

Rise of the Runelords Session Summary 04/20/2008

Attendance

Chris (Roscoe Dillon) notes, “I just got a call from Bruce. He says that he’s too wracked with grief to go see a movie with us. He claims that Mischief is dying.” *Chuck* (Phiravno) offers up, “Well, he doesn’t know what he missed. Chris seems to think that we just saw the best movie ever made.” *Ernest* (Valgrim Battlehorn) enthuses, “It had Jackie Chan and Jet Li in it! It was a great kid’s movie! It had everything! The Monkey King! A young kid who gets beaten with sticks and taught kung fu! I’m going to watch it again and again!” *Paul* shudders and gives thanks that he dodged that particular memetic bullet. *Matt* (Vaelyn) offers, “Don’t question them, it’ll just make it worse.”

At this point *Bruce* (Yenneck Grumman) shows up and points out that he spent the morning comforting his dying cat. The others exchange knowing looks and nod slowly.

Patrick (Maru Maru) decides that he really wants to embody his new nickname of “Absent Guy”, so he opts to not show up until later. Then he complains incessantly about the fact that the characters didn’t fully appreciate the unique skills that his character can bring to the table when they created their clever plan.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class & Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Hulmar Benk	Bruce	Human	Scout 7	Chelaxian. Military veteran.
Yenneck Grumman	Bruce	Human	Ranger 9	Another Chelaxian, a Black Arrow
Roscoe Dillon	Chris	Human	Cleric 9, Warblade 1	Shoanti, Skull tribe. Cleric of Gorum
Phiravno	Chuck	Human	Swordsage 3; Swashbuckler 3; Rogue 3	Varisian. Recently killed by a lamia, hopefully soon back with us.
Artkel Certor	Ed	Human	Fighter 9	Shoanti, Spider clan.
Prince Eyorak	Matt	Human	Rogue 2	Shoanti, Sun clan
Apollo Eternium	Matt	Human	Fighter 6	Shoanti, Sun clan
Maru Maru	Patrick	Human	Monk 5, Tattooed Monk 5	Shoanti, Sun clan
Valgrim Battlehorn	Ernest	Dwarf	Conjurer 3; Master Specialist 2; Paragnostoc Apostle 1; Malconvoker 4	Fascinated by all manner of unusual creatures.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class & Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
"Gutterspike" Zook Beren	Tim	Gnome	Divine Mind 7	He rides a clawfoot, and he admits that gnomes have stupid names.
Vaelyn	Matt	Human	Gold Dragon Shaman 10	Shoanti, Sun clan

Retreat! Retreat! Sound the Bugle!

Having witnessed the horrific death of *Phiravno* at the hand of a lamia priestess, the characters debate on finding a safe place to hole up and recover. *Valgrim Battlehorn* points out that his demonic monkey can teleport people around. The characters return to the now-empty dragon's lair to rest and get acquainted with their new comrade-in-arms *Enga Keckvia*. The characters also divide up the loot. *Yenneck Grumman* scores the two *Flails +2*. *Valgrim Battlehorn* and *Vaelyn* each get a *Ring of Protection +2*. *Roscoe Dillon* takes the *Staff of Heaven and Earth*. *Phiravno* gets the *Snakeskin Shirt*, even though he's dead. And *Maru Maru* gets the *Medusa Mask*.

The next morning, *Roscoe Dillon* casts *Raise Dead* upon *Phiravno*, consuming a wide variety of gemstones in the process. *Phiravno* is appropriately grateful, in the Varisian style. Everyone else shudders when they witness what that actually means.

Back Into the Fortress

And with *Phiravno* back among the living, the characters teleport right back to *Enga's* cave. *Valgrim Battlehorn* recommends, "We shouldn't leave anyone alive behind us. We should kill the ogres in the barracks and the giants in the forge! Besides, they've got dwarf slaves in the forge."

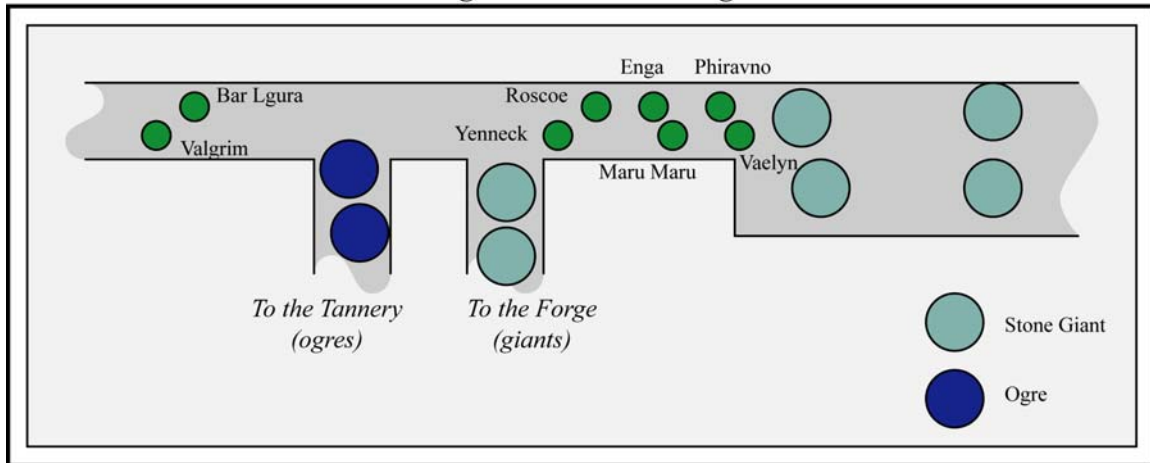
When the characters show up, they quickly discover that the locals have learned that strangers are coming in and killing people. There are more guards around now. Specifically, there are four giants waiting outside *Enga's* cave.

Maru Maru waits until *Valgrim* starts crowing out something about, "I cast the *Crazed Celerity of Crag-ma-too!*" It takes him a moment to figure out that *Valgrim* is casting *Haste*. Meanwhile, *Valgrim's* enslaved ape-demon executes a telekinetic disarm on the lead giant, an attempt that goes rather poorly.

Maru Maru activates his *Tiger Tattoo* and runs into the fray. *Roscoe Dillon* casts *Holy Weapon* on *Phiravno's* scarf and sends him forward to launch a *Sapphire Nightmare*

Blade on a giant. The giant responds by slamming into Phiravno with his heavy club while his comrade yells out, “Alert! Intruders! Intruders who mean to slay us all!”

Giants and Ogres Outside the Forge Chamber



The characters hear the sound of a hammer dropping in the forge. Valgrim swiftly casts *Confusion*, striking two giants. One of the remaining giants responds by flinging a rock at Valgrim. Valgrim staggers back under the impact.

Maru Maru moves in to eviscerate a giant while Roscoe launches some magical first aid at Phiravno. Vaelyn steps in and finishes the creature off. One of the back-row giants moves in to engage him in revenge, but fails to land a solid blow. Maru Maru unleashes the full might of his martial arts prowess and gives the giant a moderate injury. Phiravno follows up and bloodies the creature.

Another pack of giants comes stomping in from the forge. Yenneck Grumman is standing ready with a flail. His mighty swing connects squarely with the giant’s balls, eliciting a pained yelp and a crushing return strike.

Valgrim Battlehorn peers down the second passage. He sees something that advertises as a tannery but which is far closer to a vision of Hell, full of ogres. He elects to complete the vision by sending a *Cloudkill* down the corridor. Meanwhile, the ogres are dropping their tools and howling things like, “It’s a chance to stop working! We can go kill instead! Raaugh!”

Yenneck makes a total of five attacks against the stone giant, managing a string of misses. Then the kobold Enga steps in and practically slaughters the creature. Yenneck thinks, “Gee, maybe kobolds really are a superior species, beneath only the dragon.” The giant seems to agree: he hits Enga with his huge club, ignoring the apparently useless

ranger. Vaelyn swiftly runs in to help, bravely holding the corridor shoulder-to-shoulder with his kobold minion. They make short work of the giant.

It is about this point that one of the confused giants flees from the scene for no apparent reason. Everyone agrees that this makes sense, though: after all, the creature is confused.

The giant's companion, a huge specimen with sandstone skin and a broken front tusk, hammers Maru Maru twice. Maru Maru groans and spits up something reddish. Phiravno and Maru Maru cooperate to take the creature to pieces, then repeat the performance on the remaining confused giant.

Ogres start to boil up out of the tannery, running straight through Valgrim's *Cloudkill*. Valgrim's bar-igura moves to engage; the two creatures commence tearing long, bloody strips out of each others' flanks. The ogre comes to the grim end of the exchange: the bar-igura strikes the ogre down. The remaining ogres go plowing straight into the strange greenish gas that swiftly cripples them. After the bar-igura takes a few hits, Roscoe and Yenneck move in to hold the corridor.

The last confused giant finally returns and flings a rock at Valgrim. Valgrim exclaims, "Ow! Where did that come from?" Meanwhile, more ogres fall in the gas corridor. It doesn't take much to end them all.

Liberating the Forge

Vaelyn and Enga enter into the forge chamber to see four huge anvils and a massive open-hearth forge. The bellows handles for the forge extend into a series of cages along one side of the chamber, very cleverly allowing the cage residents to work the bellows without leaving their confinement. A collection of dwarf slaves and the six villagers missing from Sandpoint sit glumly in the cages.

Vaelyn swiftly searches the nearest dead giant and finds keys. He uses them to open the cages and liberate the dwarf slaves. There is much rejoicing.

Valgrim learns that the captives are all members of a dwarf mining consortium from the Iron Peaks. *Mokmurian* attacked them with giants and foul magics, then pressed the survivors into servitude. He disintegrated the dwarf leader, and turned his lieutenant to stone.

Valgrim arranges to have the rescued prisoners transported up to the dragon caves, where they count and organize the copper coins. The dwarfs are able to tell him that Mokmurian's essential plan is to conquer everything south of the Storval Plateau to make the area safe for giantkind. They also tell him that Mokmurian is very short for a stone giant: only eight feet. His skin is marked with strange purple runes.

And Then the Looting Begins

The characters do a thorough job of looting the tannery, the forge and the various giant sentries. They have to overcome a certain unwillingness to examine some aspects of the places (e.g., the giant vat full of "tanning solution") in any detail. They find nothing but *Flaming Bastard Sword +1*. Yenneck Grumman is practically beside himself with joy when he sees it. Nobody objects when he claims it.

Returning to the Temple, the characters notice that the altar can be moved. Valgrim has the bar-Igura move the altar aside, revealing a chamber containing several scrolls of forbidden knowledge (mostly on the subject of techniques for sacrificing giants and humanoids). Valgrim Battlehorn determines that they are worth 500 gold. He also finds a divine scroll of *Remove Curse* that Roscoe claims.

The Murder-Hole Corridor

The characters move down through the southeast passage from the Temple. They enter a hallway lined with hanging furs. Most of the characters realize that there are gaps in the wall behind the furs, gaps that look into other chambers. Maru Maru looks into one of them, and for his trouble he gets a ranseur in the face. There is a roar of excitement from behind the wall.

The characters scramble around in a panic. Maru Maru takes two more hits from the ranseur. Vaelyn burns away a section of furs, making himself an excellent target for a second ranseur attack. Phiravno moves up and finds a five-foot passageway out at the end of the hall. Maru Maru drops to the ground and crawls towards Roscoe, begging for help.

Yenneck is taken by total surprise when the bar-Igura grabs him and teleports him right through the wall into a cave with a ranseur-wielding troll. Then Valgrim Battlehorn summons a zak-yel, which he explains is a fire energon. All anyone else can tell is that it

is an insubstantial spheroid with four tentacloids. The creature drifts through the opposite wall and unloads with four incorporeal touch attacks against a very surprised troll.

The trolls respond with an array of savage attacks that leaves Yenneck practically torn in half and the zak-yel moderately injured. The bar-igura transports the wounded ranger away just as Maru Maru and Phiravno arrive on the scene. The troll turns upon the monk and commences tearing him apart. Phiravno lashes out with his scarf and flenses it badly. Maru Maru follows up, but doesn't manage to finish it.

Yenneck finds himself teleported back into the combat, courtesy of the bar-igura. Fortunately, the creature is already badly wounded, so even he is able to finish it.

The second troll warrior manages to kill the zak-yel, then turns to meet Vaelyn and Enga. The two of them chop the creature into pieces. And then the characters loot:

- Two *Large Ranseurs* +2;
- Two *Large Breastplates* +2;
- A large collection of shiny, striped but worthless stones;
- Assorted bits of armor and helmets;
- A dire bear skull; and
- A *Ghost Touch Gauntlet* +1

Valgrim Battlehorn quickly uses his *Wand of Erase* to remove the sirhadron runes from the trolls. "Haha! Two more souls denied to Lammashu!"

Roscoe spends a lot of healing power to bring the various wounded characters back into glowing health. He notes that he's pretty much tapped out for the day. Enga is only able to say that Mokmurian is below, but she's never seen his lair. She does know that there's a large ruin down there.

The Ancient Ruins

The bar-igura casts *Invisibility* upon Phiravno, who moves on down the corridor and further underground. The stonework on the walls becomes finer and much, much more ancient. The walls are regular, but rounded: all hard edges have been polished away. Phiravno finds that it is hard to determine where the walls actually are, but he is able to locate two further passageways.

The other characters decide that the new architectural plan is a clear indication that there are probably shoggoths around. This doesn't stop them from investigating anyway. Valgrim announces, "This is ancient Thassalonian architecture!"

One corridor ends in a cave-in, but the stones around the cave-in seem to be far more ancient than those of the rest of the complex. Valgrim thinks that the Thassalonian preservation magics are failing here: most of the stonework actually looks younger than it is.

The Runeslave Giant

The characters move to the other corridor, which leads to a chamber floored in glossy polished marble and weirdly indistinct walls. The room seems as if it is unhooked from its own physicality. And there is a creature resident here: a rune-carved obese giant madman with an abnormally large mouth. His overdeveloped muscles bulge and strain against his breastplate. Valgrim comments, "Gee, I think that's a rune-slaved giant!"

Roscoe offers, "I don't care what the hell it is, kill it now!"

Yenneck moves in and immediately becomes nauseated. The unusual geometry of the chamber has an impact upon his digestion. Phiravno moves in and gets himself *Reduced* to small size. He doesn't let this stop him from launching a *Burning Blade* at the runeslave giant. Roscoe and Maru Maru demonstrate that they can become both nauseated *and Reduced*. Vaelyn moves in and is also nauseated. And to cap it all, the kobold Enga is nauseated.

Valgrim decides that something must be done. He summons a voo-yugoloth and sends his bar-igura in on the attack. He discovers that even a voo-yugoloth can suffer nausea. Fortunately, the bar-igura's Spell Resistance is sufficient to shield it from the crazy-making aspects of the chamber.

The giant attacks Phiravno to little effect. Phiravno strikes back to ghastly effect. Then the giant *Surges*, drawing away its own intelligence but becoming faster. It strikes Phiravno, drawing a respectable amount of blood. Then Vaelyn kills the thing. It falls, "Rrrraugh... whompf..."

Fun With Golems

Recognizing that the voo-yugoloth is on a timer, Valgrim sends it crashing through the double doors and beyond. The others follow. They run down a corridor and into a chamber with runes carved in bands around the walls. An immense iron cauldron bubbles over a fire-pit in the center. And a huge stone brute with a skull head hulks over it all. Valgrim suspects that it is a stone golem, but maybe not a regular stone golem.

The golem stomps forward and uses *Slow* on Roscoe and Phiravno. They resist its power, and are happy to do it. Then it slams Roscoe around like a broken puppet. Understanding that the situation is dire, Maru Maru runs in and activates his *Wasp Tattoo* to gain haste. Valgrim decides that Maru Maru has a good thing going, so he casts *Haste* as well.

Yenneck strikes the golem, proving to the others that it has really remarkable damage resistance. Phiravno follows up with *Burning Blade*, learning something very similar. Vaelyn exploits this knowledge to roast it with his fiery breath.

Maru Maru decides that now is a good time to burn every tattoo he has, so he activates his *Tiger tattoo* and unleashes a barrage of strikes that turn out to do absolutely nothing.

Valgrim calls into the void and summons another energon, this time a zong-yong that can inflict sonic damage. The zong-yong leaves the golem looking cracked and desolated. Yenneck and Phiravno inflict minimal amounts of damage with various techniques. And then Roscoe comes in with a *Stone Shape* spell and changes it into a solid column. That falls on Yenneck. Then Vaelyn smashes the column into pieces.

Valgrim reports that both the golem and the substance within the cauldron have a strong necromantic aura. The fumes from the cauldron also have an effect upon good-aligned people: they must all save every round or become blinded and nauseated. The characters retreat back and wait while Valgrim copies down everything he can learn about the cauldron. He suspects that the cauldron is an artifact-quality item.

The characters all agree that now is a good time to retreat and rest again.

The End of the Session

9th level characters gain 5457 experience points. 10th level characters gain 4292 experience points. Yenneck and Phiravno both manage to make it to 10th level. Yenneck

picks up Warblade 1, with the avowed intention of being able to readjust all his various weapon-specific feats to whatever he wants.