

Rise of the Runelords Session Summary 08/31/2008

Attendance

Bruce (Yenneck Grumman) sits alone in his room and contemplates. A thought comes to him: “I don’t have any tea leaves, but perhaps I can foretell the entire session merely by contemplating the hideous scum left over in the bottom of this coffee cup. It’s a Walden-themed cup, so it should be weighty with Existentialist power. Whatever that means.” He peers into the cup and shudders, but the wisdom that overtakes him is hardly of the Existentialist sort.

Chris (Roscoe Dillon) feels a shuddering in the aether, as if someone had wrenched open the door to a forbidden vault. He sighs, “Great. Someone’s mucking around with Secrets Man Was Not Meant to Know. Again.” He waits for the inevitable phone call.

Paul rises from sleep. Shaking the weariness from his eyes, he stared unfocused at the clock. “Hmm... eleven o’clock. Nice and early. Oh, wait. That was in my old life. Now I’m late if I’m not up and out of the house by five in the morning. But life is so much more satisfying this way: I get the joy of knowing that I am teaching young, impressionable minds the Secrets of the Universe. I’m really looking forward to the unit on Non-Euclidean Geometry later this semester – I’ll finally have a use for all those photos I took last summer, if only I can get them to develop right. Maybe I need to add more quicksilver and selenium to the emulsion... Ah well. Time to greet the morning! Teke-li-li-li! Teke-li-li-li!”

Chuck (Phiravno) heaves the last of the swamp-folk bodies into the dumpster and groans. Once again, he reflects that it would be so much simpler if they learned from experience and stopped trying to climb the electric fence after the first couple get fried. Then again, if they learned like that then he might need something more than a mere electric fence to keep the ranch safe. For the thousandth time, he cursed himself for not asking what the real estate agent had meant when she said that the property had “charmingly rustic neighbors.”

Ernest (Valgrim Battlehorn) complains, “Hey! Why don’t I get my own paragraph? Don’t I deserve one? Wait, what’s that sound? A creaking, ancient metallic

dragging from the depths of the house... It's getting closer, ominously closer... No! Nooo! Not the face! Not the faaaace!"

Matt (Vaelyn) smugly reflects that he was right to stay silent. Ernest spoke up, demanding attention, and look what happened to him. Oh no, he got everything he deserved. Better to be quiet and spend time perusing these fascinating old volumes. Why, this one seems to be bound in the most unusual sort of leather, thin and light in hue. There's no telling what manner of creature might have produced it. Matt continues to read. When he looks up, a new light glows behind his eyes.

Patrick (Maru Maru) grumbles, "This is a fine how-do-you-do. I show up a bit late and I find out that everyone's already been carried off by extradimensional horrors *except* me. Isn't that always the way it is, though?"

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class & Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Yenneck Grumman	Bruce	Human	Ranger 9, Warblade 5	Another Chelaxian, a Black Arrow
Roscoe Dillon	Chris	Human	Cleric 13, Warblade 1	Shoanti, Skull tribe. Cleric of Gorum
Phiravno	Chuck	Human	Swordsage 5; Swashbuckler 5; Rogue 4	Varisian. Recently killed by a lamia, hopefully soon back with us.
Artkel Certor	Ed	Human	Fighter 9	Shoanti, Spider clan.
Maru Maru	Patrick	Human	Monk 9, Tattooed Monk 5	Shoanti, Sun clan
Valgrim Battlehorn	Ernest	Dwarf	Conjurer 3; Master Specialist 2; Paragnost Apostle 1; Malconvoker 8	Fascinated by all manner of unusual creatures.
Vaelyn	Matt	Human	Gold Dragon Shaman 14	Shoanti, Sun clan

Some Quick Loot Distribution

The characters go through the items gathered up in the last session and quickly distribute the more useful items. The less-useful items and the actual cash remain in the treasury for the moment, as there is no immediate convenient way to sell them or use the money.

Item	Source	Qty	Unit Value	Disposition	Rate	Total Value
Mithril breastplate.	8/17/2008	1				0
Cobra-shaped platinum armband with rubies for eyes	8/17/2008	1	2000			0
<i>Ring of the Ram</i> (with 5 charges).	8/17/2008	1		Maru Maru		0
<i>Vicious Kukri +2</i> with the unholy symbol of Lammastu etched on the blade.	8/17/2008	1				0
<i>Bronze Griffin Figurine of Wondrous Power.</i>	8/17/2008	1		Yenneck		0
<i>Bracers of Armor +5.</i>	8/17/2008	1				0
<i>Ring of Invisibility.</i>	8/17/2008	1		Valgrim		0
<i>Sirhadron Ring.</i>	8/17/2008	1		Vaelyn		0
<i>Padded Armor +1</i>	8/17/2008	4				0
<i>Rings of Protection +1</i>	8/17/2008	4				0
<i>Bucklers +1</i>	8/17/2008	4				0
<i>Sirhadron Ring</i>	8/17/2008	1		Yenneck		0
<i>Ring of Cold Resistance (30).</i>	8/17/2008	1		Vaelyn		0
Silver coins.	8/17/2008	64000	0.1	cash		6400
Gold coins	8/17/2008	21000	1	cash		21000
Platinum coins	8/17/2008	520	10	cash		5200
Golden coffer	8/17/2008	1	1400	cash		1400
35 assorted gemstones worth a total of 12,000 gold	8/17/2008	1	12000	cash		12000
Silver bracelet	8/17/2008	1	25	cash		25
Jade comb	8/17/2008	1	300	cash		300
Pair of red silk gloves embroidered with gold thread	8/17/2008	1	800	cash		800
Glass display case for the gloves	8/17/2008	1	100	cash		100
Masterwork mithril half-plate.	8/17/2008	1				0
Masterwork breastplate	8/17/2008	1				0
<i>Banded Mail +2.</i>	8/17/2008	1				0
<i>Wand of Lightning Bolt (CL 6, 23 charges).</i>	8/17/2008	1		Phiravno		0
<i>Potions of Cure Light Wounds.</i>	8/17/2008	4	25	various		0
<i>Potion of Owl's Wisdom.</i>	8/17/2008	1		Maru Maru		0
Flask of <i>Oil of Magic Vestment +4.</i>	8/17/2008	1		Vaelyn		0
Bejeweled ivory scroll tube	8/17/2008	1	300	cash		300
Scroll of <i>Unseen Servant</i>	8/17/2008	1		Valgrim		0

Item	Source	Qty	Unit Value	Disposition	Rate	Total Value
Scroll of <i>Keen Edge</i>	8/17/2008	1		Valgrim		0
<i>Ring of Evasion</i>	8/17/2008	1		Roscoe		0
<i>Rod of Extend Metamagic</i>	8/17/2008	1		Valgrim		0

Total Value	47525
Shares	6
Share Value	7920.83

There's Devils for the Killing!

The characters debate the virtues of two divergent plans: they could take the secret passage up to Karzoug's fortress (which would require that the characters get past a massive Roper), or go the high road (and face hundreds, possibly thousands, of rune-giant sentries). Valgrim notes that the Heptaric Locus is very close to the entry to the secret passage, and is reputed to be lousy with devils.

Valgrim argues strongly that he has gained a level and can summon a planetar now, so killing devils is all the way up on his list. Eventually the others agree to go along with this plan. It takes the planetar longer to agree – apparently the doings of Karzoug are not a concern that the Higher Planes give any credence to. Valgrim finally manages to convince the planetar to help when he indicates that the devils in the Locus are onsite of their own accord, directly working on the agendas of their diabolic masters.

The characters venture into the former Entertainment District of Xin-Shalast. The Heptaric Locus was once a massive and resplendent amphitheater. It still rises up over 500 feet to a massive crystal dome with a razor-sharp glass spire rising another 200 feet above the dome. The structure is surrounded by seven towers, one for each of the Sins. The whole thing glows with the light of multiple *Eternal Daylight* spells, making it a fantastic beacon in the night.

The characters debate the idea of entering through the front door, but then *Maru Maru* remembers the group's new allies. The mole-men tell the characters that the place is the site of ancient murder and that it is a terrible idea to enter it. As evidence, they mention that the nearby *Spillarium* was intended merely to strip and prepare the bodies of

those who fell in the Heptaric Locus. On the other hand, they point out that they can bring the characters straight into the floor of the arena. Roscoe orders, “Commence digging, my doughy subterranean minions!” The mole-men obediently dig.

The characters look across the arena to see four huge wraiths moving in on them. The Master of Ceremonies, a giant dressed in silks and finery, stands back with two more wraiths on his flanks. He tells them, “It is convenient that you appear – I have only just been handed the orders to assassinate you.” The characters exchange significant glances. Who put out the contract on them? Could it have been the planetar? Or perhaps the butler?

Two gigantic wraiths brush in and start draining Vaelyn’s constitution. Yenneck moves in to fence with the creature, irritating it. On the other flank, another wraith takes a minor hit from Phiravno. Maru Maru steps forward and clobbers the creature in vengeance.

Then things become serious. The Master of Ceremonies howls out, “Legions of Hell! Hear my call!” Five bone devils heed him and appear. They clack their baleful teeth at the characters and step forward.

The planetar unfurls his wings and proclaims, “Gamigin! You cannot conceal your hellish form from me!” He casts a *Holy Aura* on the characters, going on to explain that Gamigin has had a long and illustrious career of corruption and iniquity in the material world stretching back hundreds of years.

Valgrim punctuates the planetar’s statement by dumping an *Acid Storm* on Gamigin and his allies. They seem rather put out by the experience. Gamigin grumbles something about this being just like Springtime in Hell.

Roscoe calls down the power of Gorum, roasting one monstrous wraith into foul-smelling dust. He complains, “Why is the dust always *foul*? Why couldn’t one of these things turn into sweet-smelling dust?” Vaelyn plows into its comrade with his earthbreaker, shattering the wraith’s jaw and cracking its collarbone. The wraith takes its vengeance by expunging eight points of Vaelyn’s Constitution. Another wraith is inspired by his performance and drains seven points of Maru Maru’s Constitution.

The bone devils step in and start clawing and biting. The planetar’s *Holy Aura* takes immediate vengeance upon them: it blinds them, leaving them squalling in dismay.

Gamigin sees his followers start to fall and acts in desperation: he blankets everyone with a *Cone of Cold*, inflicting more damage upon his followers than upon the characters. The planetar responds by uttering a *Word of Good* that leaves all the bone devils blinded, deafened and paralyzed, and the wraiths blinded and deafened.

Roscoe asks, "How long are the bone devils paralyzed?"

Valgrim responds, "Seventeen minutes"

Maru Maru explains, "Oh, so for the rest of their lives."

Valgrim decides that the battle isn't yet sufficiently one-sided, so he summons up an *avoral guardinal* to fly in and hit Gamigin from behind. Gamigin howls, "My behind!"

This is enough to convince Gamigin to drop his humanoid disguise. He transforms back into his native form, that of an insectoid ice devil. It turns and stabs the avoral guardinal four times with its spear. The stricken avoral falls into a pile of glowing dust. Angel dust. Sweet-smelling angel dust. Roscoe starts to get ideas.

Valgrim swiftly entraps Gamigin with a *Dimensional Anchor*, ensuring that the creature cannot flee away to its home plane.

One of the wraiths manages to get a lucky hit in on Yenneck, draining four points of Constitution. Yenneck whines a lot about the damage, which has the effect of draining away several points of his Charisma as well.

Roscoe decides that he'd better do something to stop Yenneck from complaining. He thinks about clocking the ranger in the back of the head, but reconsiders and uses his *Ghost-Touch Gauntlets* to destroy the last wraith instead. Yenneck observes that the remaining active targets, Gamigin and his two bodyguard wraiths, are all sixty feet in the air, so he executes a paralyzed bone devil instead.

The planetar opens up on Gamigin, *Slowing* the creature. Valgrim helps out by summoning up a *leskylor*, a three-headed white tiger with wings. The creature flies up and savages the ice devil down to the ground. And with Gamigin out of the way, the characters are able to eliminate his two dread wraith bodyguards with ease. They are blinded and deafened, after all.

The characters search the bodies and discover much to their dismay that the only item of worth is Gamigin's spear.

- *Large Icy Burst Returning Spear +4*

On the other hand, up in the Elite Box the characters are able to find three Darkwood chests containing:

- 4500 gold pieces
- 220 platinum pieces
- 8000 gold pieces worth of gems and jewelry
- a *Sirhadron Ring*

Valgrim grabs a handful of the cash and flings it over the balcony, yelling out, “Make it rain!” Maru Maru takes the *Sirhadron Ring*. In return, he puts some items into the treasury:

- *A Cloak of Resistance +3*
- *A Ring of Protection +2*

The Secret Passage

The characters spend a day recovering their constitution and then proceed to the secret passage. It doesn’t take long for them to find the roper. Yenneck is a bit concerned when he sees that it is 28 feet tall, but that doesn’t stop him from running up and chopping at it. He notices that he isn’t having much of an impact upon it, even with the *Elder Mountain Hammer*. Maru Maru joins in and inflicts another light wound.

Valgrim and Roscoe step back and start throwing *Flame Strikes* and *annizu Fireballs* at the roper, knowing that it is vulnerable to flame. The roper starts to burn with a foul scent.

Even critically injured, the roper is still able to lash out with its six tentacles, grabbing half of the party and biting Maru Maru. And then it dies from the effects of Vaelyn’s and Maru Maru’s fire shields.

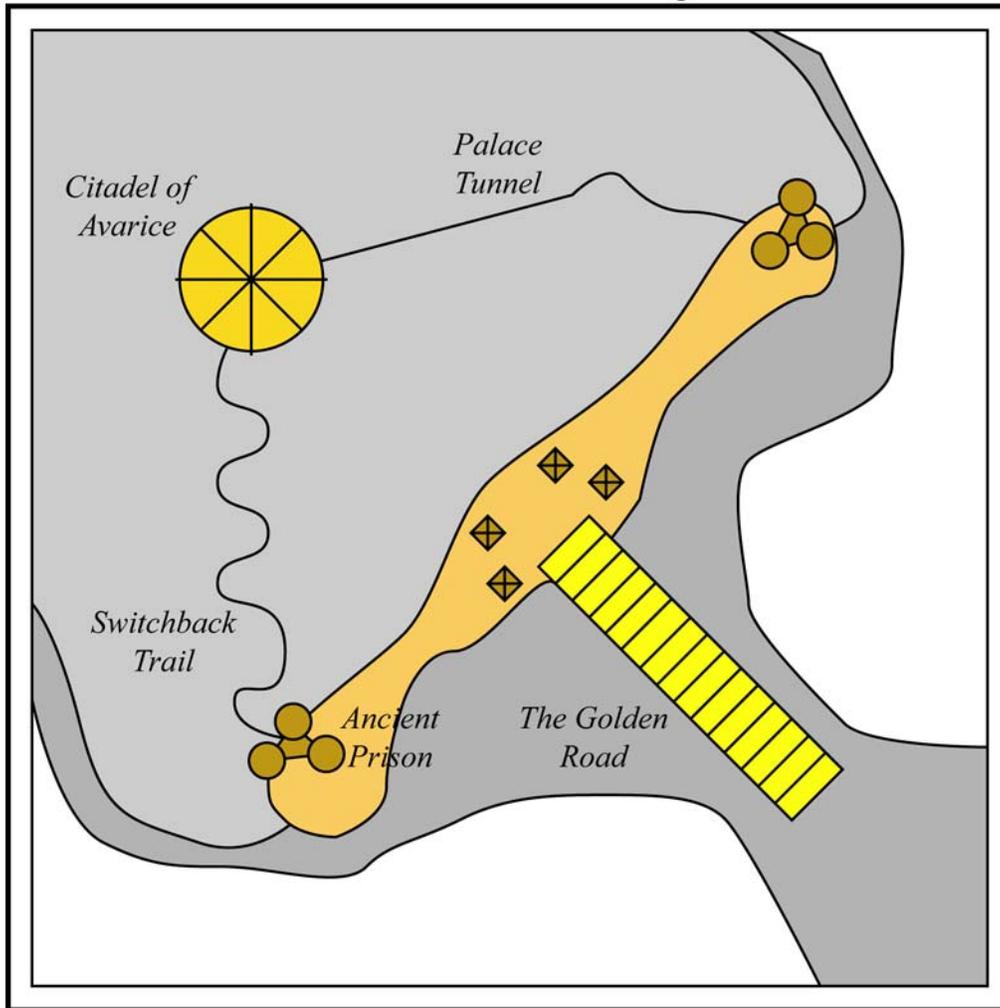
Valgrim yells out, “I get to be first to search the roper poo!” Nobody else competes with him for this honor. He discovers that the creature primarily subsided upon a diet of crag spiders and vermin.

The path comes out on a small plateau that the characters rather grimly realize is still almost 4000 feet beneath the peak of the palace. All around them are structures of cut alabaster that look like rune-giant sentry posts. They are at the very top of the golden

road. Valgrim takes advantage of this by taking a stone from the road and very carefully labeling it as, “The Top Stone of the Golden Road in the City of Greed”.

The Voice of the Runelord

The Palace of Karzoug



Knowing that the characters must have symbols of the favor of the Runelord to pass into the palace, those characters who lack *Sirhadron Rings* put on *Sirhadron Medallions*. As soon as he puts on his medallion, Roscoe Dillon starts speaking in the voice of Karzoug: “So there you are. Long I have waited for you to come into my golden city. And now I know exactly where you are.”

Yenneck comments dryly, “Prepare for Minion Wave Number One.”

The characters take a look around. They can see the Citadel of Avarice far above them, with two possible routes up: one tunnel from an ornate complex of spires, or a narrow switchback path from Karzoug's ancient prison.

Valgrim suggests an alternate plan: he simply *Teleports* the entire group into the Palace of Avarice proper. The characters examine the incredibly ornate décor (loaded with precious stones and metals, as appropriate to the Runelord of Greed), then head up a seemingly endless spiral stone ramp upwards.

Valgrim observes, "This place should have fallen down the instant it was built. Nuts. That means that Karzoug is a load-bearing boss."

First Sign of Guards

The characters stomp their way up the ramp for what seems like hours until they find four cloud giants and one storm giant sitting around in a guardroom. The giants seem quite surprised to see actual intruders, but Karzoug helps out by taking over Valgrim's voice and ordering, "Intruders! Guards! Slay them all!"

Valgrim launches a *Freezing Fog* around the giants. He chuckles as three of them slip and fall. Phiravno has no time for levity: moves in with his *Obscuring Shadow Veil Strike*, injuring a giant. Yenneck realizes suddenly that he's actually facing his favored enemy, so he has even less time: he runs in and drives his blade deep into a fallen giant's torso.

The giant struggles to its feet, allowing Yenneck an attack of opportunity. Yenneck rises to the occasion, slashing through the giant's throat and felling the creature in a blow. Yenneck is almost overcome by the unfamiliar feeling of accomplishment.

Another of the cloud giants observes the fate of his comrade. He remains prone, swinging low at Vaelyn. He catches the dragon shaman in the legs, shattering bone and leaving Vaelyn howling in agony. And rage. Terrible, terrible draconic rage.

In the distance, the characters hear the sounds of giantish feet slapping on ancient flagstones. They understand that reinforcements are on the way. Valgrim understands that it is time to muddy the situation some more: he casts *Confusion* on the giant patrol. Maru Maru simply continues the grim work of smashing his way through giants.

Valgrim observes as the others engage in what he thinks of as “retail” giant-killing. He moves over to “wholesale” by launching a *Cloudkill* through his *Frozen Fog*, then summons a pair of *arrow demons* on either side of Roscoe. Roscoe refrains from jumping in surprise. For their part, the demons send a flotilla of arrows into the crowd of giants to little effect. Valgrim mourns the relative untouchability of giants in plate armor.

Phiravno, Vaelyn and Yenneck move in on one giant. They take the creature apart in detail. Two more giants come stomping in, still coughing and choking from the effects of the *Cloudkill*. They kick Yenneck around like a tin can. Yenneck reports through broken teeth, “Don’t worry, guys! I’m still okay!” Another stomps out of the *Freezing Fog* and smashes around one of the arrow demons.

Maru Maru moves over to engage the storm giant that attacked the arrow demon. He bruises it severely. Phiravno moves in to help out, inflicting another bruise.

Valgrim cries out and casts *Brilliant Aura*, giving most everyone the ability to ignore armor. He explains, “I figured it was high time to switch this fight over to ‘easy’ mode.”

Roscoe ignores him. He’s far too busy packing Yenneck’s internal organs back into his chest cavity, courtesy of a particularly visceral *Heal* spell.

Vaelyn draws out his *Wand of Lightning* and crisps a couple of cloud giants. He is disappointed to find that storm giants are actually immune to lightning. He is even more disappointed to find himself up to his elbows in fresh new giants. Fighting at his shoulder, Phiravno assures him that he isn’t the only one up to his elbows in giants. Maru Maru lacks any such clever comments: he’s too busy ripping ribs out of giants with his bare hands. The others notice that the little monk is completely indistinguishable underneath a heavy coating of giant viscera.

Valgrim notices that there’s quite a backlog of giants building up. He does his part to clear it by casting *Confusion* into the giant ranks, catching three of them.

Yenneck wades into a wounded cloud giant with two swords swinging. By the time he’s done the giant is nothing but shattered bone and ruptured organs. Yenneck’s blades burn with acrid giant blood.

Roscoe casts *Holy Weapon* on Phiravno’s scarf and looks away, unable to bear the sight of the slaughter to come. And then out of the corner of his eye he sees Vaelyn rush

forward into a cluster of giants, three of them affected by Valgrim's *Confusion*. He yells out, "No! Don't do it, Vaelyn! You're moving into a place that in Korea we referred to as 'the meatgrinder'! You're still a young shaman! You have lots to live for!"

Vaelyn seems not to hear him. He is far too busy breaking the giant's kneecaps. The giant falls, crippled. Vaelyn whirls through and crushes the creature's skull with his hammer on the backswing.

Roscoe examines the carnage and observes, "He's like a bowling ball of death like that. Valgrim, you should use that *Brilliant Aura* spell all the time..."

It is about this time that several of the *Confused* giants break and run. The immediate giant population really clears out of a sudden. Valgrim notices that there are still quite a lot of giants lurking around deeper in the complex, so he summons up a pack of four amnizus which very obligingly launch an array of *Quickened Fireballs* into them.

The End of the Session

The session ends with the characters holding the line against an array of onrushing giants. No experience this time – the action is still ongoing.