

Rise of the Runelords Session Summary 01/13/2008

Attendance

Tim (??) announces, “Well, I’ve decided that I’m going to drink the Kool-Aid. The sweet, sweet online Kool-Aid.” *Bruce* (Hulmar Benk) tells him, “I’m so proud of you! And remember, it’s not an addiction if you can quit anytime you want!” *Ernest* (Valgrim Battlehorn) comments, “Yeah, but I notice that you showed coward’s colors in picking a PvE server.” *Aoife* chimes in by reciting the names of a half-dozen Pokemon characters. *Chuck* (Phiravno) protests, “Hey! There’s nothing inherently cowardly about PvE! Fighting against imaginary subroutines is just as challenging as fighting against real people!” *Chris* (Roscoe Dillon) rolls his eyes and silently reflects upon the inherent contradictions in referring to anyone who plays *World of Warcraft* as a “real person”. *Paul* just sighs in boredom: he overdosed on the Kool-Aid long ago. It holds no more magic for him. *Matt* (Apollo Eternium) is still subject to the Kool-Aid, but the lure of the Warblade on him is far stronger. *Patrick* (Maru Maru) just wishes, once again, that these paragraphs were slightly more reality-oriented. Even having Ernest writing the summary last time didn’t help.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class & Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Hulmar Benk	Bruce	Human	Scout 6	Chelaxian. Military veteran.
Roscoe Dillon	Chris	Human	Cleric 7	Shoanti, Skull tribe. Cleric of Gorum
Phiravno	Chuck	Human	Swordsage 2; Swashbuckler 3; Rogue 2	Varisian.
Artkel Certor	Ed	Human	Fighter 2	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 2	Shoanti, Sun clan
Valgrim Battlehorn	Ernest	Dwarf	Conjurer 3; Master Specialist 2; Paragnostoc Apostle 1; Malconvoker 1	Fascinated by all manner of unusual creatures.
“Gutterspike” Zook Beren	Tim	Gnome	Divine Mind 6	He rides a clawfoot, and he admits that gnomes have stupid names.
Valen	Matt	Human	Gold Dragon Shaman 6	Shoanti, Sun clan

How Did We Get Into an Ogre-Infested Fortress, Anyway?

Zook “Gutterspike” Beren had been sleeping off a tremendous wilderness bender in the ranger stronghold of *Fort Ranek* when much to his surprise the whole place was overrun by massive hillbilly mutant ogres who ate everyone in sight. And then a band of humans (and a dwarf) showed up to clear the ogres away. They kill a lot of ogres, then make camp in one of the barracks rooms. He simply walks in and announces himself. He is received with the sort of open-armed trust that is generally reserved for new player characters. Until the other characters remember that anybody with a *sirhadrin* rune is a potential loyalty risk and demand that he strip down to prove his bona fides. He complies, but not without a certain reluctance.

The Workroom

Now that they are rested, the characters move on to the Workroom. *Apollo Eternium* listens at the door and reports that he hears the sound of something liquid and squishy being rubbed on the walls. Someone is singing, “I’m big, you’re small, I’m going to eat your head.” He tells the others to prepare for trouble.

Apollo Eternium opens the door to see a former workroom that has been completely ruined. A massive ogre is using a decapitating body to paint bad poetry on the walls in gore. The poems are none too good, but do have a lot of powerful, visceral imagery. *Apollo* steps forward and comments, “Hi, we’re from the poetry awards committee!” and then executes a full attack. *Maru Maru* tumbles right past him and unleashes a respectable hit on the creature’s muscular gam. *Phiravno* follows him, granting flanking to all with *Island of Blades*.

The ogre *Gragauan* pulls out his ogre hook and swings at *Apollo Eternium*, burying the point into fighter’s ribcage and flinging him around like a crippled rabbit. *Gutterspike* moves in past him, takes the backhand swing from the hook, and staggers back oozing blood. The gnome makes a desperate strike, drawing even more blood. *Gragauan* looks grimly upset. Then *Apollo Eternium* drives his blade into the creature’s throat. As *Gragauan* dies, he gurgles, “You not understand what you have done... was only literate ogre... only hope for race...”

Roscoe Dillon saunters in just in time to heal up *Apollo Eternium*’s shattered ribs. *Maru Maru* and *Hulmar Benk* search the body and the room. They find:

- A potion of *Cure Moderate Wounds*;
- A *Large Hide Shirt +1*;
- A *Large Ogre Hook +1*;
- A large masterwork +7 STR composite longbow;
- A diary of bad (worse than ogre) poetry on the dead body

Valgrim Battlehorn examines the poetry journal. He determines that the author's name was *Petter* and that he was a lanky, mumbling simpleton among the Black Arrows.

Ogres in the Armory

Maru Maru moves on to the Armory, where he finds a couple of ogres playing with tiny suits of human armor and laughing at their collection of heads mounted on pikes. The characters engage.

Valgrim leads the attack with a *Glitterdust* spell that leaves both ogres blind. Phiravno follows up by wrapping his bladed scarf around the larger ogre's neck and torso, leaving the creature staggering from huge slashing wounds. Apollo Eternium dashes in and demonstrates that against blinded, disoriented foes in ill-fitting armor his courage knows no bounds. He cuts down the second ogre in a single strike.

Hulmar Benk realizes that by the time the turn order gets around to him both ogres will be long dead, so he simply stands around looking heroic for photographers.

Pappy in the Chapel

The characters confidently move on to the chapel, where they find *Big Pappy Jhagrath Kreig* armed with a massive khopesh. This time Hulmar moves forward confidently, delivering a solid tree-chopping hit on Pappy. Pappy doesn't seem to really even feel the impact. Maru Maru and Apollo Eternium move in. By the time Apollo Eternium is done, Pappy is looking slightly wounded.

Gutterspike gallops forward and stabs Pappy through with his lance. Pappy grimaces as the point tears through important internal organs. Gutterspike chirps out, "I gut-spiked him! That's how I got my name!"

Roscoe Dillon reflects, "That's interesting. I was imagining something completely different. Something much less family-oriented, for suitably conservative definitions of family."

Pappy Jhagragh decides that he hates humans most of all, even though it was the gnome that hurt him worst. He takes this hatred out on Apollo Eternium, crushing him practically flat. Roscoe Dillon muses, “Well, he died of a broken heart. Seriously: that guy just broke his heart into two pieces.” He dashes off a quick *Close Wounds* spell to keep Apollo from dying straight out.

Phiravno moves forward with his bladed scarf and his *Burning Blade Technique*. Valgrim Battlehorn picks up a chant of, “Scarf! Scarf! Scarf!” Phiravno lives up to his billing and downs Pappy Jhagragh in one strike.

The characters quickly figure out that the ogres have already thoroughly defiled the shrine and converted it into a shrine to *Lamashtu*, Goddess of Monsters. Maru Maru opines that the place looks like it was originally a shrine to *Erastil*, God of the Hunt. The characters search Jhagragh and find:

- Two potions of *Cure Serious Wounds*;
- A *Large Human-Bane Ogre Hook +1*;
- A pair of *Bracers of Armor +2*;
- A *Belt of Giant Strength +2*;
- A garter; and
- A loincloth

Maru Maru takes the *Bracers of Armor*. Apollo Eternium takes the *Belt of Giant Strength*. Then the characters move up to the second floor of the tower.

The Commander's Quarters

The walls of this room are decorated with the sort of tchotchkes that normally appeal to high-ranked guys with substantial budgets. As with every other room in the fortress, it has been ruined by ogres. Two of them are still present: *Dorella Krieg* (both daughter and wife to Jhagragh), who gained her sorcerous power from a nearly-fatal head wound, and *Hook-Maw* (both son and half-brother to Jhagragh), who had his lower jaw torn off and replaced with a forged metal prosthesis as an adulthood rite.

Phiravno leads with *Shadow Blade Technique* on Hook-Maw. His scarf dances across the creature's chest, leaving an injury that would look impressive on a coatimundi. Apollo Eternium moves in second, his blade striking true thanks to a quick bonus from

Gutterspike's magical charms. Valgrim Battlehorn decides that someone had best do something about the magician, so he summons in a fiendish ape to do the deed. The ape screams and claws with great gusto.

The two Black Arrows *Jakardros* and *Shalelu* open fire, totally surprising the characters who had previously totally forgotten that they existed. Shalelu manages to get a single arrow into Hook-Maw.

Hook-Maw roars in anger. His ogre hook cuts downward through Apollo Eternium, almost cutting the fighter in half. His swing continues on to bury the point of the hook in Phiravno's chest. Roscoe Dillon launches a quick *Close Wounds* (again) to keep Apollo from dying instantly, and a *Cure Light Wounds* on Phiravno to keep him in fighting trim. The fighter sags against the wall like a shattered rag doll.

Gutterspike stabs Hook-Maw with his lance, opening up another respectable wound. Phiravno follows up with his scarf, tearing the big ogre's throat clean out. The creature's head lolls forward as he sinks to the ground.

Dorella finally notices that there is a fiendish ape attacking her. She surrounds herself with a crowd of *Mirror Images*. Valgrim responds by summoning a *Rat Swarm* at her feet. She answers him with *Shout*, destroying Gutterspike's *Deep Crystal Lance* and killing the already-wounded Apollo Eternium outright. As an added bonus, the noise summons reinforcements from the next room.

Distraught by the loss of his lance, Gutterspike rushes in and strikes Dorella with a warhammer. Phiravno follows up with a slash hit along her flank.

Valgrim notices that reinforcements are on their way. He tells Jakardros and Shalelu to get clear and then covers the corridor and doorway with a *Web*. Two massive ogres come thundering out of the door and straight into the webbing. Valgrim is deeply grateful to see that the webbing does in fact slow them down.

Dorella decides to improve the situation further by casting *Confusion* on practically the entire party. Gutterspike's dinosaur mount and Valgrim's fiendish ape are both affected, along with Shalelu. Valgrim dismisses the ape back to its home dimension, commenting, "Ape went bad." Shalelu starts shooting arrows into the dead ogre.

Hulmar concludes that things need to be simplified, so he arranges this by skirmishing up to Dorella and downing her with a single mighty axe-swing. She falls like a broken toy.

Maru Maru moves out into the corridor to see the ogres (See the Ogres! A Wonder of the Modern World!) and fire a sling bullet at one of them. He manages to give one of the ogres a nasty bruise. Roscoe Dillon calmly waits for the ogres to approach through the clots of webbing. While he waits, he casts *Bless Weapon* on his blade. Jakardros steps behind Roscoe, mumbles something about, “That expendable cleric can be a meat shield for me... After all, I’m a high-value Black Arrow ranger...” and sends a pair of arrows downrange to the ogres. He demonstrates that his words are more than just windy ranger boisterousness when his second arrow kills the lead ogre dead.

Gutterspike’s dinosaur decides that now is the time on *Sprockets* when we run. It flees past everyone and down the stairs, pausing to nip at Valgrim on the way. Valgrim decides that this should be the gnome’s problem, so he exchanges places with Gutterspike thanks to *Benign Transposition*. He appears right in front of the *Confused* Shalelu, who howls out, “It’s a shapeshifter!” and shoots him in the foot with her bow. Valgrim grumbles something about being hoist upon his own arcane petard.

The single remaining ogre doesn’t last long. The characters wait for the *Web* to vanish, then loot the dead:

- A wand (Dorella);
- A nonmagical dagger (Dorella);
- An amulet (Dorella);
- A *Cloak of Charisma +2* (Dorella)
- A potion of *Cure Moderate Wounds* (Hook-Maw);
- A *Large Hide Shirt +1* (Hook-Maw);
- A *Large Ogre Hook +1* (Hook-Maw); and
- A large masterwork +7 STR composite longbow (Hook-Maw)
- A flat wooden coffer containing dozens of parchment sheets with nicely written love sonnets to someone named *Mirianna*;
- A pair of soft green *Boots of the Mire*;

- A jewelry box containing a silver locket on a chain, containing a lock of silver hair from a nymph.

Boots of the Mire work best in swampy terrain. In swamp, the wearer can walk across water no more than 5 feet deep, may move at normal speed through swamp, and may move without leaving tracks in swamps. They also give the wearer a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves against poisons and disease. Hulmar Benk takes the boots, while surmising that *Commander Lammatar* of the outpost must have used the boots to visit his nymph mistress in the swamps. Jakardros is quite surprised: he had no idea that Lammatar had a girlfriend, but did know that the man sometimes left the fortress for days at a time on his “Communion Walks”. Hulmar observes, “Well, it’s pretty well known that if you leave soldiers in one place for more than six months they’re going to start marrying the locals.”

The Map Room

The characters look through the Map Room. It’s ruined; only a few of the region maps remain intact. The only ones the characters are able to recover detail:

- The hidden paths of Lurkwood’s interior
- The smugglers’ tunnels beneath Riddleport;
- The first couple of levels of Viperwall.

The headless bodies of several Black Arrows are hanging from the ceiling. The characters deduce that the ogres were draining them to get blood to paint the walls.

The Tower Stairs

The characters move up the tower stairs. They find a bell-tower with a massive crack in the side. The bell clapper has been replaced with a dead Black Arrow.

The characters see one ogre posted at the East Gate of the castle. The creature is busy polishing a fresh skull to a high glossy sheen. There is an old, crumbling guard tower nearby, occupied by three ogres. One of those is ancient, with a face covered in angry red pustules. The cooking shed is occupied by a wheezing grotesque of an ogre with shriveled hands and legs and a grossly oversized head and backside. Other small clusters of ogres sit around the courtyard engaged in various terrible acts.

Clearing the Building

The characters decide to rely upon the rangers for clearing duties. They station the two Black Arrows up in a tower so they can rain arrows down on the ogres in the courtyard, then fortify up the main door of the keep to keep the ogres out.

The characters hear the screams of the ogres outside as Jakardros and Shalelu open fire. It actually takes quite a while for the first ogres to even reach the keep door without dying. And when they do, the characters are ready to cut them down. The fight goes on for quite a while and results in a fair amount of damage to both ogres and characters, but by the end of it all the ogres (including a weird variety of ogre bosses) are dead. The rangers took out twelve normal ogres, while the characters took out six normal ogres, two ogre barbarians and one ogre fighter. Loot includes:

- A potion of *Cure Moderate Wounds*;
- Three *Large Hide Shirts +1*;
- A *Large Ogre Hook +1*;
- A large masterwork +7 STR composite longbow;
- Two *Large Great Clubs +1*;
- Two *Rings of Protection +1*;
- A necklace of shriveled human female hands, each bearing one copper ring.

Twenty-one rings are worth 10 gold each; the last ring is magical

Phiravno and Hulmar arrange to have the dead ogre heads displayed on pikes outside the castle gates. The recruit Black Arrows are handed the task of collecting the bodies of their predecessors and arranging them for proper disposal (which turns out to be a funeral pyre by tradition). In particularly nasty cases (e.g., chopped apart bodies underwater) Valgrim helps out by summoning fiendish octopi and the like. The valley smells of burning humanoid flesh for days.

Organizing the Defense of the Fort

Through a strange series of errors and coincidences, Hulmar Benk finds himself as the only Chelaxian human in the group. As a result, he finds himself named titular head of the garrison at Fort Ranek. Both of the gates are nominally securable, after some

repairs to fix the damage inflicted by the ogres (who had simply bashed down the doors when they attacked). Actions for the first week include:

- Sending an envoy down to Turtleback Ferry to meet with the Mayor;
- Assembling funeral pyres for the fallen Black Arrows;
- Cutting trees to brace the main gates; and
- Enduring the near-constant winter rain, which causes rivers and lakes to swell

The characters learn that there is a magical (automatically controlled, unmanned) dam at the bottom of Storval Lake that normally keeps the rivers from flooding. Everyone reflects upon the chance that someone might be interfering with the control of the dam.

Valgrim Battlehorn collects up money from the group and spends a week making an *Artificer's Eye* to identify magical objects. Gutterspike acts as a courier between Fort Ranek and Turtleback Ferry, carrying messages and arranging various purchases.

A New Recruit

Valen is a Sun Tribe Shoanti Dragon Shaman, a relative of Apollo Eternium who has been searching for the fate of his kinsman for months. He arrived in Turtleback Ferry several days after the characters. The locals there sent him up to Fort Ranek; he arrives in time to see the characters burning the last of the fallen Black Arrows.

A Cliffhanger

In the second week of the characters' reign over Fort Ranek, a panicked messenger arrives from Turtleback Ferry to report that the flood waters are inundating the town and that it will be washed away in a day.

The End of the Session

Sixth level characters gain 5229 experience points each. Seventh level characters each gain 4500 experience points. This is enough to bring Gutterspike, Hulmar and Valen to 7th level.

Valuable Items from Apollo Eternium

The fallen character Apollo Eternium was carrying a wide variety of nice hardware, in particular:

- *Belt of Giant Strength +4*;

- *Ruby Inlaid Red Dragon Scale Cloak Clasp* (worth 600 gp);
- Silk rope with a grappling hook;
- Potion of *Cure Light Wounds*;
- 64 gold pieces;
- 2 silver pieces;
- 3 copper pieces;
- *Bastard Sword +1*;
- *Keen Rapier +1*;
- Longbow with 40 barbed arrows;

Treasure Distribution

Most of the items the characters intend to sell are still sitting in their treasury for lack of an actual market to sell them into.

Item	Source	Qty	Unit Value	Disposition	Rate	Total Value
Potion of <i>Cure Moderate Wounds</i>	Gragauan	1	300	Valgrim		0
<i>Large Hide Shirt +1</i>	Gragauan	1	1330	sell		0
<i>Large Ogre Hook +1</i>	Gragauan	1	2348	sell		0
Large masterwork +7 STR composite longbow	Gragauan	1	1200	sell		0
Diary of bad (worse than ogre) poetry	Gragauan	1	0	Valgrim		0
Potions of <i>Cure Serious Wounds</i>	Jhagragh	2	1200	consumed	0%	0
<i>Large Human-Bane Ogre Hook +1</i>	Jhagragh	1	4348	Roscoe		0
<i>Bracers of Armor +2</i>	Jhagragh	1	4000	Maru		0
<i>Belt of Giant Strength +4</i>	Jhagragh	1	16000	Maru		0
Wand of <i>Acid Arrow</i> (43 charges)	Dorella	1		Valgrim		0
Dagger	Dorella	1	2	sell		0
<i>Amulet of Natural Armor +2</i>	Dorella	1	8000	Hulmar		0
<i>Cloak of Charisma +2</i>	Dorella	1	4000	Valgrim		0
Potion of <i>Cure Moderate Wounds</i>	Hook-Maw	1	300	Valgrim		0
<i>Large Hide Shirt +1</i>	Hook-Maw	1	1330	sell		0
<i>Large Ogre Hook +1</i>	Hook-Maw	1	2348	sell		0
Large masterwork +7 STR composite longbow	Hook-Maw	1	1200	sell		0
Wooden coffer of love sonnets	Commander	1	0	Valgrim		0
Soft green <i>Boots of the Mire</i>	Commander	1	3500	Hulmar		0
Silver locket containing lock of nymph hair	Commander	1	20	keep		0
Map of the hidden paths of Lurkwood's interior	Map Room	1	unknown	Valgrim		0
Map of the smugglers' tunnels beneath Riddleport	Map Room	1	unknown	Valgrim		0

Item	Source	Qty	Unit Value	Disposition	Rate	Total Value
Map of the first two levels of Viperwall	Map Room	1	unknown	Valgrim		0
<i>Belt of Giant Strength +2</i>	Apollo Eternium	1	4000	Phiravno		0
<i>Ruby Inlaid Red Dragon Scale Cloak Clasp</i>	Apollo Eternium	1	600	Valen		0
Silk rope with a grappling hook	Apollo Eternium	1	11	sell		0
<i>Potion of Cure Light Wounds</i>	Apollo Eternium	1	50	Valgrim		0
64 gold pieces	Apollo Eternium	64	1	cash		64
2 silver pieces	Apollo Eternium	2	0.1	cash		0.2
3 copper pieces	Apollo Eternium	3	0.01	cash		0.03
<i>Bastard Sword +1</i>	Apollo Eternium	1	2335	Roscoe		0
<i>Keen Rapier +1</i>	Apollo Eternium	1	8320	sell		0
Longbow	Apollo Eternium	1	75	sell		0
Barbed Arrows	Apollo Eternium	40	0.05	sell		0
<i>Potion of Cure Moderate Wounds</i>	Final Battle	1	300	Hulmar		0
<i>Large Hide Shirts +1</i>	Final Battle	3	1330	sell		0
<i>Large Ogre Hook +1</i>	Final Battle	1	2348	sell		0
A large masterwork +7 STR composite longbow	Final Battle	1	1200	sell		0
<i>Large Great Club +1</i>	Final Battle	2	2302	sell		0
<i>Ring of Protection +1</i>	Final Battle	1	1000	Gutterspike		0
<i>Ring of Protection +1</i>	Final Battle	1	1000	Phiravno		0
Copper Rings	Final Battle	21	10	cash		210
<i>Ring of Animal Friendship</i>	Final Battle	1	10800	Gutterspike		0