

Runesmith 161

[Chapter 161 Back at the estate.](#)

Two horses were pulling a carriage through a nicely paved road made of stone. It was assembled with many smaller flattened stones which caused it to rock around more than it should. The horses' hooves made loud sounds as the carriage moved toward its destination.

The coachman gave out a yawn before looking out into the distance. There he saw a large villa that clearly belonged to a noble family. The trees that were at the side of the road were so thick that they made this road look like a tunnel made from leaves.

It was clear that these trees were tended to by a professional hand as the tunnel of leaves was quite circular in shape. The morning rays of light pushed through the thick branches and lit up the path that ended at a large gate.

"Halt!"

The man that was on top of the carriage pulled on the horse reins to make them stop before the large entrance gate. The columns that these two gates were connected to had a certain characteristic knightly crest etched into them. They depicted a knight with a sword and shield on a horse that was standing up on its hind legs.

"Good morning to you."

After the guard got a good look at the carriage he realized that it was one of their own. A similar crest adorned the side which indicated that it was part of the same estate and that the person inside was important enough to ride in it. With a wave of his hand, he called out to the people behind the gate.

"Open the gates."

Soon he returned to his post while the large gate started being opened from the inside by some servants. There was a certain characteristic sound of old metal that followed the opening which caused the person in the carriage to sign out.

"The gate needs to be oiled..."

It was a young man's voice that was met by no reply as he was sitting inside of the carriage by himself. Now as it was passing through the entrance to the estate he decided to move the blinds to the side to take a look.

"Not much has changed since I left."

As the carriage entered through the gates he could see some servants moving around. The sound of the blacksmith caught his ear as it made him recall a certain astray member of his family that he had recently bumped into.

Just as the two had agreed he had not disclosed their small get-together unless there was some kind of dire situation he intended to keep his pledge. Finally, he heard the horses stopping as he finally arrived at his destination.

He looked to the wooden door at the side and hesitated slightly. Soon though he reached out with his hand to open it and stepped outside. The first thing he saw was a familiar face of a beautiful older woman that was slowly moving his way.

“What are you waiting for, why didn’t anyone open the carriage for my Robert!”

It was his mother Francine rushing his way while holding quite the expensive-looking gown. The dress was adorned with various jewels and it was clearly not meant for fast walking.

The life at the knight academy had been quite rough, even more for people like him that were at the bottom of the totem pole. Even in this estate, the servants didn’t take him that seriously as they were assigned to his two older brothers, Reyner and Edwin.

The two had long since finished their squire training and become full-fledged knights. Even without asking, he knew that they wouldn’t be here. Instead, they were probably out in the kingdom trying to earn merits to impress their father.

One of them would be the next head of the Arden estate. From what Robert knew both of them wanted the spot and their father had not yet decided on who it would be. It also didn’t seem that Wentworth Arden would be retiring anytime soon.

His name as the Silver Wolf was widely known throughout the whole empire and it was something hard to live up to. While looking at his mother Robert felt quite nostalgic and recalled the days of hazing at the academy.

Some of the high-born children despised the fact that his father had been able to rise to fame on the merit of his skills alone. He was a rare breed of person that could not be denied and caught the eye of the higher echelons of the aristocrats. The rest was history as his military merit gained him a spot among the other nobles.

Only after spending time at the academy for young knight candidates did Robert realize how much spite existed in those nobles. Without anything to show for themselves but their bloodline, they despised anyone that gained prestige by working hard. Anytime they would lose in a training match to him or any other lesser noble there would be consequences.

Some knights used this pride as something they could latch on to. Becoming a retainer by intentionally losing or working with a higher-born noble as their follower was a ticket out for them.

In hopes of attaining high positions of a knight captain at those higher noble estates, they would perform seedy tasks for their masters. Some of them included ganging up on lesser noble sons like Robert here in hopes of beating some sense into him.

Yet Robert was quite stubborn and prideful as well. Even when they continued to come at him, he didn’t falter. He could only smile to himself while remembering those days that he spent chasing his younger brother and tried to beat some sense into him just like these nobles tried.

Those times were filled with him being pitted against Roland by his own mother. He didn’t want to admit it but back then he was behaving the same as those high-born nobles that wanted to beat the pecking order into him. Only after his brother was gone did he realize that he had been mistaken.

Fate had mysterious ways of working as he found his lost brother Roland at the strangest of places. The rage he felt when he realized that he was doing better than expected with no intention of ever coming back.

"It's fine mother, just have the servants carry my luggage into my chamber, not like I will be staying for long."

"Oh, my little Robert is all grown up! Let me take a good look at you."

Francine Arden placed her well-manicured hands on Robert's cheeks and took a good look at him. The woman was a lot smaller than her son, who was even slightly taller than Roland. Even then both of them paled in comparison to the bear-like being that their father was.

The woman wasn't the youngest but with a bit of makeup and some potions, she would be able to pass for a lady in her late twenties. Her hair was braided on the sides and coiled in a way over the ears that it formed 'horns' on either side of her head.

Robert didn't want to comment on this hairstyle as he had always preferred the simple loose long hair to be superior. His mother on the other hand liked to follow the noble trends and was an avid visitor to the aristocratic parties.

He knew that his mother had somewhat of an inferiority complex to his father's other wife, Tabitha. While she did everything in her might to expand her influence in the noble circles he knew that the high nobles would never really accept her as she was just a daughter of a wealthy merchant that bought his way into nobility.

"I'm fine mother, we should go inside."

Robert felt a bit uncomfortable as his mother started looking at his face intently. He did not resist as it had been a while since he and his mom had some time to be together.

While there was no one else to greet him here he was happy that he still had his loving mother. Even though she was overprotective to a fault he knew that she just did everything out of love.

"No need to be shy with your mother, come, my son, tell your mother all about your life in the academy, to think that my son would be one of the top apprentice knights in the academy!"

Robert half-smiled about that notion as there was a certain reason that he had been pushed to the top of his class. Lucille De Vere was the real reason that he was able to ascend through the ranks while previously he was being suppressed by the high-born youths.

Lucille's father found out about the little predicament and was more than glad to support the only knight that was involved with this predicament. Even though Percival and the knight responsible for the examination pushed the information down, the De Vere count wasn't someone that could be fooled easily.

Out of fear of this issue ever coming out to light which would lower the academy's prestige, Robert was given a deal that he couldn't refuse. For his heroic deeds, he was raised up in the rankings to reflect more of his own true skills.

Even though he somewhat knew that he deserved his spot in the first place, he was only receiving it due to his younger brother's involvement. Without Roland being there he knew that Lucille would be dead along with him.

Luckily for Roland, no one from the Knight Academy took the adventurer that was with them seriously. To them, he was just some commoner that did what he was paid for. No one would take his word above a noble's so even if he tried to release the truth into the open he would only get thrown into prison for offending someone from the noble cast.

"Is Father ..."

While wandering through the mansion corridor he gave the question to his mother that was just constantly talking.

"Your father is ... "

Francine stopped for a moment as she wasn't sure what to say. Even though Robert didn't show it, his mother knew that he wanted nothing more than to be praised by his father. Regrettably the man in question was far too busy. As a high-ranking member of the kingdom's military, he was mostly indisposed.

"Is that so... The border skirmishes have been slowly building up..."

Robert mumbled to himself even though he knew that his father was busy, as his son he wanted to be praised by someone that he aspired to be. The Arden Patriarch was the perfect goal for him, someone of lower status that gained fame and prestige by his own merits.

"I'm sure your father is proud of you, let us not talk about him."

Robert's mother clapped her hands and a few maids appeared before her.

"Prepare some tea and snacks for me, don't make me and my son wait!"

"Yes, Madame."

The two girls bowed with their heads while Robert and Francine continued their slow walk through the corridor. On the walls, he could see some family paintings that depicted the old members of the Arden bloodline. There were many faces that he wasn't familiar with but they all kind of looked similar to the man of the house.

At the end of this corridor, there was a large painting. On it, Robert could see a large family consisting of himself and all his siblings. Even on it, he could see status being involved as his mother was sidetracked to the first wife.

The person to the side at most was his half-brother Roland, the only one below him in status. Only recently did he realize how badly he had treated him. He was acting just like those weak high nobles that couldn't win over him with pure skill.

Only now he realized that the circumstances of someone's birth were not something that should define a person. This was not something that most nobles agreed on, not even his own mother. While looking at the picture his eyes trailed to his brother that he had found once more.

“That child... he was always a strange one.”

“Strange, Mother?”

Francine noticed where Robert was looking as she started to talk.

“Yes, he always had those dead eyes... never acted like a child his age...”

While he wanted to stop his mother from belittling his brother he did have to agree that Roland was a peculiar person. Even in their younger days, he seemed fine with getting beaten up by him, Robert could also not remember ever seeing his younger brother crying. He could only attribute it to his high intelligence which pushed him into becoming a mage and then a Runesmith.

“But let us not talk about the dead, I’m sure the tea is ready now.”

Francine stopped in front of a large closed door and looked to the attendant on the side. Before the person could open the door for the lady a strange sound was heard by them on the inside. It sounded as if something hit the floor and then started quickly running towards this exit.

“Brother Roland is not dead!”

The door was slammed open by a certain young lady. Robert was surprised to see this young girl that was wearing a long dress. It seemed that the getup was unfinished as some threads were standing out and her corset was hanging out from the back.

“Lucienne, that’s now how a proper lady is supposed to conduct yourself, you were supposed to wait here for me and your brother, why are you dressed like that!”

“Please forgive us Madam the young lady just doesn’t want to be still...”

Two older ladies dressed in maid uniforms waddled over to where the group of three nobles was. Robert could see that they were out of breath and by the way the room looked he knew the reason. The problem was his younger sister. She had far too much energy as even now she was trying to run away from the two maids that wanted to dress her up as a proper young lady.

“Lucienne, stop this instant.”

“Not until you take it back! Brother is still out there! You believe me don’t you!”

She quickly hid behind Robert who was just standing there without knowing what to do. He knew that she was right but he could not tell his young ten year old sister that Roland was out in some town working as a Runesmith.

“I think you should listen to your mother, Lucienne.”

After reaching the age of ten and receiving her mage class he was sent to the magic academy for an aptitude test. After receiving good results she was to remain there to get a proper education. She was too young to attend classes yet and was getting tutored by a costly magic teacher. From what he knew, his sister was quite a ball of energy and she was giving the magic tutor quite the headache.

“I don’t need these dresses, I’m going to become a powerful mage!”

Soon she was forced from behind Robert as the maids started chasing her through the room. A little smile crept on his face as his mother joined into the fray and tried to catch the little young lady.

While normally he would agree with his mother when it came to Lucienne he wasn't that sure. With the aptitude for magic, the world was her oyster. She didn't need to be stuck in this bubble that the aristocrats created for themselves. After seeing his younger brother that looked happier than ever he realized that there was more to this world than met the eye.

With that in mind he entered the loud room and closed the door behind himself. He wasn't sure what the future would bring but as long as he had his family by his side, he would be happy.

Still the words that his brother told him lingered in his mind. Someone was responsible for the attack on his half-sibling and he would need to figure out who before this secret of his came out to light...

[Chapter 162 Time moves on.](#)

"That will be all for today, you should go over the research material that I have provided you before contacting me again. Also, don't forget to catch up with the basics my friend."

"I will, until next time."

Roland turned off the communication crystal on which a smug-looking cat was displayed. The exchange between the two had been going on for several months but he still had so much to learn.

After turning off the crystal ball Roland looked to the side. There on his desk he could see a large stack of papers, books and scribbles. This was all the research material the cat professor had dumped on him.

'He really did send me the school books this time around...'

Through the months of their exchanges, Roland had continued to improve on the runic diagrams that he was given while taking snippets of knowledge for himself. Finally, for one reason or another, his associate decided to just give him all of the basic rune-related academy books that they usually gave to their mages.

This was quite a pile of knowledge and it required several gale birds to deliver for a span of a month. Now he had a compendium of materials that could fill in the gaps in his runic comprehension.

It seemed that the cat was fed up with Roland asking questions every time the two were talking. Thus he was given some homework to get through the fundamentals first before their partnership continued.

While Roland was knowledgeable with the outer runic components at this point in time he was unable to affect the runic programming. Most of the time he found himself copying pre-existing code that he discovered in runes and then hoped that it would stick.

All of this research material would guide him from the beginning and teach him the inner workings of the runic code. It was quite a stack of papers to go through but luckily with his increased intelligence and his newest skill that allowed him to read multiple pages at once, he hoped to slog through it fast.

"Hey Boss, I'll be heading out for tonight, see ya in the morning."

"Try not to get in trouble."

“Hah, when did I ever get in trouble?”

Roland rolled his eyes while looking through the window through which he could see Bernir. His assistant was using his newly gained raise to go to town and have a good drink.

It was probably not the only thing that he would be getting there but not like Roland was interested in Bernir’s nightlife. As long as he returned when it was time for work, then all was fine.

A few weeks had passed since his new store opened for business and business was booming. He underestimated how fast the adventurers went through lower level magic equipment.

With the close proximity to the dungeon, these items were being used for all they were worth. Many of them got lost in the process of hunting monsters and the runes were being used up quite fast. Some adventurers instead of using the repairs preferred to just put some more gold down and get an improved weapon after using it for a month instead.

It turned out that there were far many more adventurers in town than there were craftsmen. While regular weapons were easy to find it wasn’t the same for the wares he was peddling. So on the first day, he was able to get rid of all the old stock that was piling up in his workshop. Even with the lowered prices, he was able to make nice profits that translated well into future progress.

Elodia was doing a nice job at selling and presenting everything to the new customers. He had written down all the various runes that the items came equipped with and she was able to learn all of the uses of the items they were selling in just a few days. She was ready to fight through the first day as if she knew that there would be such an outcry for the magic weapons.

Even Roland needed to come help as the people were clamoring to get in. He clearly underestimated the worth of a magic weapon that was going for under the market price. There were even a few merchants that he recognized from the city. They were probably intending to sell the items in different cities due to the dwarves.

Since everything was going well, Roland finally decided to raise Bernir’s wages by a bit. Even though it wasn’t that much, the dwarf was quite ecstatic. Now with the hiring of Elodia both of them had the weekdays off while the store was closed.

While both of his workers would have time to spend their hard-earned money and take a break, he would continue with his grind. He needed to inscribe more runes and produce more wares to sell while also improving on his golem and turret designs.

Now after starting his own business he realized that being a regular employee was not the end of the world. Being the owner of a new shop forced him to work even harder if he actually intended to be successful.

While Bernir was in the tavern getting drunk he would be going through runic diagrams and lists of components. While Elodia finally had some time to spend with her family and watch over them, he would be hammering away on the new golem design that would now have six legs instead of four.

“No rest for the wicked, huh?” Roland gave out a sigh but he was somewhat feeling content with this new situation. While he was not so keen on working for others it wasn’t the same when he was doing it

for himself. Everything was under his control and depending on the circumstances he could always decide to take a break when he wanted to.

While it looked like he was becoming shackled with his new responsibilities he could not be any freer. There was no debt holding him down and his craft gave him something that he could apply in other places. Even if this little business fell through he would still be fine, all thanks to his hard work he had gained a skill that could not be denied by others.

This didn't mean that he intended his little venture to be a failure. Growing dungeon cities like this were quite rare and he would not be able to fight against monsters like the dwarven union in cities that they had a stronger presence in.

"Before I forget..."

While Roland ended his call with the magic cat he still needed to stay in touch with the person that introduced him to it. This person's name was Lucille De Vere who came from quite the prestigious count family.

"Good evening Sir. Ro... I mean Sir. Wayland."

"Good evening, hope I didn't call at a bad time."

While Lucille knew about his true heritage he still urged her to call him by his current alias. He had no idea if these magical instruments could be recorded by outside sources. But going by the fact that they had some type of signal that was going between them it was possible that it could be intercepted by a third party.

"The Professor has been talking fondly of you, I never seen him so cheerful when talking about someone else!"

"Huh? Are you sure that you weren't talking with some other talking cat?"

Roland was a bit confused as the cat never shied away from telling him how incompetent he was when it came to the basics. All the questions he posed were answered in a smug way and he started to slowly fear bringing up things that might make him seem uneducated.

This was also why he was glad that he was given so much research material to work with. With all this knowledge he hoped that the cat would finally get off his back.

"You must be joking, Sir. Wayland."

Lucille laughed a bit while looking straight at the crystal ball before her. The picture that he was getting on his side was distorted in a sort of fish-eye lens way. This made Lucille's nose look a bit unflattering but it also gave him a better look into the room she was staying in.

It was clear that she had relocated from the magical academy to somewhere else. This brought up a question in Roland's mind that he had to ask.

"Did Robert finish his knight training?"

“Ah, glad that you brought that up, Sir. Robert has left for his home not so long ago, at this very moment he might already be there.”

“By home, do you mean the Arden estate?”

“Yes.”

Lucille nodded while Roland moved his face a bit to the side. He looked out through the window and towards one of the moons that was peeking out through the clouds.

His ice mage friend was not aware of this but Roland was still worried about the family situation. With his academy life over Robert would be assigned a proper position somewhere.

He could either be drafted into the army and become a commanding officer due to his noble lineage. The other way would be to come under the command of another noble and join their private army, his rank would depend on this higher noble.

The people that went with the first option would have to go through a long period of trials before they were lifted up into a prestigious position. The latter could soar up high in no time depending on who they were working for.

It was also considered far less dangerous to work for another rich noble. Most of the time a person like Robert would just become a personal bodyguard that would just shadow their master from behind. Most work they would put in would be to continue their training while their masters are at the main house.

Depending on the high noble they were serving it could be a very easy position. Even without asking Roland was aware which path his ‘older’ brother would take. It didn’t take much to realize what kind of person Robert was and how he intended to make his mark on the world.

“So, do you know which regiment he intends to join?”

“Ah, so you knew about his decision? Sir. Robert wasn’t sure but he mentioned that he was interested in the cavalry divisions.”

“He really does intend to follow in his footsteps, huh?”

Roland mumbled to himself while Lucille was left with some scrambled audio on her end.

“What was that Sir. Wayland? Some footsteps?”

“You’ll have to excuse me, I was just thinking out loud.”

Roland was aware of his father’s military merits and he too had started out in the cavalry as a knight. He had worked his way up from a newbie knight to the rank of Knight Commander which was the highest title a regular knight could hope for. Then he had pushed towards an even higher ranking as he achieved the noble status.

It would be a hard thing to mirror but Robert could also go through this path. Then he could actually receive his own noble title that would not be under the Arden Estate umbrella. He could choose to

either keep the Arden name or to use a different one. With a new name, he would be asked to create a crest of his own and he would receive some land.

“So, did you finish your academy training, will you become a court mage or maybe a free mage, Lady. Lucille?”

Roland shifted the conversation in a different direction. He was mostly interested if Robert didn't tell his father anything. As an existence that could lead a small army, his father would have no problem of forcefully dragging him back to the estate. Lucille did assure him that his secret was safe with them but Roland was still scared that the information could slip for one reason or another.

“Oh... I haven't decided yet, pappa wants me to stay at the estate for now. After the incident, he has become overprotective...”

Lucille was still a daughter of a count and also a skillful mage. She had a lot of worth and her close call with death was something that her father was aware of. While most of it was downplayed by Percival and the examiner some info had made it through.

If he knew that his daughter was stuck wandering underground caves for a week, unsupervised then some heads might fall. The fall was apparently downplayed to a few hours and Robert was given a big reward in the hopes of shutting them up. Roland wasn't sure but probably either contracts or knightly vows were used to keep anyone from telling everything.

With how little nobles cared about the words of commoners and adventurers, the event was successfully contained. The truth would probably never reach his ears and with how Lucille was going along with the lie there would be no reason for him to push the issue further.

“That doesn't sound so bad, why don't you join the mage order at the academy, you always seemed like the scholarly type.”

There were a few ways for a mage to make a living. A court magician was given a lot of money but they were required to answer the call of war when the country requested it. A free mage just as the name stated didn't offer any benefits but gave freedom.

Lucille could join one of the free mage guilds that were in this kingdom. They would help her level up further while requesting some tasks here and there. Adventuring was not out of the picture as some guilds were specifically there to lend out magicians to the adventurer guild.

In Roland's opinion, Lucille still had a craving for knowledge. While she managed to help him during the monster battles in the dungeon she was not quite ready to become a battle mage. The decision was her to make but with her father getting involved in this predicament.

“I sure would love to work with the Professor... maybe I could become his assistant!”

Roland smiled as Lucille continued to talk. The conversation lasted for about fifteen minutes before the magic was at an end. With his monthly checkup, he was finally free to continue with his work.

“When Robert joins the army he won't have time for anything, it could take years for him to return home...”

His brother would be joining the army for sure. The knights were used to patrol the borders as well as for monsters that lived outside the dungeons. They would not be given much free time to visit their families and certainly not when they are fresh as Robert was.

With the connection ending Roland got up from his spot and stared at the stack of papers on his desk.

“I think I’ll leave those for later...”

He didn’t feel like going through more archaic books about runs would do him any good today so he moved back into his workshop to get his hands dirty. The way into his underground lair was now behind a bookshelf that he could open by pulling on a specific book.

Before going down, he looked at a certain ruby wolf and gave his head a rough pat.

“I’ll leave the house to you.”

Agni gave out a bark while flopping his tongue out, his tail wiggled while he stood up proudly. It was as if he was telling Roland that he could leave everything to him.

The entrance slowly revealed itself and he went down the stairs. The door that was previously there had been reinforced with a few layers of metal. On the right of it, there was a little glowing crystal that illuminated this dark staircase.

Roland dug into his pocket to pull out a small dark card. On it there were many various tiny runes. The moment he moved this card towards this gem the card started to shine. The red coloring of the gem switched to green and he could hear the locks on the door being undone.

The moment the doors opened he was greeted with his old blacksmithing workshop. The tools were neatly hung up on the sides in an orderly fashion and on one of the benches he could see an unfinished item. It looked like a spider leg made from shiny silver metal with various runic inscriptions covering the surface area.

This whole place was lit up with orange light as bright blue light always reminded him of his old working situation that he didn’t have any fond memories of. After approaching the tool rack he took out a hammer along with a little chisel.

The two items were then used to finish the runecraft on the improved golem leg that he intended to use in the next design.

The hammer lit up in bright blue and revealed many various runic symbols on it. With a gentle tap, he used the hammerhead to connect with the small chisel. A tiny bolt of mana then traveled through this special tool all the way to the golem leg. When the light connected with the silvery metal a tiny runic component appeared on the unworked side of the golem leg.

Late into the night did his dinging sounds continue as the Runesmith worked on his wares. In his mind this was only the beginning, there was so much work to do but so little time on his hands.

So did the time pass for the Albrook city Runesmith and his shop continued to raise eyebrows and cause headaches for his competition...