

## Rise of the Runelords Session Summary 01/27/2008

### Attendance

*Ernest* (Valgrim Battlehorn) tells everyone, “We’re going to get Indian food for lunch today!” *Chuck* (Phiravno) groans, “I love every ethnicity of food except Indian. But I guess one billion people can’t be totally wrong.” *Bruce* (Hulmar Benk) chirps out, “I bet they’ll have goat! I can eat a goat!” *Paul* groans and reflects upon the fact that there’s a *reason* why Americans only consume a strictly limited number of types of meat.

*Tim* (Gutterspike) shows up after lunch, listens to the others, and points out, “You people are all savage meat-eating barbarians!” *Matt* (Valen) replies, “I eat meat, and I’m not a savage *or* a barbarian.” *Patrick* (Maru Maru) offers, “Speak for yourself, effete city-dweller. Raaaugh!”

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class &amp; Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Hulmar Benk	Bruce	Human	Scout 7	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; Paragnostic Apostle 1; Malconvoker 1	Fascinated by all manner of unusual creatures.
“Gutterspike” Zook Beren	Tim	Gnome	Divine Mind 7	He rides a clawfoot, and he admits that gnomes have stupid names.
Valen	Matt	Human	Gold Dragon Shaman 7	Shoanti, Sun clan

### *Turtleback Ferry Is Drowning!*

The characters shortly debate the virtues of leaving two of their mooks behind at *Fort Ranek* to guard the place, finally deciding to leave privates *Scrotum* and *Foreskin*, then rush to the drowning town of *Turtleback Ferry*. It is quickly evident that the town is inundated and that there are two points of immediate peril: a turtle-shell ferry loaded with

women and children that threatens to capsize, and a church that is on the verge of being washed away by the flood waters.

*Hulmar “Marshhump” Benk* starts wading out to the church across three-foot deep floodwaters, a safety rope trailing behind him. He sees something approaching in the water. He calls out, “Incoming!”

A huge constrictor snake bumps up against the swamped ferry and prepares to constrict and consume young *Tabitha Kramm*, pigtails and all. *Valen* offers, “Well, that’s tragic and all, but it’s an acceptable loss. Let’s rescue the rest of the kids!” He forces himself into the water, but is pushed back by the current.

*Roscoe Dillon* points out, “Things are actually not so bad. The only thing attacking is the snake that Hulmar saw.”

Hulmar yells back, “No, it’s worse! The snake isn’t the thing I saw. The thing I saw was *much larger* than the snake!” Almost on cue, a tentacle comes up out of the water as if to look around. The wookie starts to cry and hammer on the blast doors.

*Valgrim Battlehorn* summons a celestial hippogriff to ferry *Phiravno* out to the church. *Phiravno* finds the Mayor of Turtleback Ferry in charge, and a large collection of sick and wounded folk who had taken refuge in the building.

*Gutterspike* stands back on the shore and starts casting *Charm Animal* from his *Ring of Animal Friendship* at the snake. Then *Valgrim* points out, “Actually, that’s not just any constrictor snake, it’s a nightbelly boa!” He casts *Benign Transposition* and swaps out young *Tabitha Kramm* with *Maru Maru*. She ends up wounded and unconscious on the shore, while the monk finds himself grappled by a snake. *Roscoe Dillon* works to cast some healing spells upon the girl.

*Maru Maru* squeals as the nightbelly boa constricts him.

*Valen* swaps his aura for Fire Resistance to protect the kids, then attempts to envelop the snake with flame. The snake barely notices.

*Gutterspike* hands his magic ring to *Roscoe Dillon*, then goads his riding dinosaur into leaping onto the sinking boat so he can stab the snake with his lance.

Hulmar gasps as the tentacle-monster he saw before explodes out of the water to attack one corner of the church. The creature is a *Black Magga*, a horrible entity with a plesiosaur head and an octopoid body. Various of the characters know that these

creatures are terrible harbingers of storm and disaster who might be immune to divine magic. Phiravno knows that bathing in the black heart's blood of the Black Magga can render a person totally immune to divine spells.

The locals see the Black Magga and react in blind terror. Roscoe Dillon yells to Hulmar, "Good plan! Scaring the locals away from the flood!"

Hulmar answers, "Thank you! I'm already planning my victory speech!" He struggles towards the church door. Black Magga responds by engulfing him and Phiravno in a foul-smelling narcotic cloud of gas. Hulmar becomes confused, determining that now is the time to void his bowels. And then the Black Magga bites Hulmar, giving him two negative levels and flinging him around like a rag doll. He runs, allegedly hoping to draw the thing away from the townsfolk. The others can hear his manly screaming across the sodden roofs of the town: "Come get me, monster!"

Roscoe Dillon finally manages to *Charm* the nightbelly boa. It lets go of Maru Maru. Gutterspike uses the opportunity to pull people off the boat. Phiravno and Valgrim arrange a ropeline to the church to bring the healthier inhabitants. The various Black Arrow recruits join in to help evacuate the infirm and wounded who had taken refuge in the building.

Hulmar realizes that the Black Magga is not following him when he hears Valgrim's distinctive scream. He turns around, grabs a rock, and flings it at the creature. Nobody is more surprised than Hulmar when his attack flies true. Phiravno uses this opportunity to get the rest of the people out of the church. And then Black Magga decides to retreat from the encounter.

### *Does This Happen All the Time?*

Phiravno asks some of the locals if this kind of thing happens often all the time. They indicate that this sort of thing *never* happens: the magical dam at *Skull's Crossing* normally regulates the water levels and keeps massive monsters from getting into the lake. Even as he is asking, the floodwaters seem to be receding.

The mayor offers the characters 1000 gold to go up to Skull's Crossing and fix the floodgates. Valgrim Battlehorn suggests that the actual arrangement should be more a discussion of what the tax rate the town should pay to Fort Ranek and the Black Arrows.

The mayor seems a bit edgy about the idea, so the characters agree to table the discussion until after their victorious return from Skull's Crossing.

The mayor also mentions that he's learned that about half of the town has the sirhadrin tattoos. And when tattoo-bearers died in the flood, something bad happened to their souls. The characters emphasize that this means the tattoo-wearers need to be found and the tattoos removed. Valgrim adds in that the Black Magga is a creature of Lammastu, and that someone might have decided that now was the time to exterminate the town and cash in their chips. The mayor listens to the characters' story and concludes that there must be a Well of Greed somewhere in the area. The Well of Greed could well be up at Skull's Crossing.

### **Minor Tragedy for Hulmar**

Both Hulmar Benk and Valgrim Battlehorn took hits from the Black Magga and gained negative levels. Roscoe Dillon is able to partially alleviate their suffering, but in Hulmar's case part of the damage is permanent: he ends up as Scout 6 in spite of Roscoe's efforts.

### *The Mighty Dam at Skull's Crossing*

The huge dam of Skull's Crossing holds back the waters of the Storval Deep, though a huge new crack allows the waters to pour through. The surface of the dam is carved into thousands of skulls, with five larger skulls across the top, each of them clearly a massive floodgate. The dam gorge is steep and slick with rain. The characters see that the dam is at risk of breaking, and that the floodgates must be opened to alleviate the danger.

The characters travel up a seven-foot wide stairway to the top of the gorge. They notice that the stairs are decorated with thousands of skulls of various species, each marked with a distinctive skull-like rune. Valgrim Battlehorn explains, "The rune is giantish, and marks this as the territory of the Skull-Taker Trolls."

The characters go on through a short tunnel, then see that they must go up a fifteen-foot cliff to reach another small cave. Maru Maru clammers up the cliff with a rope, hoping to bring up the rest of the characters quietly enough to avoid notice. Unfortunately, he is not so fortunate. He arrives on the ledge only to hear two creatures

call out from the next room, “Who there? You part of Skull-Taker tribe?” Heavy footsteps thud towards him.

Thinking quickly, Maru calls out, “No! We’re enemies of Skull-Takers! You should be our friends!”

The creature responds, “Raaugh! We crush you then! We take your skull!”

Roscoe Dillon rolls his eyes in frustration. Phiravno and Hulmar swarm up the slope like rabid goats. They are just in time to see *Gorger and Chaw*, a massive two-headed giant with a pair of morningstars. Maru Maru attacks the creature’s kneecap, giving it a serious bruising. Gorger and Chaw are not impressed. They are somewhat more impressed when Valgrim Battlehorn summons in a shiny varut nerra that promptly casts *Mirror Image* and fills the cavern with mirror-surfaced creatures.

Maru Maru leaps up and hits Gorger right in his shovel jaw. “Take that, creature! I bribe you with pain!” Phiravno and Hulmar move in and pile on the damage. The two-headed giant howls. And then Maru Maru reaches out and snaps both of its necks. The thing collapses to the ground. The characters search and find:

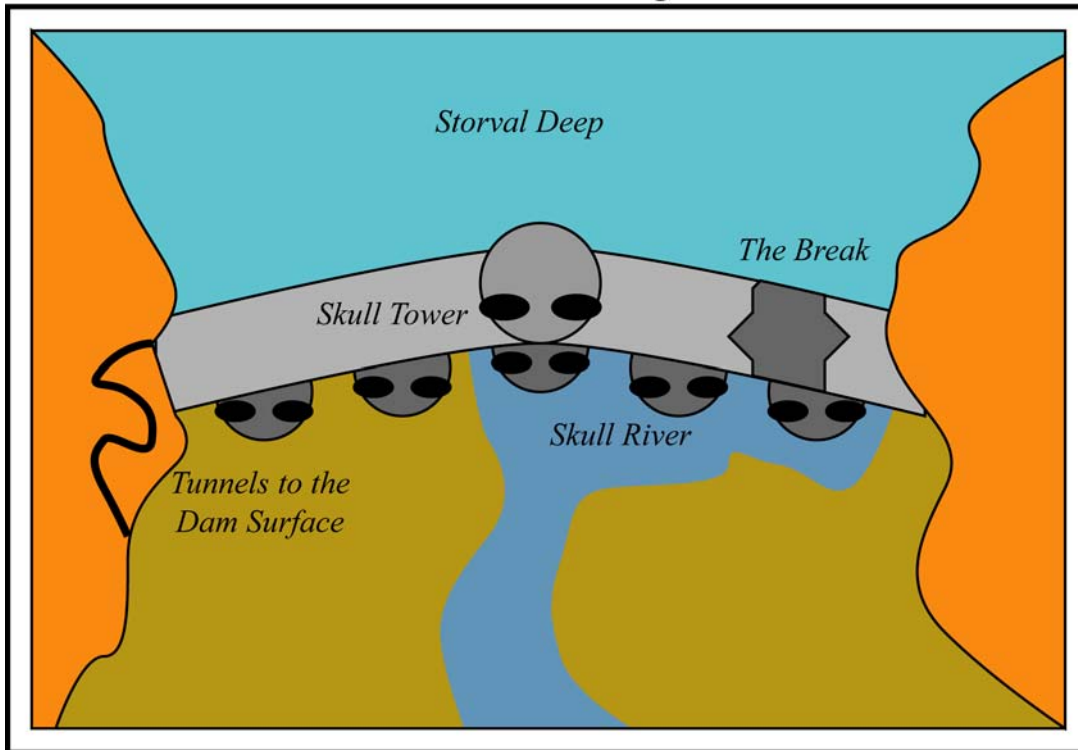
- 693 gold pieces;
- 1240 silver pieces;
- a velvet pouch containing 6 pearls worth 100 gold pieces each;
- a *Phylactery of Undead Turning*;
- an ivory scroll tube inset with strips of jade worth 300 gold;
- arcane scrolls of *Cone of Cold*, *Hold Monster* and *Telekinesis*.

Valgrim gets the three scrolls, even though he cannot use some of them. Roscoe Dillon takes the phylactery.

### *On Top of the Skull’s Crossing Dam*

The characters continue on up over a ledge and up stairs to the top of the dam. Three hundred feet away along the top of the dam the characters can see a pack of ogres trying to break the dam. They look exhausted as they hammer their ogre hooks into the surface. The characters can also see a tower of skull-shaped domes in the center of the dam. On the one side of the dam are the choppy waters of the Storval Deep, on the other side is the deep gorge.

## The Skull's Crossing Dam



The characters move up on the ogres carefully, firing arrows and casting spells. Only Valgrim and his *Melf's Acid Arrow* spells manage to actually damage the ogres. When the ogres move closer, Hulmar chops away at the lead ogre while Valgrim summons in a celestial bison to finish it off. They don't quite manage the job, so Valen and Phiravno do it for them.

Gutterspike moves past the other characters to spear one of the ogres in the next rank. He leaves the creature furious and bleeding. Maru Maru engages another ogre, then Valen burns the creature up with his fire breath. Hulmar moves up and exterminates the ogre Gutterspike wounded.

Roscoe Dillon decides to step through a bone-breaking attack of opportunity to attack an ogre. The ogre evades his attack and mocks him, "I break human bone! I crush human meat! Human so weak!" He is so involved in his soliloquy that he doesn't realize that he is the only ogre still standing. He hits Roscoe once more, then gets cut to ribbons.

The characters survey the battlefield and find that one ogre is still clinging to life. The characters restrain the creature then heal it up enough to answer questions.

- *Who do you work for? We were sent by Barl Break-bones.*

- *Where is Barl?* On Hook Mountain.
- *Why did he send you all here?* To break the Skull's Crossing. There were two dozen sent, but after fights with the Skull-Taker trolls and the big disaster when the monster came across, this is all that was left.
- *How many trolls are there?* They live in the dam. There are many of them. We don't know how to kill them.
- *Have you been inside the dam?* That's where the trolls are.
- *Why did Barl want to break the dam?* That is not for me to know.
- *Is there pretty lady that Barl listen to? Who tell Barl do this? Pretty lady with snake hoo-hah?* A month ago, Barl Break-Bones came. He dispatch many ogres with ease, animate those he killed to fight against us. Our chieftain surrendered to him, so Barl became the chieftain.
- *Where do you live?* On the last, highest outcrop of Hook Mountain. Many many ogres live there.
- *Is Barl an ogre?* No, Barl is a giant.
- *What tribe are you?* We are Krieg!
- *What else did Barl have you do?* Attack the human fort. And make many iron weapons for giants.

Valgrim paints runes on the ogre, persuades him that this is a curse that will make him shrink to the size of a halfling and wander forever in the orc lands where the orcs will have improper social relations with him should he ever trouble humans again. The ogre plainly believes all this, and runs screaming.

The ogres had relatively limited loot. The best of them did have a few nice items, including:

- *Large Great Club +1;*
- *Large Hide Armor +1;*
- *Ring of Protection +1*

### *The Skull Tower*

The characters force their way through a barricaded door into the Skull Tower, straight into a chamber occupied by four trolls and the remains of several eviscerated

ogres. The characters notice that the ogres' skulls have been removed and the bodies partially eaten.

Valgrim casts a *Glitterdust* into the room, blinding two of the trolls. The remaining characters move in under cover of blindness. One troll manages to hammer Roscoe Dillon pretty hard even so. Valen steps in after him and unleashes a fiery blast that burns three of them.

Phiravno and Maru Maru stand firm against two of the unblinded trolls. One of them lays hands upon Maru Maru and tears him practically in half. Roscoe steps out of the shadows with a heal spell ready, pointing out, "There's a reason I keep these things on hand!"

For their part, the trolls turn to rending Phiravno. Phiravno gasps out from between his broken teeth, "Don't... worry... I'm... okay... except... for... bones... and... organs..." Roscoe hears Phiravno's comments and understands that it'll be okay for him to concentrate on a different part of the battlefield. Phiravno is so alarmed to see the healer leave that he tumbles away from the trolls, pulls out a wand of *Scorching Ray*, and roasts the only troll still in operational shape. The troll staggers, then collapses when Valgrim hits it with an acidic splash.

Another troll, previously gutted by the characters' strikes, staggers back to its feet. Hulmar and Gutterspike chop at the thing until it resembles ground beef. Hulmar wipes his brow and comments, "This is thirsty work. It won't be coming back for a while, at least." Gutterspike shudders. Then Valgrim and Valen step in with acid and fire and kill the trolls permanently.

The characters continue through the tower. They find a room overrun with disgusting green oozy plants and troll-nests. They find nothing of real value, so Valen (eventually) sets the place on fire. They find a room painted with graffiti reading, "Below lives Wet Pappa Grazool! All hail Wet Pappa Grazool!" Valen mourns, "I think that means he won't burn very well." There are double doors that look like they might lead to stairs down in this room. They find a former storeroom so clotted with ropy wet plants that it smells like a miniature fetid jungle. And they find a collapsed room with a gap looking down into the terrible chasm beneath the dam.



### *Down Into the Dam*

The characters force the doors and take the stairs down into the bowels of the dam. They find a large, wet, cold chamber dominated by a pool of slime that resembles three-day-old banana pudding. Floating to the surface of the pool is the torn-off face of a troll. Maru Maru offers, "I bet that Wet Pappa Grazool isn't a troll. I advance into the room."

A troll with half of a face rises from the depths. It is wielding a military fork. The characters guess that they are looking at *Wet Pappa Grazool*. Valgrim assures the others, "He's a water troll, or skrag for short. He can only regenerate in water!"

Valen comments, "Gee, look at that military fork. I wonder what kind of reach he's got with that thing." He steps forward. "He must have fifteen feet of reach! That's pretty cool!" Then he realizes that he's stepped within fifteen feet of Wet Pappa Grazool, who stabs him.

Gutterspike crows out, "Forward! Forward men! Advance on the creature!"

Roscoe asks, "Why? I thought we were trying to pull back to get him out of that pool?"

Gutterspike ignores him as he stabs Wet Pappa Grazool and issues insults at him in Giantish.

Valgrim Battlehorn calls out, "Fiendish sea snakes, I choose you!" The summoned snakes slip into the water and nip at Wet Pappa Grazool's buttocks.

Phiravno pulls out his wand of *Scorching Ray* and burns Wet Pappa Grazool. Wet Pappa Grazool responds by forking him. Phiravno makes unhealthy burbling noises. The other characters move in and start the wood-chipper process. Wet Pappa Grazool doesn't last too long after that. Loot includes only:

- *A Vicious Adamantine Military Fork +1*

Oddly, Wet Pappa Grazool was using a medium-sized weapon.

The characters heal up, then move onwards. They find a chamber with a scale model of the dam, complete with five skulls. The skulls have moveable jaws, and tubes within their jaws. The characters decide that these skulls are the controllers for the flood gates, but manipulating the jaws does not have an effect on the dam. The characters conclude that there is not enough power to work the flood gates any more. Moving on,

the characters find a chamber with a feeble, desiccated pit fiend curled upon the ground in a magic circle. It gasps out, "Free me! Dispel the circle!" Valgrim refuses, demanding, "Obey me, sub-creature!"

The characters investigate and find another summoning circle, this one occupied by nothing but dust. Valgrim summons a nashru into the empty circle, briefly restoring the balance and providing the energy to open the floodgates. The pit fiend in the first circle evaporates into dust, completely drained by the effort. The characters could barely care, for Turtleback Ferry is saved.

### *The End of the Session*

6<sup>th</sup> level characters gain 4929 experience points each. 7<sup>th</sup> level characters gain 4250 experience points each. Hulmar gets back to 7<sup>th</sup> level. Most of the other characters move up to 8<sup>th</sup> level.