

Runesmith 173

[Chapter 173 At the City Square.](#)

‘A lot of people are here.’

Roland was walking towards the town square, even before reaching it he could see other people pouring in. A few days had passed since he returned from the dungeon where he had scored a lot of exotic resources.

He and Bernir spent some time organizing everything and working on the ore. There were a lot of large chunks that consisted of volcanic rocks that needed to be chiseled down. If they just threw everything into the smelter, the product would probably be worse than everyday iron.

Regretfully the golems were not smart enough to automate this process. While Roland was able to modify the regular golem runic programming that they came with, he was not able to make that many drastic changes.

To this day he mostly worked on a premade operating system that had been created by some other craftsmen. The amount of runic programming that he had to go through was staggering. Just as with modern-day software, a small change in the code could bring forth disastrous outcomes.

From time to time he found himself abandoning the altered runic code. It was easier to start from the beginning than to sweep through the code to find the correlating problem.

Even with his debugging skill working on the code, it wasn't easy. It could recognize the problems but it did not work like modern-day debugging solutions. It did not give him any tooltips on what he could change the runic code into. It only lit up the faulty part of the code which could be quite long.

Then even when the implementation of the code was correct it didn't mean that the golem was working fine. It just followed the programming as it was made, what that runic programming did was up to the runesmith.

He had to take everything into account. If he altered the golem design even by an inch he would require to alter a couple of values in the code for it to function correctly. His biggest desire would be to create something that could calculate these values automatically.

It was clear why other runesmiths didn't bother with golem customization. It was just too much of a bother when there were working models already in circulation. They would rather spend five years working as an intern to get their hands on golem schematics, instead of coming up with their own.

Without the professor that he came to know through Lucille De Vere's help, he might still be stuck on a prototype spider droid. The ones he had made were just a modification to an existing model. Adding weapons like hooks, magical cannons was at least bearable as long as he kept the chassis as close to the original as he could.

It was slowly becoming a problem even for him, but for now, he needed to concentrate on this strange new noble that arrived in his town. He required more information so he decided to lean against the side and listened to some of the people whispering about.

“It’s someone from the Valerian Household... but I never heard of anyone named Arthur from that house.”

“That’s right... it’s probably another bastard that Lord Alexander had brought into the world.”

“Don’t be so loud, if the guards hear you they will lynch you!”

“Hah, you think they care? He might be the lord but he is the leader only by name.”

As the conversations continued Roland got a somewhat good picture of the new lord that was about to appear and give an introductory speech to his people. It seemed that what he previously heard was the truth, most people never even heard about this noble’s son in the first place.

There could be a couple of reasons for something like this happening. One of them could be that he had only recently discovered this offspring and pushed him to the edges of this island. This would keep him away from the more important areas like Isgard and would show the other children that Arthur was not really competing for the Duke title.

Roland knew well that the battles for inheriting the titles could get bloody. This was the title of the Duke, it was only second to the royal family titles. An Archduke title was something only a member of the royal line could achieve.

This title was kind of special as it was given to one sibling of the current king. That is if there was a male sibling remaining after the war for the crown was over. Sometimes two princes would team up with the intent of getting one of them crowned and the second in command would be given this title.

Even though the title was called Archduke it didn’t mean that this forever prince had more power than a noble duke. The dukes were already powerful individuals that were at similar footing as the king. What the Archduke received at the end also depended on the king, sometimes they ended up with less than a count.

“What do we even need a noble for, Albrook has been fine for years now, why do those blasted nobles only show up after all the hard work is finished.”

“Damn bastards probably only want to tax us more, if that dungeon never appeared they would have let us starve.”

The various conversations continued as he noticed some older Albrook citizens that had gone through harsh times started talking. Roland heard some stories of the old town and how life was hard before the dungeon appeared.

The old residents still carried some grudges from the past. Probably if they received some aid from the nobles they would not have to starve through some droughts. While volcanic soil was normally quite fertile this didn’t account for magic.

With the close proximity to the dungeon, the soil could be altered in bizarre ways. Monstrous plants could start growing and crops could just die from oversaturation of the nutrients.

‘It will probably take a while until these people warm up to the noble, that is if he doesn’t turn out to be some kind of tyrant.’

What Roland feared was not the person called Arthur but the title that he was bringing with him. While he might have been some low-standing 6th son of a duke, he was still part of a prestigious family. If something happened to him, it would be surprising if the whole city didn't get blamed for it.

In these troubling times, the nobles were still law. If they for any reason hurt someone from a duke's house there would be consequences, bloody ones. That is of course, only if the duke cared enough about this Arthur person.

Sometimes the high-nobles would distance themselves from their offsprings, even if they perished they would be considered real noble family members. In this case, there would be no repercussions and this noble would be relegated to nothing more than a figurehead with no actual power.

There were some cases where low nobles were even imprisoned in their mansions while the knights or servants kept everything running. As long as the noble was alive everything was fine, their family members abandoned them and without their approval, they could not leave.

This was something that Roland was afraid of as well. Now being a proper successful runesmith he somewhat feared getting hauled off to the old Arden estate. There he might be forced to work for the family like a mule without any say.

Though with his current strength he wasn't sure if that option would be even possible anymore. With his armor on, there weren't many high level tier 2 class holders that would be able to go against him.

His father on the other hand was the biggest threat as Roland didn't think he was anywhere close to that battle maniac that spent most of his life out on the battlefield.

"Hey be quiet, someone is coming."

Finally, it looked like the time for the audience with the new 'lord' of Albrook City. The city square had been created around an old well that existed here before the dungeon appeared. In its place a large fountain was placed, it looked like it was made from marble. It was of a woman with a large jug over her shoulder from which water streamed down.

Then before this fountain, they had built up a stage. On it they would present new laws and various other presentations. From Roland's perspective, it was kind of a waste of space as they weren't forthcoming enough to host any celebrations on it.

If he was part of the people that run the city he would have probably hired a band to perform on this large stage. They could probably make a lot of money from ticket sales while also boosting the city's fame.

Things like open-air theaters and musicals existed in this world but they were meant for nobles. What the commoners got were bards at taverns or street performers. There wasn't much they could do for entertainment.

The focus was clearly on the adventurers and the dungeons instead of the common folk. But with the city's growth, it would be a yet untapped market.

"Silence, you are in the presence of a noble!"

A loud voice filled the entire area which quickly caused everyone to quiet down. Roland noticed that the voice was backed by some kind of magic spell or enchantment. The man that was shouting out was the previous city mayor and after a few words, it was time for the lord to come.

'So that's the lord... he looks to be about my age?'

Roland looked at the person named Arthur Valerian. The first thing that he noticed was that the young man was quite handsome. The clothes that he was wearing were white and blue which meshed well with the color of his hair.

'Wait... silvery-white hair color?'

For Roland, who was knowledgeable about the various races in this world, it was easy to come to the conclusion that he wasn't a pure human. There were two races that came equipped with it, one were the moon elves while the others silver wolf beastmen tribes.

'Looks more elven than beast...'

The young man was wearing gloves so besides his face and long silvery-white locks he couldn't there wasn't much to go off. The deep green eyes were something that the Duke was known for, so in Roland's mind, it was clear why this young man was sent here.

Even though Caldris was a kingdom with many races, the nobles were all pure humans. There was a limit of how far an 'un-pure' member of a noble family could progress. If this young man was partially moon elf, he was probably out of the picture of becoming a Duke.

From what he knew, there weren't any cases where a half-blood attained the position of Duke. The most they went up to was a Baron and this only when their merits could not be denied. It would take truly a herculean amount of personal power to help a person like this to be on equal footing with a regular noble.

"My name is Arthur Valerian and I've just been appointed as the lord of this region..."

The speech started but Roland was more interested in the young man's roots and the enchantment that was making his voice louder than the speech itself. He also noticed that some other people had caught on to the fact that this man was not of pure human descent.

While not everyone knew what this truly meant, the small number of guards around him told the tale.

'He really might just be a temporary figurehead, probably nothing more than just a proxy between the true lord...'

While on paper Arthur Valerian had actual power to affect the course of this city, this might not be what his father wanted. It could have just been a place to keep this son of his, far away from the proper successor of the line.

This meant that he would have to think about that present that he wanted to send. If this noble was nothing more than a figurehead with no footing, it would just be a waste of money.

"As your new lord I will strive for Albrook's improvement but this is not something that can be achieved alone, you all must fulfill your part in the coming years..."

The speech continued for a while as the young noble started prattling on. It seemed that he was somewhat genuine in his tone and it felt that he was trying to work with the people here.

'Is he trying to inspire the locals into working harder? He would probably need to lower the taxes and give handouts to achieve that...'

Words were just that, words. Roland didn't think that prattling on about Albrook as a whole would do much good as the people here were divided into many smaller parts. The guilds, the merchants, the adventurers, and even families.

Mostly everyone just kept to their smaller group. Even he was part of this divide, the only people that he was concerned with were the ones at his home. What happened to anyone else was not his problem.

This didn't mean that there was no way of moving the masses in his favor. If he somehow managed to lower the burden on them or help them earn more money, they would probably see Arthur as a good leader.

The biggest problem with that would be the currently hidden masters of the city. Roland knew some of them, the dwarven union was a royal pain in the behind even to this day. Even with his current shop, he was not making as much as he could.

"...That will be all."

The speech was over and the previous mayor took the stage to inform the people of some changes. Now with the lord being here, a person would need to ask for an audience if they wanted to get something more strenuous done.

Without a proper court system in place, a lord of the region could act as a judge, jury, and executioner. That is if he cared enough, most would just push this duty onto some officials that worked in the city.

Roland was wearing a robe over a different version of his armor. His face was covered as he was not sure if the noble here would be someone that he previously met. With the help of his helmet, he could somewhat focus in on the noble and his retainers.

What he spotted were two knights and a maid that stuck closely to this young lord. All the other guards were more concerned with the mayor. This was enough confirmation that he needed to see that the young man didn't have much pull.

'I'm not sure if he will be the quiet type though...'

Judging by the long speech and how the young man was speaking, it seemed that he was trying to gain the approval of the people here. Maybe he would attempt to gain some power through this city but if he achieved his goal only the future would show.

'Interesting... that maid's level is higher than that of the two knights...'

With the help of his radar, he was able to somewhat put numbers on the lord's retainers. Thanks to the color-coding he could tell that the two knights were around level hundred while the young woman was closer to his own level. While she was up there, she was not a tier 3 class holder.

Now that the inauguration speech was over he turned away. This didn't change anything, it was time to upgrade his wares. Months of hard work awaited him when he returned home. Bernir was already informed about the hectic schedule and was willing to work overtime.

While the crowd was dispersing the young lord looked to the people around him. It didn't seem that his heart-filled speech got through to the populace. This did not deter him in the slightest, this was only the beginning...

[Chapter 174 New man in town.](#)

"I don't think the local populace appreciates me too much..."

A certain silver-haired noble lord gave out a sigh while looking through a window. There he saw some servants moving around as they continued with their work.

"You did great my lord, I'm sure you have reached the hearts of the common folk!"

"Mary, you can drop the honorifics, we aren't in Isgard anymore, not like anyone really sees me as a proper Valerian..."

The young man waved his wrist around while slumping into a large chair by his desk. After coming to this city he had done some research before doing his inauguration speech. When he thought back to it, the speech might have been a bit too flowery for the people living here.

From how bored they looked he had to reconsider doing any other long speeches ever again. Now that the

Announcement

was done he needed to get informed about the region that he would be managing.

It wasn't really much land, to begin with, the only points of interest were the growing city and the C rank dungeon that was here. His siblings had also received similar plots of land with other points of interest.

"Lord Arthur, I'm sure that with time they will learn to respect you, you just need to show them that you are on their side and not like the other nobles!"

The cat maid that was with him was one of the few people that he could trust. She was a few years older than him and was raised as a bodyguard. But considering that she was a maid instead of a butler her position had been lowered.

Arthur knew Mary since they were young as she was one of the maids in training when he was growing up. She was the only servant that was willing to go with him. Even now he felt somewhat bad for this turn of events as from his point of view she was getting a bad deal here.

With how skillful she was, Mary could have gotten the position of a head maid at one of the larger estates. Instead, she was stuck with an 'impure' member of the family which would probably cause her future prospects to disappear.

"Not like the other nobles? I wouldn't be so sure about that, Mary. Just like them, I want to use the common people to further my cause."

He didn't fool himself into believing that he was any better than the other nobles just because he felt slightly more sympathetic to the plight of the common person. Through his life as an unlawful member of the Valerian line, he had gone through a lot of prejudice from his older siblings.

This was due to his mother being part moon elf. It planted a target on the son that came from this unorthodox match. While his father was proper enough to allow his mother to live a good life, she was nothing more than a bird in a cage. Without any real power to speak of he would not be able to do anything about it. Thus he needed to prove himself, his goal was to aid his mother that was locked away in the mansion just withering away without the freedom to leave.

She was seen as a blemish on the good name of the Valerian household. She was not allowed to attend the noble get-togethers as his father's wife. She was nothing more than a commoner-born mistress that was not to show herself to others.

His and her existence was not something that his family wanted to admit. The best option for the Valerian household was to keep them at arm's length. While his mother was locked away in the mansion he was sent away to the far reaches of their territory.

No one really expected much from him or this city. The dungeon here was only a C rank which was somewhat ordinary. There were many such dungeons sprinkled through the entire kingdom, only when it was B rank and above would it pull in interest. A dungeon of such rank could supply tier 3 monsters and tier 3 materials which went for a lot of coins.

"You are right about one thing Mary, if I want respect from them I should probably stop wallowing in self-pity. Have you brought over what I had asked?"

"Yes, here is the current map of the region along with the most important locations."

"Good."

Arthur nodded while unrolling the map on the large desk. On it like Mary described were all the sites of interest that were instrumental to this growing city. As he examined the map he began noting down some information into his own notebook.

This was not a simple matter as he needed Mary to bring over the ledger that the Mayor was previously responsible for. The old man apparently didn't want to part with the book of records but Arthur at least had enough power to make the previous city leader bend the knee.

Through the examination of some of the open records, he could see some of the cash flow that was going through the city.

"The adventurer's guild is at the center of it all, It's the most important part of this city's development."

He realized fast that without the dungeon the city would probably go under quite fast. It didn't really have any export goods to make any money besides the monster parts that the adventurers were bringing in.

These adventurers also put their hard-earned coins back into the city. Pubs, inns, and brothels were on the rise as the sellswords spent an exorbitant amount of their earnings on alcohol and women.

Without the adventurers, Arthur couldn't see the city existing as it was. There were some old records pointing that before the dungeon appeared here Albrook was just a dying village with a dwindling population. Now after the dungeon existed here for close to five years it was quite booming.

"I can't really do much with the Adventurer's guild, it has its own autonomy, even the King would have trouble making it move..."

While rubbing his chin he decided to put the adventurer guild to the backburner. There was not really much he could do for the guild at this point in time. He might have been the lord of the city but not like he could reduce their taxes.

These were agreed upon by the Duke as the lands belonged to him. Part of the money that was created in these lands would then be put to use for further development of the kingdom.

Each noble needed to relegate resources to the country's war effort. This could be done in several ways, sending troupes, sending food, or just plain money. Some of the nobles that lived in poor regions were forced to send their sons instead if they were not able to pay.

Everyone needed to pitch in, if not they would be in danger of having their noble title revoked and their lands seized by higher-standing nobles. This was also a reason for marriage proposals always going to the nobles with rich lands. A tactical betrothal could save a dying noble house from certain doom.

Arthur was quite a good-looking young man. He was also offered a choice of being married off to a daughter of a rich noble. For the time being, he was still confident in managing the issues by himself but if all failed he might have to sell himself off to gain his mother's freedom.

"What if you offer them some land instead?"

"I don't think there is any left for me to give..."

While he couldn't really affect the tax percentage as the lord of the lands he could lend it out. In reality, people that bought houses and land in this kingdom didn't really own them fully. They were mostly paying a set sum for a timed deal.

While normally even the common people would be able to pass over houses to their children or siblings, there were ways that the kingdom could take back the previously bought parcels. One of the reasons would be not paying taxes on time or committing some kind of crime.

Arthur as the lord could dictate where specific partitions of the land could be sold to. In a developing city like this, the land would be auctioned off to the highest bidder. That is if the lord agreed to it.

He could outright sell it to whoever he wanted to, thus some underhanded dealings could surface. It wasn't odd for rich merchants to line the pockets of nobles out to get their hands on the best spots for their shops.

The money the nobles gained in such a way would not be taxed as they never showed up on the record. They could also do it in a less underhanded way by giving the nobles gifts of jewelry, various goods or lowered prices to their wares.

"If we need money, why don't we just increase the taxes a bit?"

Mary asked while Arthur just shook his head. While increasing the taxes would let him take the surplus for himself, it would make the citizens angry. This was still a developing city that was attracting new people.

If the taxes were too high the new citizens would find it hard to sustain themselves in the new environment. When in such a situation it was not rare for the common man to turn to the life of crime, which in the long run might cause them to lose more money.

They would need to invest more into security and would also risk the ire of the merchants. If the city wasn't safe for the merchants they would just pack up and leave. With fewer people to tax they would need to increase taxes even further which could lead to an even bigger collapse.

"Let us move on, the biggest asset that our family has here is still the auction house."

While the adventurer guild produced the most money in the city the auction house wasn't that far behind. The allure of auctioning something off in a bidding war was still quite something very addicting with the people in this kingdom.

Not everyone had time to become a merchant and heckle the prices up or gather the right customer for the best possible offer. Thus auction houses had been created for this purpose in mind. It was a place where the masses gathered, with more eyes on the items the sellers were hopeful of getting a better deal than directly selling them to stores.

This didn't mean that the auction house was used for low-quality items. The goods were always checked by a person with a high appraisal skill. Only if the item brought in a good profit would it be auctioned off.

"It's the only real asset that I can use now if I manage to increase the sales..."

The Auction house belonged to the Valerian household, as the new lord, he would be given part of the monthly earnings. With more profits, he would be given some pocket change through which he could slowly build up his power base. By showing that he was making good profits for the family he would show his worth.

"We need to see this auction house, schedule a meeting with whoever is running it, and I will pay them a visit personally."

While normally the lord would not have to do something like this by themselves, Arthur didn't trust the people in the city. They probably saw him as an eyesore that could alter the power balance.

"No wait, let us not schedule a meeting."

"Oh? Want them not to be prepared for your visit?"

"Yes, let us see how they really handle things here."

Mary nodded while grinding as she had an idea what her lord was thinking about.

"Should I do the usual?"

"Yes, I'll be counting on you but try not to cause any problems in the city, my reach is very limited."

The maid chuckled while shrugging.

“Don’t worry lord Arthur, I will be very discreet!”

“Good, while you tend to the problem I’ll have a look through all this paperwork...”

Arthur looked at the pile of record books that he had nabbed from the city hall. There was a lot of information about the dealings happening in the city and he wanted to look through them. He didn’t expect to learn much through them but he needed more information about the biggest factions in the city.

The adventurer guild was something that he couldn’t really touch but the merchants were another thing. He could make life really easy for them or really difficult if he wanted. While the guild could not be replaced the peddlers could. What he needed to see was who was in bed with whom.

Going through the records would probably give him a clue but he didn’t expect everything to be in there. There were various ways of doing business without involving any written down proof.

He didn’t think that any of the merchants would attempt tax evasion as the penalties for that were quite severe. If he actually managed to pin something like that on the rich business owners it would make things a lot easier for him.

“This might take a while.”

Mary asked while moving towards the exit.

“I’ll give you a week, try finding some trustworthy allies if you can.”

“You are a real slave worker, lord Arthur, leaving everything up to a weak young maiden.”

Mary chuckled while opening the door, behind it were the two soldiers that arrived with them.

“Sir Gareth, Sir Morien, I’ll trust the young lord’s safety to you, I’ll send a replacement maid soon.”

The two armored men nodded with their heads as Mary clued them in. They knew that this was not just a simple maid, the way that she walked without making a sound was proof.

As this was happening Roland the city Runesmith was looking through some personally drawn schematics. Next to him was his trustworthy assistant and his large wife that was also a blacksmith.

“Now that’s some metal you got there.”

Dyana commented while looking at one of the Durium ores. They were stacked to the side and created a nice pile of resources that Roland was intending to use.

“Yeah, the current smelter might not last too long but it should be enough to produce the ingots we need...”

While the current runic smelter was created from lesser metals it would be momentarily able to last through the smelting process. What Roland needed was Durasteel to make his new forge. Some of that fire-resistant mythrill would also go into the mix.

With its addition to the durasteel alloy, he would be able to make really high-quality tools and equipment. The resistance would allow him to work with higher quality materials without needing to worry about the new forge.

This type of mythril was resistant to fire but even it wouldn't last forever. The three people in this room had gathered here with the intent of remaining here for multiple days for the melting to occur.

"I hope you ate enough, don't even think of leaving this workshop before we are done. Don't forget about the potions, there should be enough for everyone."

Roland pointed to the stack of fire resistance potions that he bought for this occasion. The workshop was decked out with runes to alleviate the problems but it would get quite toasty in here.

Everyone here was a high-level blacksmith with skills to alleviate heat in one way or another. Even with that accounted for he wasn't sure if it would be enough to last through the scorching flames.

"Just fire it up sugar but don't forget that you'll let me use that fancy forge of yours from now on~"

Dyana replied while grabbing one of the potions from the workbench. Next to her Bernir just smiled while doing the same.

"Okay, let's go then..."