

Edelgard was a large city, it was considered prosperous in the kingdom and was renowned for its crafting professions. A lot of the country's magical equipment was manufactured right here. An item with the quality seal coming from here was most of the time guaranteed to sell and bring in coins.

These coins were being regulated by the merchant council as well as by the noble house that was here. The nobles mostly kept their noses out of the merchant business and only required them to pay taxes. This was natural as most of the aristocrats were busy with other things, like attending parties, acquiring merits, and gaining favor with people in a higher position like the duke houses or the royal family.

In a well-lit room, there were six people sitting around a round table. Two chairs were empty but this didn't stop them from speaking. This was a gathering of the rich merchants that were the largest business owners in the city. Some had others deal with things like this by sending proxies, one of those people was the Gnome manager that Roland was affiliated with.

“Blasted mines cost me a fortune, how did a myrmeke infestation spread there, this makes no sense!”
(Blasted mine cost me a fortune, how did a myrmeke infestation spread there, this makes no sense.)

A large dwarf with a bit of a tummy to him was slamming his large hand on the table. This hand had various golden rings on it just as his beard did.

“Just some bad luck?~”

Replied an elven woman whose skin color was dark. She was a moon elf, she had a cigarette holder in her right hand and some pink smoke was coming out of the end of the bud. She was squeezed into a black dress that showed quite a lot of cleavage. She looked to be a young beauty but her age was several times above this dwarf.

“Clam up Lilatah!” (Shut up, Lilatah!)

The angry dwarf replied while spitting out saliva in rage.

“You should watch that temper Mr. Thardur, maybe I should reserve a night with one of my girls for you, I'll be sure to give you a good price~”

The woman smirked while leaning over to show off some more of that cleavage. The dwarf clicked with his tongue and leaned back in his chair as he started to calm down.

“This doesn't make any sense, you know that those monsters don't wander near places close to water. My mine has a large river right next to it, someone must have lured them there!”

The dwarf voiced his concerns. The mine was far too close to a large body of water, the ants should have reacted to the moisture in the ground and evaded the area like the plague.

“Yes, this does feel fishy...”

The one answering was the Gnome manager that Roland was working for.

“Haven't strange things been happening lately?”

The people quieted down and started mumbling. The mine disaster that caused the big headache for this dwarf wasn't the only thing that was out of place.

“Yes, my convoys have been getting attacked lately, more than usually I even had to pay out of hand for more bodyguards!”

Another member of the council answered.

“Someone put poison in one of the dishes in my restaurant when one of the nobles was visiting, they almost tore down the whole place!”

Another person that owned a lot of food-related businesses voiced his concerns. There had been a lot of irregularities happening in this city since half a year ago. The mine incident was the most high profile one as it left a big body count and the adventurer guild even had to get involved.

“Someone trying tae muscle in oan oor turf?” (Someone trying to muscle in on our territory?)

“Possibly but who would be so shameless? We have the backing of the noble families could it be...”

The gnome stopped talking as he looked at the council members. It was possible that one of them was doing this. Even if one of their businesses was hit it could easily have been a distraction. If they started bleeding money someone could very easily just move in and buy them out for close to nothing.

Even in his stores that he had spread through the city were getting hit, mostly by people complaining about the items failing and asking for returns. This in term tarnished the store's good name and brought fewer customers that went to others to do their purchases. It wasn't that bad at the moment but could become a problem if it continued.

The council discussed some more rumors but they didn't come to any consensus. Everyone soon dispersed and they just agreed to keep an eye out for potential spies and sabotage. They could easily have the authorities work for them if they found out who was messing with their businesses.

The gnome manager was now sitting in a carriage with his elf attendant Zilyana. The gnome continued speculating about the real mastermind behind this. After some time Roland's involvement in the mine expedition was mentioned and the conversation switched to him.

“The boy's work has been selling well, it was a good thing that he signed up with us. It's going to take a while till he develops further, the scrolls he makes are a hot commodity...”

The elf woman that worked at the store was here as well. She praised Roland's work mentioning the great sales. The only problem was that the scrolls were still only a common grade item and the stock was very limited. The number he could make in a month's time brought in some money but it wasn't really that much in the grand scheme of things.

The gnome nodded as the elf spoke. Since the youth returned from the mine expedition about five months ago he had been working tirelessly. He unloaded quite the sizable number of spell scrolls onto him. He was clearly some kind of prodigy as he was able to craft the highest quality common spell scrolls.

He had thought that he would be a one-trick pony and continue making runic fire arrows but he was wrong. He could scribe all of the elemental arrow types, he even gave him scrolls to sell as a bundle and explained how they worked together. One of them was the combination of wind, water, and ice that could simulate a tier 3 blizzard spell quite well and freeze opponents in a wide area.

The profits from the runic scrolls were sizable but at most, he outworked five regular mana scribes. He wasn't a runesmith quite yet and the real money was in creating reusable gear for adventurers or the country's soldiers. If you managed to fetch a good commission from the noble lords to outfit their army you could make more than by selling too sparse adventurers.

"Aye, the brat is working hard he even requested smithing books from me..."

The gnome said while the elf woman smiled.

"He is going to change classes again already..."

The two were baffled by Roland's progress, they figured that he couldn't be an ordinary person just by the fact that he already had his second class when he was eleven. There were certain ways to increase your experience besides killing monsters and crafting.

"You think he used blood crystals, manager? He doesn't seem like the type."

"Didn't have the telltale signs of using them, probably not."

The gnome replied while lighting up his pipe. The elven woman cringed a bit as she saw her boss do this, not being a fan of smokers to say the least.

"We have him for another two years, so we can watch him closely, don't think he is a security risk."

Zilyana said with a resounding nod.

"Should I do some digging? The people that complained at our shop were a dead end, they didn't seem to know much even when I 'asked' them nicely~"

The elf woman smirked a bit as she recounted how she investigated the people that were trying to return their items back to the store. They were unusually loud while doing it as if they were told to make a scene. They haven't been hit that hard like the rest, nothing as a poisoning incident or a monster attack at the mine happened just yet.

"Tighten the security, whoever this is they are being careful. Might be one of the council members or even the nobles... could also be an unknown third party that is trying to move in. Have our people report any major buyouts happening..."

The two continued talking while riding the carriage back towards their residence. Edelgard was considered a large city of half a million people. The meeting place was on the other side of the city so they would need half an hour to get back.

"Well then, I'll be off first. Another little mouse appeared again..."

Zilyana said while grinning, her body started turning dark and it soon turned into black smoke. She vanished from within the carriage that she occupied with the gnome. He just continued to smoke, there was no reaction on his face to the strange occurrence as if it was something that he saw many times before. The faint screams that were heard afterward didn't garner a reaction either.

"Wished she didn't always leave such a mess behind, tired of paying off the guards all the time..."

The manager blew out some smoke through his nose while the moon shone brightly in the night.

In another place, a different scene was playing out. A certain human youth was reading a large book, a large pile of them was to the side. He was going through the pages quite fast and his eyes were moving through the letters at a rapid pace. He finally placed it down on the table where the stack of the others was.

“Think that’s all...”

Roland rubbed his eyes that were slightly tired and glanced at his status screen.

Name :	Roland Arden L 50
	T1 Mage L25 [Secondary]
Classes:	
	T1 Runic Mana Scribe L 25 [Main]
HP	413/413
MP	2144/2144
SP	496/496
Strength	27
Agility	31
Dexterity	65
Vitality	30
Endurance	30
Intelligence	100
Willpower	76
Charisma	14
Luck	7

He went through his stats and skills, he had gathered quite a lot of them through these years. He wasn’t able to rise all of them to level 9, there was just not enough time for all of that. He had to focus on his main skills like the ones for mana manipulation and crafting. He had managed to get his runic mastery up to the limit as well as both his mana scribing and runic scribing skill.

He was now ready for the next step, he was only worried that there could be something more. When he wanted to change into the mana scribe a variation of the class appeared, this was his current runic mana scribe class.

He had read up in the blacksmith class, there wasn’t much to get past the class change trial. Normally you just needed to craft something, it would be something easy at first like a horseshoe or some of the basic blacksmithing tools like an S-hook. It was a simple tool for hanging your other tools and for various other things around the smithy.

Making those basic things wouldn’t be much of a problem for Roland. His stats were already above what a beginner level 1 blacksmith should have. This class required a lot of strength though, this was one of the attributes that he lacked the most. In contrast if he went for a more artisan like class that made smaller parts, his high dexterity would be quite useful. He wasn’t planning to be a goldsmith to make gold rings and necklaces though.

The only slight fear that he had was that there would be a different class option like the last time. This would be good news but he still could fail his class change quest and waste two small gold coins while at it. He gave out a sigh and looked at the crystal that activated the strange dimension that had his old apartment in it.

“Well... if I fail I'll just do it again.”

He nodded to himself. He had read all the smithing related books that he could find. There were also some basic rune smithing books there but they didn't go into much detail about how runecrafting or runic inscriptions. Roland grasped the class changing stone and stared at it before activating it as he did before.

He arrived in the usual spot at the bottom of the apartment building. The outside looked dead as always, he just turned around and walked slowly upstairs. His room was the same and he went straight to the computer. He heard the fans turning on and the system asking him for his password the same as before.

“Hm... there are a lot of them this time...”

After going straight to the program that showed him the possible classes he started looking through them. There were the usual tier 1 classes like archer, warrior, scout there but just as he expected there were some tier 2 classes available now.

‘Advanced Mana scribe...Advanced Runic Mana Scribe are there...’

He leveled up both of his scribing skills to the max and along with the skills that he had from his mage class. He reasoned that this was enough to allow him to change to these classes. He felt like going with the tier 2 advanced runic mana scribe class wouldn't be such a bad idea.

He looked through the side of the window that should have the more magical classes and frowned, there really weren't any tier 2 mage classes available. He was hoping that something like a ‘Rune Mage’ class would appear but apparently that wasn't the case. He turned his gaze to the other side where the blacksmith class was the last time he went through a class change.

To no surprise it was still there, it showed an icon of a pixelated version of him. The pixel art was wearing the usual blacksmith apparel along with a large hammer. Instead of the walking animation, it was showing him sitting down and hammering a large anvil. He started looking to the sides just as he suspected it was there.

Roland's mouth curled up slightly, the name of the class that he was hoping to get was similar to the one he currently had.

‘Runic Blacksmith...’

He gave out a sigh, he wasn't sure what he would be able to craft with this class in his position but he should at least be able to inscribe some runes on metal.

‘Wait... does that mean there is a Runic Runesmith class after this?’

He paused a bit before thinking, would a Runic Runesmith add something to a class that was already working with runes? He might have been overthinking this. Maybe he wouldn't even need to take that class to forge runes.

‘What if there are runic variations of all the smithing classes and I can skip the tier 2 one altogether?’

He thought to himself, he had a theory that if he would be getting certain rune related skills now that the runesmith class only had then he might be able to skip it. There could also be a better version of this class waiting for him. He continued thinking before finally snapping out of it. He needed to first finish this class change quest before he could think about the tier 2 classes.

He scanned the other classes with his eyes that could become available to him and to his surprise there were others. Runic Archer, Runic Warrior all littered the interface and could be taken by him. He believed that these classes would probably only lower the usage of mana with rune weapons and wouldn't actually differ much from the regular versions of those classes.

They probably became available after he leveled up his runic mastery and might not offer that much to him in the long run. If he went with that route he would have wasted time with crafting runes and would have to switch to melee combat. He might be able to fight better with runic gear but it was still better to customize it yourself.

Roland finally made up his mind and clicked on the Runic Blacksmith variant that was available to him. The usual VR headset popped out and he put it right on just like last time he was transported into another area.

The place looked like a regular blacksmith's workshop like he saw in the city. It wasn't all that large but he could see it had all the things required for one. The forge, water barrel, and quench tank were close to each other, the tool rack with the basic smithing tools like tongs and hammers was all there. The anvil was right in the middle and a bit further away was the workbench with a book on it.

He walked up to it while remembering his first class change mission that was similar to this setup. Just as before he needed to read through it to get the temporary skills and then craft the required item. He spotted a large hourglass in the corner that was already counting down the time. He moved forward and grabbed the large book, he hoped to get an easy item for crafting like some nails. He received an unexpected thing instead, this even prompted him to raise an eyebrow.

‘How to forge a ladle of lesser fire resistance.’