

## Rise of the Runelords Session Summary 02/10/2008

### Attendance

*Ernest* (Valgrim Battlehorn) asks, “Has everyone taken advantage of the *Rogue’s Gallery* clearance sale?” All indicate that they have, to some degree or other. Ernest takes this as a way to make a series of comments on “hot-three-way-action” in various comics, action that sometimes rises up to four-way action. *Chris* (Roscoe Dillon) notes, “I wonder how they get the third guy in. Perhaps he tags in when one of the others needs to hydrate up.” *Bruce* (Hulmar Benk; Yenneck Grumman) notes, “Ever since Mischief started having problems with her kidneys I’ve had a whole new experience with hydration. It involves fluid bags, needles, and bloodshed.” *Paul* listens for a bit, then turns to *Chris* and asks, “So, can you tell us more about *Diamondback*? We’re all big *Cerebus* fans here, and we want to live out as much of our lives in tribute to it!” *Chuck* (Phiravno) grumbles, “Speak for yourself, fan-boy.” Then he goes back to obsessing over old *Star Trek* episodes.

*Matt* (Vaylen) staggers in late, gasping, “Traffic. Horrible. Freeway. Closed. All. Diverted. To. Feeder. Road. People. Gawking. Awful. Plus. Rabid. Monkeys. Everywhere.”

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class &amp; Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
<del>Hulmar Benk</del>	<del>Bruce</del>	<del>Human</del>	<del>Scout 7</del>	<del>Chelaxian. Military veteran.</del>
Yenneck Grumman	Bruce	Human	Ranger 7	Another Chelaxian, a Black Arrow
Roscoe Dillon	Chris	Human	Cleric 7, Warblade 1	Shoanti, Skull tribe. Cleric of Gorum
Phiravno	Chuck	Human	Swordsage 3; Swashbuckler 3; Rogue 2	Varisian.
Artkel Certor	Ed	Human	Fighter 2	Shoanti, Spider clan.
<del>Prince Eyorak</del>	<del>Matt</del>	<del>Human</del>	<del>Rogue 2</del>	<del>Shoanti, Sun clan</del>
<del>Apollo Eternium</del>	<del>Matt</del>	<del>Human</del>	<del>Fighter 6</del>	<del>Shoanti, Sun clan</del>
Maru Maru	Patrick	Human	Monk 5, Tattooed Monk 3	Shoanti, Sun clan
Valgrim Battlehorn	Ernest	Dwarf	Conjurer 3; Master Specialist 2; Paragnostoc Apostle 1; Malconvoker 2	Fascinated by all manner of unusual creatures.
“Gutterspike”	Tim	Gnome	Divine Mind 7	He rides a clawfoot, and he admits

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class &amp; Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Zook Beren				that gnomes have stupid names.
Vaylen	Matt	Human	Gold Dragon Shaman 7	Shoanti, Sun clan

### *Magic Items on the Hoof*

*Valgrim Battlehorn* announces, “I have just found a hermit who taught me *Transference*. It lets me use your experience points to make magic items! It’s swell! Of course, the hermit doesn’t have any friends so he didn’t think it was so great.”

The other characters mumble something about being completely broke and short of experience points to boot. Then they go back to preparing to murder ogres out on Hook Mountain. *Phiravno*, noticing that *Maru Maru* isn’t really paying attention, offers that the monk should be on point.

### *Winter’s Inevitable March*

By the time the characters have finished their preparations the rainy season is over and the weather up on Hook Mountain has turned cold and wintry. Accordingly, the characters take a quick detour by Turtleback Ferry to pick up climbing kits and cold weather clothing. *Roscoe Dillon* memorizes up a couple of *Endure Elements* spells, just for the heck of it, and *Mass Snowshoes* because he likes the sound of it. *Hulmar Benk* buys himself twenty days of trail rations, a handful (10) of tindertwigs, and five skins full of cheap wine.

*Maru Maru* observes the grade of wine that *Hulmar* is purchasing and shudders, noting, “That stuff is really nasty. You’ll be sick of it soon.”

*Hulmar* looks up, uncomprehending, “Huh?” *Maru Maru* comes to understand that *Hulmar* may have never encountered anything better than common wine.

### *Traveling to Hook Mountain*

The characters hit the trail. *Hulmar Benk* tries hunting along the way. After a quick detour, he tells the others, “I have good news and bad news. The good news is that I found some food. The bad news is that it is half of an ogre-gnawed goat frozen in a ravine, and it took a really spectacular Survival roll to get it. Y’all should keep careful watch over your packs.”

The others make mocking comments about the quality of training in the Chelaxian military these days.

The next day, Hulmar reports signs of something bigger than an ogre that is herding sheep. He follows the trail for a while, then gives up on the notion that the characters have enough preserved food, and he'd prefer to not meet the shepherdess.

At the base of Hook Mountain, Hulmar is able to find some hunting trails used by the ogres. Ascending the mountain using them should be fairly easy, taking only a few hours. The characters prepare, and Roscoe casts *Mass Snowshoe* on the group to further ease their trip. Everyone except Maru Maru is covered by *Endure Elements*. Hulmar promises, "I'll give you a bonus to your saves with my Survival skill. Here, have some goat excrement to protect your nose." Maru Maru shudders.

As the characters move higher, the air becomes thin and both Valgrim Battlehorn and *Vaylen* become fatigued. *Vaylen* complains, "I can't run or charge, and I suffer -2 STR and -2 DEX. Plus if I suffer additional fatigue then I become exhausted!"

### *The Hook Mountain Clan-Hold*

The characters arrive at the Clan-Hold, a cave with a massive twenty-five foot opening. It is clear that the Krieg clan has lived here for generations. There are two ogres standing guard at the mouth of the cave, swathed in leather and fur. The characters rush to attack. Maru Maru leads with a tumbling charge, learning that snow and ice imposes a -5 penalty on his Tumble check. He slams into the ogre, leaving the creature stunned. Hulmar follows him with a vicious axe cut that leaves the ogre mildly irritated.

*Vaylen* observes the others' attacks and comments, "Gee, they're really building these ogres well these days." He moves up cautiously, noting that he had thought about doing something clever but then realized that the other characters weren't worth it. He simply breathes fire on the second ogre. The ogre gets a mild sunburn. Then he steps forward and hooks *Vaylen* with his vicious ogre hook. *Vaylen* howls like a high school girl who has just been kicked out of her clique.

The second ogre takes a hit at Hulmar and kills him instantly. Maru Maru flinches at the blood spray. Pieces of Hulmar fly in a fluid spray.

Valgrim Battlehorn quickly summons a fiendish monstrous crab, planting it straight in front of the ogre. The crab snips away at the ogre, cutting one hamstring.

Roscoe stomps up to the creature and hammers it. Much to his satisfaction, he observes that the creature is starting to look pale.

Phiravno dodges in and slashes an ogre. The ogre recognizes that he's not going to be able to hit the elusive human, so he hammers on Vaylen instead. Vaylen coughs up something pink and squishy and gurgles, "Yay! I have two hit points still!"

Phiravno moves in to save Vaylen from an ugly fate. He cuts the ogre down with two dramatic scarf-passes. The ogre goes down, black blood oozing from his severed throat.

Valgrim Battlehorn decides that now is the time for dramatic action. While his fiendish crab snaps at the ogre from one side, he causes Roscoe Dillon to become huge. Roscoe follows up by cutting huge chunks out of the ogre. The ogre is barely able to keep standing, but he's still in the fight. Then Maru Maru steps in and finishes the creature.

With the ogres down, Valgrim puts a *Sirhadron Medallion* on Hulmar's body to give it *Gentle Repose*. The ogres are carrying:

- Two potions of *Cure Moderate Wounds*;
- Two large hide shirts;
- Two finely-made (magical) rune-encrusted large ogre hooks; and
- Two large +7 STR masterwork composite long bows

The characters fling the ogre bodies off the cliff and hide Hulmar's body for later retrieval.

### *The Mouth of Darkness*

The characters proceed into the cave mouth, between what look like the ribs of some massive creature. Valgrim examines them and pronounces, "These were once the bones of a blue dragon." They are decorated with crude scrimshaw carvings, including sirhadron runes.

Roscoe Dillon notes, "We could use these for soup!"

At the end of the cave, the characters find the massive statue of a giant, forty feet tall. The statue is clad in heavy metal armor including a ferocious helm forged into the likeness of a snarling devil. It is armed with a forty-foot glaive. A sirhadron medallion weighing perhaps twenty pounds is placed around its neck. Valgrim examines the thing

and determines that it is actually a real giant, albeit one that seems to be utterly unmoving. While Valgrim tries talking to it, Maru Maru shimmies up it to take the helmet. He sees that underneath the helmet it looks like a white-haired giant. The sirhadron rune is actually branded into the creature's flesh. Just for safety's sake, Maru Maru blinds the creature.

The characters continue up the crude stairs in the back. The characters hear a conversation, so Vaylen sneaks up to overhear. Unfortunately, he is more than twenty feet away from the speakers so he cannot make sense of what the speakers are saying. Phiravno is able to hear clearly, but he doesn't understand the language. But from the bottom of the stairs, Valgrim's keen senses are enough to hear that two giant sentries are grumbling about their work hours, but noting that they're better off than those guys in the mines: "Barl Break-bones doesn't care if we Krieg ogres live or die as long as he gets his weapons made!"

The characters make a clever plan: Valgrim casts *Enlarge* upon Roscoe Dillon, who disguises himself as *Pappy Krieg*. Various details like Pappy Krieg's *Human-Bane Ogre Hook +1* and Maru Maru's limp body complete the ensemble. Roscoe lumbers up and tells the ogres, "I think this monk is poison. You taste it."

The ogres goggle at him, confused. Roscoe Dillon swings hard and kills one in a single strike. Phiravno and Vaylen take advantage of the opening to move in and slay the second. The third ogre goes down almost as quickly, overwhelmed by a pile of characters and a mirror varut, but not before he is able to howl out a warning. The characters can hear the sounds of ogres strapping on armor and gathering weapons down the corridor.

### **Night-Shift at the Ogre Mines**

Valgrim sends his mirror varut down the corridor towards the ogres, and then covers the corridor in magical caltrops. Thirty seconds go by. The characters peer around the corner to see a huge crowd of ogres coming up at them. The ogres look exhausted, as if they just came off-shift in the mines. Two bigger, better-equipped ogres are behind them. The varut valiantly attempts to hold them all off by casting *Mirror*

*Image.* Valgrim helps it out by casting *Grease* and *Cloud of Bewilderment* across the advancing creatures, rendering most of them slippery and nauseated.

Maru Maru takes advantage of the ogres' confusion to move in and crush an ogre's windpipe. The ogre falls, but one of his comrades steps up to take his place. Phiravno slashes at an adjacent ogre and leaves him emotionally crippled. "Haha!" he taunts, "Your school chums consider you to be weak and stupid!" The ogre weeps big, greasy tears. Then Roscoe cuts it down, eviscerating the creature in detail.

Valgrim's varut attempts to make it across the *Grease* but falls. It struggles and squeals, "I am a tasty, tasty morsel!" Then the spell duration expires and it evaporates. Valgrim responds by summoning up a fiendish dire ape to replace it. The ape steps into the caltrop area and savages an ogre. Phiravno steps behind it and kills another ogre.

Noting that the supply of ogres is getting thin, the fiendish dire ape thunders heedlessly across the caltrops and slams into a nauseated ogre. The ogre barely notices the ape's clawing attacks. A second ogre moves in and almost cuts the ape in half. Phiravno decides that the ape is his new favorite team-mate, so he once again steps up and slaughters an ogre.

The remaining characters find that they have to start moving into the *Cloud of Bewilderment* to get to the ogres. They advance very slowly, observing that the ogres are withdrawing into the ogre hooks of their masters. One of the boss ogres cuts a retreating ogre in the back, inflicting a ghastly injury. Phiravno comments, "Gee, it's tough being a trooper in this army." Valgrim ignores him, sending the fiendish dire ape forward to stand guard at the edge of the caltrops. Maru Maru moves forward as well, resisting the effects of the cloud. The monk's first strike breaks the ogre's knees. The second crushes his skull.

With all the worker ogres gone, the two masters move back. The fiendish ape rushes after them and is messily dismembered for its trouble. Roscoe listens to the sounds and tells Maru Maru, "You go first."

### *The Forge Room*

Fire and thick black smoke reign here, gushing from the dark fire-pits in the floor. Massive hammers stand across crude, worn anvils, silent witness to the absent smiths.

Several ragged tunnels in the walls lead down into the mountain's heart and the actual mine shafts.

The two boss ogres stand in the midst of the foundry, waiting for the characters to approach. Valgrim responds by summoning a vooor yugoloth and sends it at them. The creature storms forward and smashes one ogre silly.

Phiravno gasps, "You can summon *that* now?"

Valgrim responds with a fiendish cackle, "Welcome to Monster Summoning FOUR!"

Then the ogres strike back. They efficiently quarter and gut the unfortunate yugoloth. The characters move in to deal with them in good form, with no troubles except for a massive life-threatening strike to Phiravno. The two ogres were equipped with:

- Two potions of *Cure Moderate Wounds*;
- Two *Large Hide Shirts +1*;
- Two *Large Ogre Hooks +1*;

Valgrim looks around at the forge and concludes that the place is making normal iron weapons for a large army of giants.

### *The Chambers of Barl Break-Bones*

The characters pick a corridor going upwards, with Vaylen in the lead. They enter into a huge chamber open to the sky. A massive stone giant sits in a solid stone throne. A stone giant bodyguard stands before him. Barl thunders out, "Deal with these mites! They have caused enough trouble for me!" The bodyguard stomps forward. The characters move to engage in dispersed formation. Behind them, Barl Break-bones casts *Fly*. The characters groan, expecting that there will be *Fireballs* coming in from the sky soon.

Valgrim Battlehorn quickly casts *Haste* on the party. Phiravno takes advantage of this by moving in and carving away with his scarf. The giant falls dead. And then Barl Break-bones uses his *Spectral Hand* to cast *Animate Dead* upon the giant and bring it back into the battle. The characters respond with a barrage of attacks of opportunity, finding that the thing is much easier to hit now that it has lost its thick stone skin. For its part, it lashes out at Phiravno, who dodges to the side. Vaylen stomps up and bludgeons

away at the skeleton while Roscoe heals the badly-wounded Phiravno. Revitalized, Phiravno moves forward and cuts the skeleton's legs out from under it.

Valgrim Battlehorn looks over at Barl Break-bones and decides that he'd better do something to address the root cause problem. He casts a *Web* at the giant. Barl evades the webbing, then flies up out of it. Valgrim responds by summoning up another mirror varut and casting *Fly* upon Maru Maru. Maru Maru moves forward to engage the giant, who responds by smashing him twice with his earth-breaker. Maru groans as he feels shattered ribs moving around in his torso, but this does not stop him from striking back and delivering a solid blow.

Valgrim concludes that additional intervention is needed. He summons a hippogriff and orders Vaylen to board. Vaylen looks at the beast askance, but complies. It flies him straight at Barl Break-bones. Both Vaylen and the hippogriff slash at the giant, who does not appear to suffer much in the process.

Roscoe Dillon casts a healing spell upon the badly-wounded Phiravno, then moves forward to the attack. Phiravno gathers himself together, draws out his *Wand of Magic Missile*, and shoots Barl Break-Bones twice. Vaylen asks back, "Why exactly are you not using *Ray of Enfeeblement* or *Scorching Ray*?" Phiravno rolls his eyes.

Barl Break-Bones decides that he has had enough of the annoying monk. Maru Maru wafts gently from the air. He is only barely aware of what is going on, but he is grateful that the *Fly* spell doesn't let him fall to his death.

Valgrim announces, "I call upon the powers of Arcadia!" and expends his last summoning spell to bring in an arcadian avenger. The avenger delivers a very convincing series of strikes, including an extra six points of damage from a "blade rend" (whatever that might be). At long last, Barl Break-Bones starts to look wounded.

Vaylen uses up all his magical tricks at once in an effort to down Barl Break-Bones in a single round. He calls upon his *Brute Gauntlets* and his *Bracers of Quick Strike* to make a remarkable number of attacks and deliver 29 points of damage. Barl Break-Bones looks quite badly wounded.

Roscoe Dillon moves up into range and hits Barl Break-Bones with *Searing Light*. He curses because Barl is not actually undead, but he does manage to leave quite a mark on the giant. Phiravno dashes up and shoots Barl with another pair of *Magic Missiles*.

Barl looks stricken. He exclaims, “You may think I’ve gone insane, but I promise that I will kill again!” Then he falls from the air.

Roscoe Dillon runs forward with a *Cure Light Wounds*. He stabilizes the giant then quickly checks for a sirhadron tattoo. He finds one and immediately understands that the characters mustn’t kill him. The others simply loot the giant, directed by *Detect Magic*. He is carrying:

- A *Wand of Enervation* (12 charges);
- A large masterwork earthbreaker;
- A *Ring of Minor Cold Resistance*;
- A *Sirhadron Medallion*;
- A spellbook (full of necromancy spells); and
- 300 gold pieces worth of black onyxes

The characters tie up Barl then move some distance away for a round of *Sacred Healing*. He proposes removing Barl’s tattoo and then killing him, possibly after some interrogation. To ensure that he stays under control, Phiravno hits him several times with his wand of *Ray of Enervation*.

### **Barl Break-Bones’ Spellbook**

Most of Barl’s spells are necromantic. Valgrim Battlehorn examines them with detached curiosity and hopes that he can trade it for a book full of conjuration spells some time later. It contains:

- Fourth Level: *Animate Dead, Fear*
- Third Level: *Fly, Ray of Exhaustion, Vampiric Touch*
- Second Level: *Blindness/Deafness, Command Undead, False Life, Ghoul Touch, Spectral Hand*
- First Level: *Chill Touch, Mage Armor, Magic Missile, Ray of Enfeeblement*

### **Interrogating Barl Break-Bones**

The characters wake Barl up and start asking questions.

- *So, Who’s in charge here? I am in charge!*
- *You’re not bright enough. Who is in charge of this whole sirhadron stuff? I answer to no woman! I serve Mokmurian, King of the Giants.*

- *Why is the King looking to invade our lands? You are usurpers? All this land belonged to the giants long ago.*
- *All this land belonged to the Shoanti. Not true! The Shoanti are the descendents of the soldiers of the Great Lords, but we were the builders! We were favored!*
- *Where is the King? Or would you like to find out what intercourse with a celestial black bear feels like? Screw you, tiny one.*
- *Does your King also follow the degenerate sirhadron religion? (Silence)*
- *What about the degenerate religion? What up with this? This doesn't look like good old-fashioned giant religion? That is Mokmurian's personal sigil!*
- *Oh, so Mokmurian is following a human religion? No! That is his personal sigil!*
- *Hate to tell you, but the snake-heads would tell you different. He isn't banging some snake-woman, is he? I am from a small tribe in the mountains, I do not know his practices.*
- *I guess his fortress is way too far away to visit from the Iron Hills, or are you too much of a wuss to be allowed inside? What do you mean? It is not too far away.*
- *So you are too much of a peasant to be allowed to visit? Jorgenfist is in the ancient forbidden valley.*
- *Who forbade it? The elders, but Mokmurian has turned the people away from the elders. He will bring us back to the lowlands! He has brought back the secrets of the Ancient Lords! The secrets of studying magic! From books!*
- *What does this mighty leader look like? They say he is short.*
- *Really? Yes, really. And he is covered with the runes of the ancient lords! The sirhadron is his personal rune and all of his followers have been branded with it.*
- *Are there any women close to him? He took one of the female elders as his slave. He has been going from tribe to tribe killing the elders and taking control.*
- *So why did he send you out here? I took over this pathetic tribe of ogres so they could forge weapons for our army.*
- *How would you get them home? We would carry them on the backs of the ogres.*
- *Where is this valley? Mokmurian has hundreds of stone giants there. If you go there, you will die.*

- *Are you the only giants here?* Yes. There was one other bodyguard I brought with me, but he got mouthy and I had to off him.
- *Did you order the attack on Fort Ranneck?* Yes!
- *Is there anyone else here?* Well, there are the hags.
- *Where are they hanging out?* They have a room over there.
- *Are they allied with you?* Yes! They created the rainstorms to flood the town.
- *Do they pretty much keep to themselves?* Yes.

Valgrim ends the conversation with, “Well, we’re going to have to remove that little brand from you. No squealing!”

Roscoe approaches with a heated brand and rather cheerfully announces, “I (heart) Hook Mountain!” Fssssh! And then they give him an honorable death after promising to burn his body and put up a cairn of stones above it.

### **All About Hags**

Valgrim assures the others that hags are just plain evil, with all manner of dark magic and evil powers. They’re also not particularly reliable as minions, prone to betraying their erstwhile masters. They look like crones, but they’re quite swift and strong. They are resistant to spells. They also often group up in covens of three, one of each type (annis, green and sea); such groups have a lot of extra powers, including Control Weather.

Roscoe Dillon adds, “And they love children, which is why we’re going to shave and swaddle the dwarf.”

The characters decide to spend the night resting and recovering their spells before taking on the hags.

### **And Enter the Ranger**

While the characters rest, they come upon *Yenneck Grumman*. He explains (through broken teeth) that he was a Black Arrow who was carried off as a prisoner by the ogres. He has spent the intervening time laboring in their mines, and is able to offer the other characters a detailed description of the twenty-foot section of mine tunnel he has been digging from. The others locate his equipment and bring him back to health.

Except that they make him strip naked to “check for tattoos.” He complains that the characters are worse than the ogres.

### *Coven of the Hags*

The characters sneak up to the hags’ chambers. They can hear that the hags are chanting the traditional chant (“Double, double, toil and trouble!”) as they enjoy potluck night. The three hags *Briselda*, *Grelgatha* and *Larrestyne* surround a bubbling iron cauldron. They are accompanied by the undead body of *Lamatar Bayden*, former leader of the Black Arrows. He is coated in a rime of evil ice. It’s not totally clear how the characters can tell that it is in fact evil, but none of them have any doubts on the matter.

Roscoe Dillon moves up and tries turning Lamatar Bayden. He succeeds with style: the undead Lamatar falls in a shatter of ice shards. Roscoe comments, “Cool. I’ve never killed an ice undead before.”

Yenneck Grumman, apparently eager to avenge his dead boss, runs up and delivers a rather indifferent strike to Briselda, hulking with her stumpy arms and oversized talons. He explains to the others, “At least she isn’t the one with the pustulent face and sagging breasts!”

Phiravno follows with a strike against Briselda to back up Yenneck. He leaves her wheezing and bleeding. Roscoe exclaims, “He hit her in the buttocks! Soon we’ll learn what the blood wind is all about!” Vaylen averts his eyes.

Maru Maru, enhanced with a *Silence* spell, runs in, leaps across the cauldron, and strikes at the grotesque Grelgatha. The hags lash out with their hideous talons, hitting him three times. Maru Maru takes comfort only in the fact that their attacks do not count as magical, which substantially blunts the pain. The third rends Yenneck, leaving him gasping and wishing that he’d had Damage Resistance too. Then he sees that Maru Maru has been grappled by two hags and is part of a hag three-way. Sadly, this distracts Yenneck long enough that the third hag is able to grapple him as well.

Vaylen yells, “I’ll save you, Maru!” He unleashes his fiery breath, though the effect is much more like a fiery burp. The hags barely notice.

Valgrim calls out, “I summon you from the pit!” A gadacro demon appears and does a flyby attack on Grelgatha, stealing her eyes. Oddly, this effect only lasts for five rounds. And only does two points of damage.

Yenneck and Maru Maru struggle against the grip of their captors, mostly in vain. Phiravno slashes away with his terrible scarf, slaying the hag who was grappling Yenneck. And Vaylen slams his great hammer down upon Larrestyne, cracking her skull.

The gadacro demon makes another flyby attack on Briselda, stealing her eyes. A moment later, Valgrim casts *Benign Transposition* and swaps out Maru Maru for his demon. The blinded Briselda is confused, but only for a moment: Roscoe interrupts her discomfiture with his blade, severing her head.

The characters are quite upset to find that there is no loot in the chamber, except for the disgusting boiled objects in the cauldron. Roscoe Dillon curses, “These hags are totally useless!”

Vaylen agrees, “Worst. Room. Ever.”

### *The End of the Session*

Seventh level characters each gain 5513 experience points. Eighth level characters each gain 4400 experience points. This is enough to bring everyone who was seventh level up to eighth.