A common canine type monster found in volcanic regions. Their noticeable feature is their growing mane covered in volcanic rocks.

Adolescent Ruby Wolf

[Fire/Earth/Beast]

An uncommon canine type monster found in volcanic regions. Their noticeable feature is their growing mane covered in rubies.

Adolescent Gemstone Wolf

[Fire/Earth/Beast]

A rare canine type monster found in deep dungeons. Their noticeable feature is their growing mane adorned with various gemstones.

Hellhound Puppy

[Fire/Fiend/Beast]

An uncommon canine fiend type of monster. This type of monster is regularly seen accompanied by demonic beings.

Adolescent Ash Wolf

[Earth/Beast]

A common canine type wolf found in dungeons. They are characterized by having a white ashy fur pattern.

Roland was now glancing at the evolution options that he was given. there were five of them, with two uncommon variants and one rare. There was one peculiar option with the hellhound that caused the puppy to stay as a young type.

From what he knew these types of evolution options were a rare sight. They would more or less reset the current monster progress and turn them into a different type. Here his Ruby Wolf would transform into a Hellhound puppy which would change it from a wolf to a dog and also give him a 'Fiend' type along with the 'Beast' type.

'A rare type doesn't mean that it is particularly better than an uncommon one...'

He rubbed his chin while reading through the explanations. There wasn't much information given about the skills these evolution options would give. Normally he wanted to go for the Ruby variant at first as that was the original type of monster Agni was.

Now there was another option with the Gemstone Wolf which was probably there due to the new mana stone eating skill his puppy gained. The Volcanic and Ashen Wolf types looked like the more generic ones, with the Ashen one even losing the fire type in the evolution.

There was also the option of going with a Hellhound and starting anew. Then when the time came to evolve again there could be some rare options for the Hellhound type. Though these types of monster were considered the more violent type which could pose some trouble down the line.

“What do you think Agni? Ruby Wolf or Gemstone Wolf? or maybe a Hellhound?”

“Bark!”

The little guy started barking and running around. It was clear that he wouldn't get much out of this baby monster and would have to make the choice himself.

“Let's go back home for now Agni.”

Roland decided to stall this evolution. He needed to get more information about these advancement options. The mana eating skill wasn't fully matured yet either so there might be some other evolutionary option if he maxed it out.

There was no rush for something as important as an evolution. There were sometimes options to reset like the Hellhound one but those were super rare. The Ruby Wolf options would not be there again, it was impossible to go around in circles until someone made up their mind. The only thing he could go off of is books or by experience from tamers.

The two returned home to discover a quite drunk Bernir hammering away while shaping some nails. There was also a use for those and a lot of scrap metal to go around. His assistant was also very close to reaching level 50 now which would also let him advance further.

“Ey Boss, w-elcome back. I put the cables where you wanted. Want me to help you undress?”

Bernir noticed Roland walking back into the house as his runic armor was quite characteristic. The half-dwarf's face was quite red but he was actually able to work in such a state. If he would be able to do the same thing when power tools were introduced was something Roland was afraid of. It was one thing to swing a hammer and another to handle a runic saw that could take out a limb.

“No it's fine, we'll connect everything tomorrow.”

“Aye.”

He didn't bother his assistant as Bernir was clearly working hard to get his level up. Since hitting the 48th level he was tirelessly using his smithing skills to grind up towards this important occasion. It was also getting late after spending most of the day down in the dungeon.

When Roland opened up the door to the house Agni was quick to jump in and go to his spot. He had one right next to Roland's own bed and even though there was a perfectly fine Dog house outside the puppy liked to sleep here. With time Roland gave in to the whines and barks not being able to fight against the deadly puppy stare.

“Here, catch.”

Roland tossed Agni a nice looking mana stone and the puppy began munching on it almost instantly. Enough time had passed since the last one so it was fine now. After getting undressed it was time to look over some plans.

The wind turbine would be getting connected tomorrow so he needed to go through some things. At this point in time, some months had passed since his new assistant had arrived. Even though he didn't want to reveal his secret lair below his house it was inevitable that it would be.

It was clearly obvious that he was doing runecrafting somewhere in his house. Even with some sound-canceling runes to keep the noise of his smithing away from prying ears it was easy for Bernir to figure things out. The decision was made to show his assistant his secret workshop that he had now locked behind a special magic magnetic lock.

By being able to focus on studying the runes he started to crack the code slowly. With time he hoped to not need to look at other people's work or use his debugging skill to just steal the working designs. With the knowledge of the magic programming language he wanted to construct his own magic, maybe even make something new that never existed in this world before.

'If I can't install any mine runes for now, I could go with a normal alarm system...'

Roland was still on the fence on what to do instead of the mine approach. It was too deadly with his puppy and new assistant around. He needed something different, maybe something that could tell the two apart from unwanted guests.

'I could make something akin to a photocell alarm system.'

With some knowledge of his old world, he came up with one of the classics. By placing some light sensors around the fence he would know if someone passed through it. He recalled one of the popular movies, where the hero had to evade many red laser beams that would trigger the alarm. It was an easy solution and could be placed around the fences away from his assistant and puppy.

'I wonder if I could make some automated magical weapons...'

Then there was another thing that he wanted to do. His land was fenced up in a square shape. At each corner, there was a smaller tower made of hardwood. Thanks to Bernir that was good at building things the fence had been redone to actually be proper.

Roland was thinking about placing magical devices at those corners which would turn them into sort of defensive towers. It would be easy for him to connect the alarm system to this sort of attacking device. It would only require some mana from his generator to run. He could also use a reusable scroll system that didn't use up much of his mana reserves in the generator.

The difficult task would be for it to actually hit a moving target. Creating a magic device that shot fire arrows in random directions wouldn't work. He needed to use something different, something that could be guided.

'There are special self-guiding spells... That could work... for now...'

There were variations of his favorite magic arrow spell that guided itself onto the target. If he also inscribed it in the highest grade it would actually be quite accurate. He wanted the towers to react to

the intruders and aim themselves but he would need to stick to the basics for now. Maybe if he figured out that golem operating system he would be able to put it in his defensive towers.

'I don't think thieves will expect getting chased by magic arrows the moment they set foot here... that will probably require more wind turbines. I'd also have to reinforce the house walls, even with guided arrows they can still hit the house...'

With more intricate spells the requirement for mana was also there. If he wanted to make everything work he needed to build more. Otherwise, he would have to somehow include scrolls into the circuit. With more moving components there was always more that could go astray during the activation process.

'Okay... let me draw up some schematics ... but first...'

Before moving on with his work he peeked outside his workshop. He saw his puppy drooling into the large pillow that was his bedding.

'The beast is asleep... I can work in peace.'

Roland gently closed, removed himself from the room Agni was sleeping in and moved back into his workshop where he could focus on his work. There was also the idea of reusable wands or runic plates that he wanted to mount into his armor, placing it somewhere around his forearm area.

This was for easy access while also was there to allow him to point with his hands at the target. Most of the spell would be on the plate while the discharge rune that created the spell outside would be on his palm. With this, it would look as if he was actually casting spells even though he would be just activating separate runic structures on the added components to his armor.

Most of the strain would fall on those reusable parts while his glove would only degrade just a little bit. Thanks to it already being from deep steel the damage would be minimal. The reusable components on the other hand could be made from cheap iron or steel.

With that in mind, he got to drawing. He had made some previous iterations but he was focused on leveling up his new puppy so he didn't progress much.

'I'll use a lesser bolt of guidance spell in this design... doesn't pucker as much of a punch but can be cast repeatedly without much damage to the equipment.'

His penmanship had increased by leaps and bounds after reaching tier 2. His dexterity was now doubled and he had access to the upper tier scribing skills that were slowly leveling up. With this, he was able to draw up multiple runic schematics within minutes.

Regretfully his little leveling cheat had plateaued with time. Even common grade runic schematics didn't give him that much. By this point it would be faster to go into the dungeon and massacre some tier 2 beasts in the lava region. He was strong enough to even take on multiple of those now, which left his debugging trick in the dust.

Maybe if he got his hands on some tier 3 runic schematics he would be able to progress faster once more. The problem with that was the rarity and exorbitant prices. The only realistic way of getting them would be buying something with a tier 3 rune in a store or at the auction.

The prices for common-grade armor and weapons were already steep. Something at a higher tier was not something he could afford at the moment. At least not while he was spending a lot on building his turbines and defensive systems.

'That should be it, think we will need a lot more copper wires to get to all the towers...I'll just tell Bernir to fetch it tomorrow.'

Roland yawned while stretching, it had gotten late into the night and it was time to sleep. Agni noticed him leaving the workshop and was fast to tackle his leg.

"You should probably go do your business..."

He let the puppy outside while he himself went to take a bath. Time continued to tick and it was the next day. Roland always got up quite early thanks to his sleeping resistance skill. Bernir on the other hand was a deep sleeper, even more after drinking through the day.

"Hey, wake up. I need you to fetch something from the market..."

The sun was already up so Roland didn't have any bad feelings about waking his assistant up. His foot kicked the door to the log cabin that was now used as Bernir's new place of lodging. It was also his smithy that was slowly getting new and better equipment made by the half-dwarf himself.

"Is he still sleeping?... If you go now I'll give you money for that wine you were drooling over..."

After the sentence was uttered he could hear a strange loud thud in the log shed. This was quickly followed by a lot of metallic tools falling over and him hearing Bernir shouting some profanities.

"I'm up... I'm up!"

'I should dock his pay for pretending to be sleeping...'

Roland waited another minute to see a half-dressed Bernir coming over to meet him. The moment he opened the door the smell of spirit-filled Roland's nostrils. This was something he was already used to and other dwarven workshops were quite similar.

"Finally you're up, here go pick these things on the market. If you can barter down the prices you can buy that wine of yours..."

"Thank you, boss!"

Roland thought that Bernir would be a bit dejected that he would only get the wine if he bartered well enough. It seemed that it was enough to just give him a chance at getting it for him to be happy.

While Bernir was packing up Roland decided to work on his magic arm guard design. There were enough steel plates in place for him to make some prototypes. With the ethereal pathways skill also leveling up it was a lot easier to connect them to the main armor. The two parted ways and started the day off early.

Bernir hefted up his backpack and looked at his workshop while smiling. It just took him a few months but now he felt like he really could be a proper blacksmith. The person that had hired him was an oddball but also a good person.

After locking up the log cabin and saying his goodies to Agni that was nibbling on his morning mana stone he left. Bernir was not provided with a working runic bicycle so he needed to do his work on foot. Roland didn't deny him one outright; the problem was in Bernir not having enough mana to last him towards the city. Even mana stones didn't alleviate this issue much so he was left with his own two legs.

It was still only a thirty-minute walk so Bernir just used it to take in the sights and think about what he could craft next. One of the reasons he was so excited today was not only for the wine but also that he was close to reaching level 50. His boss had promised to show him some of his runic items if he managed to pass into the second tier.

"Mornin'"

"Good morning."

Bernir greeted the gate guards that already knew him. There weren't that many half-dwarfs in this city with huge backpacks like his. Since getting his new job he was a lot happier thus his more extroverted personality came out. Thanks to this, getting good prices at the market was easy.

While Bernir was trying to haggle down on the price of the copper Roland ordered a group of five adventurers was walking down the street. One person from the group then came to a stop while glancing towards the market.

"Isn't that..."

"Hey Garlen, what are you doing, get a move on."

"Wait Devyn, look at that..."

The two men exchanged some glances and both of them started looking in Bernir's direction. Soon a smirk appeared on both of their faces while the other three adventurers went over to see what was going on.

"Well well... isn't it our little Bernir... Awfully chipper isn't he?"

"That he is... reckon we should remind him of how we treat old friends..."

The group of men moved to the side into a lonesome alley while keeping watch over the market. What they were up to only they knew but it didn't look that it was anything peaceful...

[Chapter 96 Tracking down the perpetrators.](#)

'What's taking him so long?'

Roland looked at the runic clock that he made in his free time. Bernir had been gone for quite some time and was running late. Roland had lost himself in runecrafting on one of his newest inventions and didn't notice that it was already the middle of the day.

'Did he go get drunk in a tavern or something?'

He started imagining Bernir getting a good deal of the copper and other metals that he sent him for. Roland had stated that he could use some of that money to buy the brand wine that Bernir loved so much.

While holding his new runic component that he could attach to his armor at the forearm. With the improvements to his tier he was able to work much faster even with common grade runes. The need to watch out for his mana also started to fade away.

There was no need to take long meditation breaks between rune smithing. Only when doing some large projects like his whole crimson armor would that be now a requirement. In his hands, he had two new prototypes of a new spell weapon.

The new runic weapons that he made were something he came up after remembering an old movie. It used quite a bit of mana to work but it was something to be feared. There was a possibility of shifting the tides of battle due to the unique movement and destructive power. He had already tested this design out beforehand and now he had just made it connect to his own armor and to the runic program.

'I'll have to give these a final test later but now...'

Roland also started to think about having a talk with Bernir about that drinking problem. It was all fun and games to look at a drunkard having fun but when it impacted their work then there was a problem.

Due to the half-dwarf not returning faster he wasn't able to get his wind turbine up and running. Thus he shifted his attention to weapon crafting but now it was done as well and his assistant was still missing. Before he could think about a punishment he heard Agni barking out loudly.

"What is it, boy?"

The barking was quite loud and prolonged, it was clear that Agni noticed someone or something. The most obvious explanation was that it was Bernir coming back but for some reason, these barks sounded a bit different than usual.

There was no time to put on his armor at this moment but Roland didn't like the sound of those frantic barks. It was clear that there was something off about them thus he decided to at least put on his gloves and helmet. After grabbing his sword and shield from the side he was finally ready.

"Who is it?"

Roland called out while going outside but there was no one there, only Agni scratching at the entrance gate. After looking around for some enemies he focused on that gate and could somewhat hear something. There was a certain sound of something being dragged, this was accompanied by heavy footsteps.

There was no answer to his question instead of it a loud noise of someone hitting the ground followed by a grunt. He was momentarily stunned as he could more or less recognize to whom that grunt belonged. This also explained why Agni was scratching at the large gate door to go outside.

"What the... Bernir is that you?"

Without getting an answer he rushed outside, there he saw him. Bernir was down on the ground, his clothes torn up. The characteristic backpack that he always wore was gone. It seemed to Roland that his assistant was robbed. The surprising thing about this was that it was broad daylight and the city was more or less safe.

"Hey, can you hear me?"

Roland ran up to Bernir and handled his body gently. His assistant was breathing which was a good sign but after turning him around he frowned. Bernir's nose was clearly broken and bloody. His lip was cut up and his face was swollen, if not treated it would balloon even more.

"Who did this to you? Were there bandits on the way here?"

His first thought was bandits as something like this would be hard to miss in the city. The guards would have at least seen him limping away and helped him to some extent. Fights broke out in the city but Bernir here was beaten half to death. Even without looking at his body he could tell that some of his bones were broken.

"Ughhh...."

There was no reply to the question, Bernir was clearly on his last breath. He probably used the last of his stamina to drag himself here, soon he would pass out.

"Shit, hold on..."

Roland placed the bloodied Bernir down gently without moving him inside of the house. It would be dangerous to carry him around without properly tending to the wounds first.

"Drink this."

While preparing for some home invaders Roland had taken one of his storage bags with potions. He used one of the better health potions on Bernir's wounds. He splashed one right on his face while another one was used on his banged-up leg.

That is before forcing it in the right place for the healing to start. If done incorrectly the bone would heal in the wrong place which would then have to be broken once more to heal correctly. Bernir was out cold at this point so luckily he wouldn't need to feel the pain from having his bone set.

Only after doing this did he decide to pick him up to carry him to the house. During the whole debacle, Agni was on the side whimpering with a curled up tail.

Bernir was placed on the couch and Roland removed his clothes with the help of his knife. The clothes that he was wearing were filled with sweat and dried up blood. There was no use keeping them around.

"Damn... did they have to go this far?"

He could see many bruises on Bernir's chest, stomach, and other vital areas.

"This doesn't look like a bandit attack... this looks personal..."

After washing away some of that blood from his assistant's beaten-up body Roland realized this. A bandit wouldn't go to these lengths, they would also not leave their victim alive unless Bernir was lucky to getaway. His limp leg that seemed broken told another tale.

From what Roland was seeing it looked like Bernir was beaten up thoroughly. It was as if the person that did it had a grudge against him or wanted to pay him back for something. He didn't really ask about his assistant's past and he didn't think someone like him would have many enemies.

These wounds were all done by fists as well. If he was robbed by some thieves, some knife cuts would be there as those types wouldn't bother with roughing their victims up to this extent. He was also left alive, which indicated that the perpetrators didn't fear any form of retaliation.

'He's not waking up any time soon... could they have been some rouge adventurers?'

Roland started to debate on who could have done such a thing but the more he thought about it, the angrier he became. After living with the silly half-dwarf for a few months the drunk had grown on him. He was his boss and a boss was someone that took care of their employees.

"Fuck..."

His fist descended on a nearby chair which turned to scrap wood in an instant. His increased strength paired up with the deep steel gauntlets that he was wearing caused fatal damage to the inanimate object.

"Bark Bark Bark!"

Agni started sniffing Bernir around and afterward, he continued to bark. He started to run around in a circle before pointing with his nose at the door as if he wanted to go out.

"What do you... "

Roland noticed his monster's strange behavior but he soon realized what he was trying to tell him.

"Did you get the scent of the one who did this to Bernir?"

"Woof!"

At the question, Agni started bouncing around even more. He was a canine type of monster and after a couple of levels, he had earned a tracking skill as well. With his nose, it was possible to find the perpetrators of this robbery. The only problem was that there was a short window that this could be done.

The trail would go cold in a few hours and then he could only ask Bernir about it. He knew his assistant well enough now. It was probable that he wouldn't tell him the truth about this attack.

He could have had history with the perpetrators and wouldn't want to report this to the city watch either. The backpack was his so he didn't owe Roland anything for it and he would probably work hard to pay back for the copper and money that was stolen.

"Now or never..."

Bernir's situation was stabilized, the healing potions worked wonders but they wouldn't help the injured person wake up faster. Roland also wasn't sure if he wanted him to be awake for the thing that he was about to do.

'I can't handle any Tier 3's... but if it's only tier 2's below the 100th level then...'

He grasped the bloodied cloth that he used to clean Bernir's beaten-up body and looked at it. It was clear to him that the assailants could have gone back to the city. Causing a scene there would bring unwanted attention.

His reputation as a strange runesmith living in the woods made him a neutral element in the city. He felt that the adventurer's guild would take his side if he was able to prove the theft. Bernir's bag was something very characteristic among the guild, if the robbers had it on them, it could be the proof that he needed. Roland had told him to mark the backpack with his initials in a hard-to-find spot just for such an occasion.

Roland felt angry, he knew that the rational thing to do now would be to not do anything hasty. The backpack was an item that cost a lot of gold but it was replaceable just like the things in it. But would that approach keep him and Bernir from harm's way in the future?

"No... this is not how this world works..."

He started going down into his workshop, his feet were slow and a myriad of thoughts was going through his head mostly telling him that this was a bad idea. Roland had hidden himself away in this house to evade trouble but even then it found him.

One good way of showing people to not trifle with him was a show of strength. Reporting it to the authorities could be a dead end as status, power and money were the only things that moved the people on the top.

If he continued to hide people would come. When it came to light that Bernir was living with him and he did nothing about this he could be seen as an easy target. Someone could decide to put that up to the test sooner or later.

Hiding his strength could backfire in the near future but having a high profile also brought in many other issues that he was trying to avoid. If he acted then the news of a particular runesmith would probably circulate through the city. He would alert everyone to his presence, if this would cause more trouble down the road remained to be seen.

He placed his helmet on his head as he was now ready. The weapons that he previously constructed were still attached to his forearms as he decided to take them along. After checking all of his gear he walked out with his shield on his back and his sword to the side. This time around he would go with the classics as a sword and shield were quite versatile against humans.

"Agni, do you still have the scent?"

"Woof!"

The wolf puppy barked and sniffed Bernir some more before charging out through the door. His master was left behind to lock up the entire house. Bernir's life wasn't in danger but he probably wouldn't be waking up before this whole situation was over.

Roland's stats were much higher than Agni's so catching up to the puppy wasn't hard. He saw him sniffing around and running along the usual path that they took to get to his house. There were signs of Bernir moving through here, marks of dried blood, and even where he was dragging his leg.

"This path leads to..."

They came to the fork in the road that was between his house, the dungeon, and the city. With more sniffing, Agni shot towards one of these paths that made Roland frown. He was going towards Albrook which he had hoped to avoid.

This was not a main road path but one that he and Bernir used as a shortcut. It went through the woods and was also the place of the incident. Soon both of them arrived at a spot with a lot of snapped branches and marks of battle. There were even parts of Bernir's torn-up clothes.

While Agni continued to sniff around Roland examined the crime scene. It was clear that Bernir tried to put up a fight but there were multiple assailants.

"They must have followed him from the city and waited till he was alone, probably a tracker in the party. This isn't that far away from the house..."

Roland felt a bit dejected that he had no idea that such a thing was happening. While he was consumed in his work Bernir was getting assaulted by someone here. He was already thinking about some sort of communication device that would alert him if something like this happened again.

"Did you get the fresh scent boy?"

Agni barked after sniffing around this area. The trail was still fresh but it went towards the city. The people that did this were probably somewhere there, this could pose a problem.

He had already decided to at least check things out, if the assailants proved too powerful he would have to let things be. On the other hand, if they weren't, then he would have someone to take out this pent-up rage on.

The two continued all the way to the city gates which they passed now after Roland had attained his monster permit. The combination of a large man in a crimson armor and a small red puppy with a ruby tail did turn some heads. Weapons and armor were allowed so even though he had a shield and sword they weren't taken away.

'Where is Agni leading me to...'

They moved past the main street and into the market and continued further. He only visited the adventurers guild along with the auction house. They were going further in, into the more underdeveloped area which some might call the slums.

It was a place that people that came here with high hopes ended up when they failed. Bernir told him once that before he started working as a smith with him, he was forced to live around this area. He told him some tales of daylight robberies and thugs getting into fights. Apparently, the guards didn't wander in here too often which led to the creation of a more lawless zone.

This was a part of this world, places like this existed in all developed cities. With time Roland also expected the thieves guild to be created if the city's population kept increasing.

The houses became more shabby and the streets dirtier the further the two went in. Soon they ended up at a larger building with saloon-like doors. Agni started pointing with his nose inside which made Roland believe that the assailants were in there.

“In there Agni? ... Good, you should go hide somewhere and don’t come out till I call for you, understood?”

Agni whined a bit but soon followed the instructions. With time he had grown into quite the well-behaved pooch. He was smart enough to realize that he would only hold his master back against the people inside. Roland watched as his Ruby wolf ducked into one of the alleyways to hide. It would be difficult to concentrate on fighting if his puppy got used as a hostage.

‘The assault happened recently, I should be able to ascertain who it was...’

He moved forward to open the door to this run-down pub. It was a seedy establishment that housed all sorts of ruffians that didn’t want to pay the market price for alcohol.

The door parted for him and revealed a somewhat large interior. People were talking and laughing loudly while drinking watered-down beer and wine. His somewhat unique appearance did raise some eyebrows as not many would be able to afford an eye-catching runic armor like he did.

While they were looking at him, he was looking at them. His eyes scanned the area for potential culprits and stopped at one of the tables. There was a group of men sitting there, they looked rough around the edges. They were clearly the ones that he was looking for as there was a particularly large backpack up against the wall next to their table.

‘All tier 2 huh? This should be manageable...’

Roland turned to them and started walking. It was time to get in some trouble.