

## Rise of the Runelords Session Summary 02/24/2008

### Attendance

*Tim* shows up as a surprise and announces, “I don’t play in this game, but I’m here for lunch! Let’s go get Mexican food, but not at the place we usually go to!” *Chris* (Roscoe Dillon) offers, “So we should go to the place that got shut down by the Health Department? Or to the place where we have to wait 45 minutes for a table?” *Ernest* (Valgrim Battlehorn) adds, “Hey, we could also go to the place where the wait staff doesn’t remember anything and can’t do math!” *Chuck* (Phiravno) tries to bring rationality to the discussion by declaring, “We’re going to the regular place! It’s the only way to be sure!” *Matt* (Vaelyn) nods his head in agreement. *Bruce* (Yenneck Grumman) just spends his time telling long stories about Cypress and Paul Krugman that everyone else prefers to ignore.

*Patrick* (Maru Maru) shows up later on, ignorant of the previous debate. He announces, apropos of nothing, “I’ve suddenly realized that I have a tremendous crush on Barack Obama! Do you think he’d mind if I started following him around the country and staring at him as he sleeps?”

<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 8	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; Paragnost Apostle 1; Malconvoker 2	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.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class &amp; Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Vaelyn	Matt	Human	Gold Dragon Shaman 8	Shoanti, Sun clan

### *Re-Establishing Fort Ranneck*

With the ogre threat beaten into submission, the characters divide up the important tasks facing them. They spend the next six months dealing with these issues.

Turtleback Ferry Mayor	Re-establish the previous legal and financial arrangements with the town. Hire some unemployed townsfolk for reconstruction, and provide aid in the effort. Ask the Mayor to write a letter of introduction to the Lord Mayor.	Vaelyn
Lord Mayor of Magnimar	Deliver a letter to the Lord Mayor informing him of events at Fort Ranneck. Send the <i>Adamantine Vicious Fork +1</i> along as a gift.	Roscoe
Buying and Selling	Sell the characters' loot and purchase materials important for the reconstruction of the fort.	Phiravno
The Local Hellknights	Establish relations with the local traveling Hellknight contingent, who generally serve the district as judiciary, jailors and executioners.	Maru Maru
Local Trade and Relations	Train new Black Arrows. Establish patrols of the area. Re-establish contact with outlying settlements and build goodwill.	Yenneck
Talking to the Dwarves	Persuade the dwarfs of Janderhoff to send people to mine iron from the Hook Mountain mines.	Valgrim Battlehorn

*Vaelyn* gets a good reception with the Mayor of Turtleback Ferry, who is already fairly well inclined to the characters. He agrees to the characters' various requests, including a letter to Magnimar requesting extra funds. Remarkably, he is able to get some extra tax money from the Lord Mayor. Relations with Turtleback Ferry only get stronger over the next few months.

*Roscoe Dillon* brings a letter and the *Vicious Adamantine Fork +1* to the Lord Mayor of Magnimar. The Lord Mayor agrees to resume the relationship he had with the former Black Arrows with the characters: he will send criminals as recruits, and allow some money to be taken from the Turtleback Ferry tax revenues. He does agree to

provide some trained (non-criminal) officers along, but the money he agrees to provide is only the same as he had previously provided the Black Arrows.

*Phiravno* handles selling the characters' loot, and buying various necessities. He deals competently with the merchantry, getting a 55% base sale rate. Unfortunately, he finds that the markets are largely bare of goods: he is only able to find things that the characters want with an 80% success rate. He manages to sell enough to bring in 3747 gold, 2 silver, 3 copper for each character.

*Maru Maru* greets the local Hellknights when they stomp into town, threatening in their plate armor. Their captain speaks in a deep, booming voice with lots of reverb. Maru Maru thinks, "It must be the helmet. I bet he has a headache all the time." The Hellknight questions Maru Maru closely upon his dedication to Law and the discipline and conditions in his facility. In the end, he is impressed and agrees to send criminals to the characters' fortress for labor. He actually sends so many minor criminals that the characters are forced to expand their facilities. Maru Maru notices that most of the criminals sent to Fort Ranneck by the Hellknights are utterly terrified.

*Yenneck Grumman* travels to the settlements within sixty kilometers, primarily *Bitter Hollow* and *Pendaka* on the shore of Claybottom Lake. His goal is to persuade the local authorities to allow the Black Arrows to patrol. He manages to set up some trade deals with Pendaka, but isn't able to persuade them to accept protection. Bitter Hollow is able to provide a little bit of money in taxes, but is otherwise not very enthusiastic. Neither of them is willing to allow Black Arrows to be stationed in the towns, but both are willing to allow the Black Arrows to patrol the roads. The local foresters report that the *Kriegwood* remains a dangerous place, so Yenneck organizes patrols through that area.

*Valgrim Battlehorn* travels to *Janderhoff*, the great dwarf citadel. He brings along ore samples from the Hook Mountain mines and argues in favor of sending dwarfs in to work them. He suggests giving the dwarfs of Janderhoff a 50% interest in the venture. Unfortunately, his pleas fall upon deaf ears: he reports that the dwarfs are unwilling to send anyone.

## **Hunting Xanesha**

Both Phiravno and Vaelyn are interested in finding the whereabouts of the lamia *Xanesha*. Phiravno thinks that she knows where his sister is, while Vaelyn simply wants revenge. They hear stories of merchant caravans being attacked, the merchants bound in webs and ritually murdered, their skins carved with the sirhadron runes. These stories come from the Corvosan border to the east.

## **True Loves Reunited at Last!**

Roscoe Dillon goes to Sandpoint and proposes marriage with his sweetheart *Shaeliss Vinder*. Given that he is a nobleman now, she accepts instantly. She returns to Fort Ranneck with him.

He also oversees the destruction of the disturbing shrine the ogres had built in the Fort Ranneck chapel and reconsecrates the place to *Gorum*. He incorporates rites to Gorum into the rehabilitation process for the group's criminal inmates.

## **The Secret Chamber**

While workers are rebuilding one section of the fort they come upon a secret chamber with a stash of weapons and several magic items. The weapons are distributed among the Black Arrows. The magic items are:

- *Amulet of Teamwork* – allows you to work more effectively as part of a team, makes Aid Another bonuses go to +3, gives a +2 damage bonus to flanking, and once per day allows +1 AC bonus to the wearer and a companion;
- *A Wand of Delay Poison* (10 charges);
- A suit of masterwork full plate

## **The Traveling Salesman**

The traveling dwarf trader *Silas Torr* shows up at the Fort. Excited children run in the wake of his cart, heaped with goods. He stands upon the seat and exclaims the virtues of his various goods. Even Maru Maru spends some money on various snake-oil products. The other characters watch as some of the money they brought into the local economy goes away for various items enchanted with minor illusion magic.

## **Varisian Wanderers**

A brightly painted wagons of a Varisian caravan, led by *Jerron Kovini*, come into the area. Jerron asks Lord Roscoe for a place to rest and resupply. Lord Roscoe agrees, provided the Varisians behave themselves. They respond by setting camp near the river. Late nights full of exotic Varisian music and dancing follow. Lord Roscoe decides that he would like to get a Gorum tattoo. They are quite pleased, and invite Roscoe to participate in the *trastaturi*, a celebration of friendship. He declines on the basis that he just got married. Phiravno joins them in the secret *vimaturi* dance to speak with the dead ancestors of the Varisian people.

Yenneck Grumman doesn't trust the Varisians at all. He obsessively patrols around the edges of their encampment, ensuring that none of them are sneaking off for malign purposes. He also keeps obsessive track of all of his men who visit the Varisians, making sure none of them disappear. He is practically beside himself with rage when Roscoe starts paying the Varisians to put Black Arrow tattoos on the new recruits in an effort to promote esprit de corps.

The characters become such favorites of the Varisian gypsies that other tribes stop by in following weeks. Every time they show up, Yenneck Grumman puts the Black Arrows on double-shift and starts acting really paranoid.

## **The Giant Killer**

The characters' reputation for hospitality has clearly reached the surrounding countryside: the famed giant killer *Terreck "Earth Breaker" Charhok* shows up, tells a lot of impressive stories, and drinks a fantastic quantity of ale.

He initially impresses the characters. Their fascination diminishes over the next few weeks as he refuses to leave. His poor table manners and imperious attitude grate upon the locals.

The characters finally get him tattooed with a Black Arrow tattoo while he is in a drunken swoon. They tell him to go hunt some ogres. Instead he sneaks away, laughingstock of the fort.

## The Spirit of White Willow

There is a faery settlement in the Shimmerglens off across Claybottom Lake called *White Willow*. Black Arrow patrols report that the place has become haunted. The characters organize an expedition over. They quickly meet a waifish pixie who exclaims, “You! You! You are friends with my mistress’ human lover! She is ill! Death would be a kindness! Perhaps you could help her! Maybe you can help her forlorn heart! The whole area is dying!”

The characters agree to go with the pixie *Yap*. Valgrim Battlehorn travels knowing that he has a bundle of the dead Black Arrow leader’s love poetry, which he thinks might help the situation. The journey into the swamp is miserable for everyone except Roscoe, who is wearing the *Boots of the Mire*, and Yenneck, who seems to enjoy being wet and mucky. Yenneck finds, kills and butchers a giant gecko, offering the proceeds to the others for lunch.

Along the way, the characters learn that the nymph is despairing because her lover hasn’t come to visit her. The characters avoid pointing out that this is because he is dead. After a harrowing trip through the swamps, the characters come upon a derelict ship, hundreds of miles from the coast. Even Yap has never seen it before. The characters explore. It seems deserted, but in the Captain’s quarters the characters find the body of the long-dead Captain sitting at a harpsichord decorated with demons battling angels. He clutches a chart-case that proves to contain charts of completely alien shores. There is also a book of sheet music containing several completely unknown titles. Yenneck reviews the titles, “This one seems to be an atonal piece showing how to rend the barriers between the worlds... and this one is a celebration of the Captain’s father, who seems to sleep beneath the seas.”

Phiravno pays him no attention: he manages to find a goblet worth 100 gold. Meanwhile, Roscoe determines that the Captain was killed by a blow to the head.

The characters take the goblet, the charts and the sheet music. As the characters leave, they see a blind white dog sitting and watching them. It fails to respond to Yenneck’s entreaties and shies away from Roscoe’s touch.

The characters finally make it into a small clearing. Valgrim warns the others, “Everyone, avert your eyes. Unless you want to die or go blind.” The nymph rises, a

haggard ghostly horror. The characters avoid looking directly at her. She demands a token of *Lamatar's* body or she will wreak horrible vengeance upon them. Valgrim gives her a packet of love poetry while Roscoe promises to bring back a part of his body. The characters are only able to provide a bit of dust from his body, but she is able to use it to *Reincarnate* him. He comes back as a half-orc, and indicates that he is a Black Arrow no longer. Instead, he will spend his time in the swamp with his nymph lover *Mariana*, becoming the new guardian of White Willow.

### **The Mysterious Scroll**

A group of Varisian travelers offer to sell Valgrim Battlehorn an ancient scroll of lost summoning techniques, but only for a price: 2000 gold. Over Yenneck's objections, Valgrim pays them by making them magic items. The scroll tells him how to swap the various Elemental Creature (air, earth, fire, water) templates in place of the Fiendish and Celestial templates when he summons creatures. He considers this a very good deal. Yenneck can't stop grumbling.

### **Another Secret Chamber**

A jarring earth tremor opens up yet another secret chamber in the basements of the fortress. It proves to contain an aged skeleton. The characters investigate. They find the ghostly figure of *Lorgus Fenker*, an ancient Black Arrow who died of an "accident" on patrol. When he starts talking about wreaking horrible vengeance on the Black Arrows Roscoe destroys him.

### **An Uneventful Month**

A month goes by with no notable events. Yenneck Grumman puts the Black Arrows on double shifts.

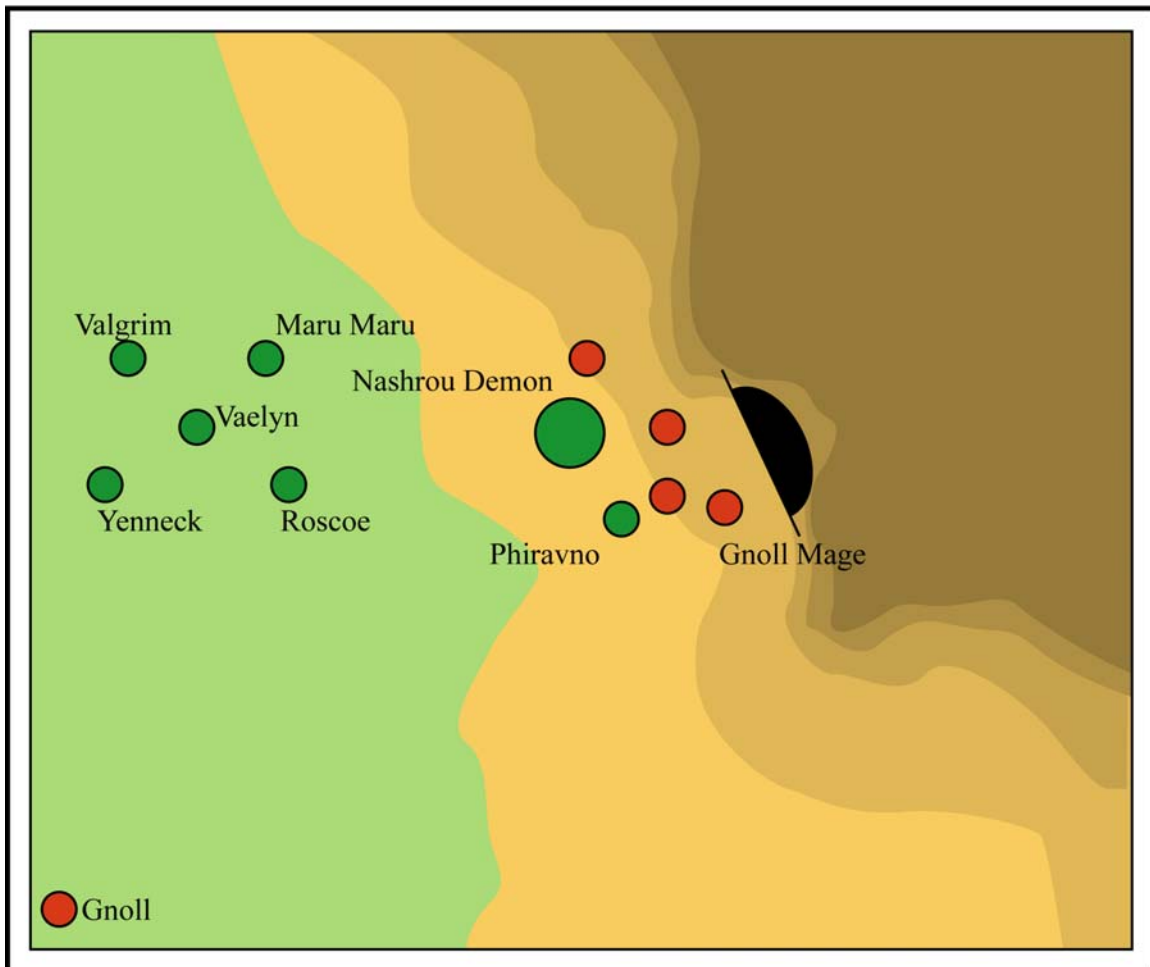
### **A Trading Consortium**

A group of traveling merchants show up and offer to provide a financial consideration of 100 gold/month to be allowed to use Fort Ranneck as a stopover point in their trading caravans to Janderhoff. The characters mostly accept their offer.

### *The Sirhadron Bandits*

The characters decide to search for the bandits working with the lamia Xanasha. They are able to find a dead elf wrapped in webbing. Yenneck Grumman is able to pick up their trail from there, tracing them to a cave mouth at the top of a slope covered in scree and loose stones. Above the cave is a cliff. The characters see four gnolls hiding at the cave entrance. The gnolls see the characters as well.

### **The Gnoll Sentries**



Valgrim Battlehorn leads by summoning a nashrou demon and sending it up the scree. Phiravno and Maru Maru run crazily up the scree to attack the gnolls. They notice that the gnolls are quite scarred and armored in splint mail. One gnoll steps back and casts a spell that Valgrim recognizes as *Mage Armor*. While Phiravno engages the front line, Maru Maru moves in to attack the caster. Maru Maru notices from his new



perspective that the caster is actually not completely a gnoll: it has distinct spider features. Then it hits him with a *Ray of Enfeeblement*.

Vaelyn sees a beautiful target space of one gnoll and the spider-gnoll magician. He steps up and breathes flame upon them, heedless of the fact that Maru Maru is in the way and takes damage as well. Maru Maru is enraged, so enraged that he kills the spider-gnoll in a single strike.

The characters cut through the remaining gnolls, all except the last gnoll that surrenders and claims that the strange spider-gnolls enslaved all the regular gnolls and forced them to guard. The characters do not believe this story at all. They get a story involving strange spider cultists worshipping a spider goddess that lives in a pit at the back of the cave.

- Three suits splint mail;
- Three *Battleaxes +1*;
- Three masterwork +3 STR composite longbow;
- Three heavy steel shields

The characters send the (naked) gnoll survivor packing into the woods. Most of them are humming the *Deliverance* theme. Phiravno is humming something about “Master Blaster run Bartertown...”, for some reason.

### **Webbing!**

Maru Maru and Phiravno lead the group down the cavern tunnels, right up until Maru Maru gets ensnared by a web trap. Moments later, an ettercap and two huge monstrous spiders scamper out. Maru Maru tells the others, “Careful, everybody! There’s a net!”

Phiravno ignores all the warnings: he tumbles his way right past all the spiders and the ettercap, then hides underneath his *Cloak of Elvenkind*. Maru Maru struggles through the webbing and engages both spiders. One of them bites him deeply upon the neck, but he remains unaffected by the creature’s greenish venom. Vaelyn burns his way through the webbing and moves to assist.

Phiravno unleashes his *Shadow Blade Technique* against the ettercap, leaving a terrible wound that burns and suppurates in the light. Valgrim Battlehorn summons a

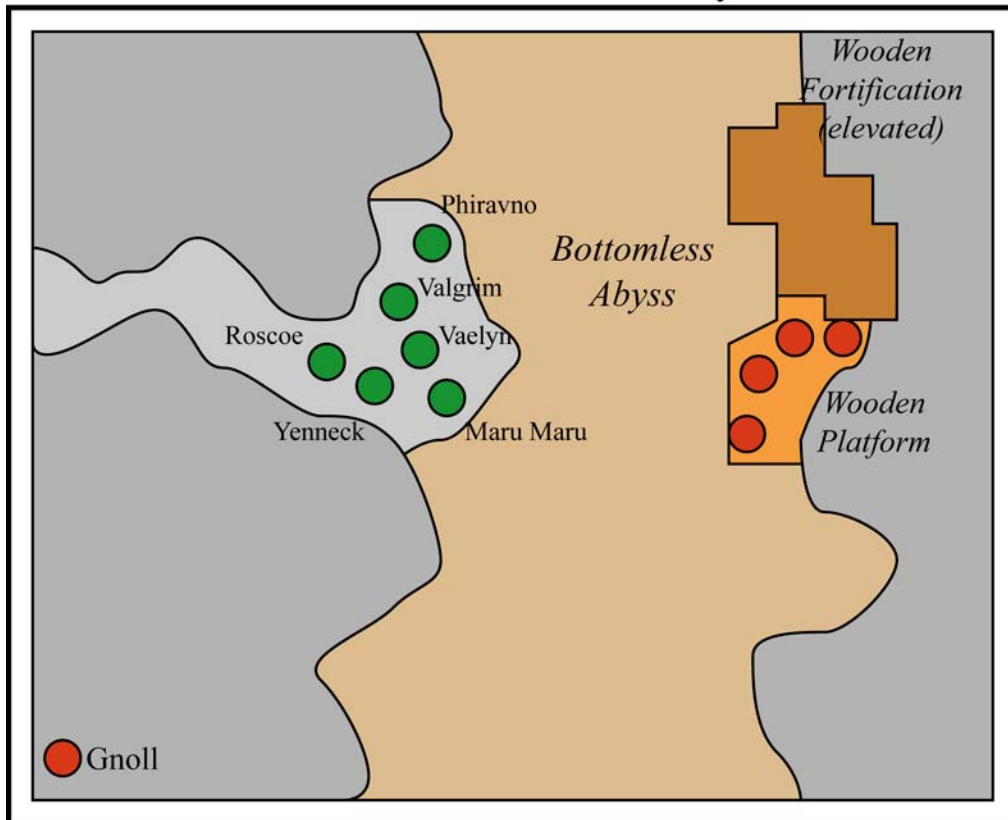
celestial bison to attack the ettercap. He is more than a little surprised when the ettercap uses a held action to web it into immobility. He asks, “It anticipated that I would summon a creature?” He is slightly mollified to learn that the action was just to web any creature that moved to attack it. For its part, the bison simply bursts the webs apart and gores the ettercap in the head, killing it.

Yenneck stomps up heedlessly, ignoring a spider’s attack of opportunity, and slashes deep with his bastard sword. His target chitters in pain as ichor dribbles from a wide wound. Vaelyn moves to flank the creature then crushes its head with his earthbreaker. The creature collapses to the ground, twitching feebly.

The other characters cluster around the remaining spider and pound it into gory fragments. It dies with its jaws reaching for Maru Maru’s neck.

*The Abyss Fortress*

**Gnoll Fortress Above the Abyss**



The characters continue down the cavern until they find a rounded chamber. A narrow sinkhole breaks the floor. A horrible, charnel smell comes from below. The characters continue past. Further along, the passage ends at an apparently bottomless

abyss. Across the gap, the characters see a wooden platform attached to the abyss wall. A ramshackle wooden fortification stands above it. Gnoll defenders stand on the platform.

Phiravno leads off by teleporting across the gap into the midst of the gnolls. Valgrim Battlehorn casts *Fly* on Vaelyn, then summons a pack of varut neras, which he sends through the mirror on his belt buckle to explode out of the mirror on Phiravno's buckle. The neras compound the situation by all casting *Mirror Image*, resulting in a cloud of twenty-four of the things. The gnolls seem confused by the sudden explosion of shiny little men with swords.

A spider-gnoll magician starts killing varut nera images with *Magic Missiles*. Phiravno responds by cutting him to pieces. One of the varut neras bull rushes a gnoll into the pit. The remaining gnolls don't last long: the characters (and the swarm of neras) chop them to pieces. Or fling them into the pit.

The characters hear gnoll yipping from the darkness below. Maru Maru ignores the sounds as he lowers the drawbridge across the abyss. About this time, more gnolls start to clamber up from the pit. The characters dispatch them, then investigate. They find that there is another platform forty feet down, along with a bridge that spans the shaft.

Gnolls start clambering up from the depths, answered in turn by various chopping and mangling attacks from the characters. Phiravno complains, "My scarf-arm is getting tired!" Eventually the wash of gnolls ends. The loot includes:

- Twelve suits splint mail;
- Twelve *Battleaxes +1*;
- Twelve masterwork +3 STR composite longbow;
- Twelve heavy steel shields

### *Secret of the Fruitcake*

The characters lower themselves to the bottom of the pit. They burrow around until they find a small chamber evidently used by a lair by the spider-gnolls. There are a half-dozen insensible victims wrapped in webs. The characters cut them free and do what they can for them. One of them, a young woman, is dressed in what had been expensive clothing. A few heal checks determine that all of the victims have been

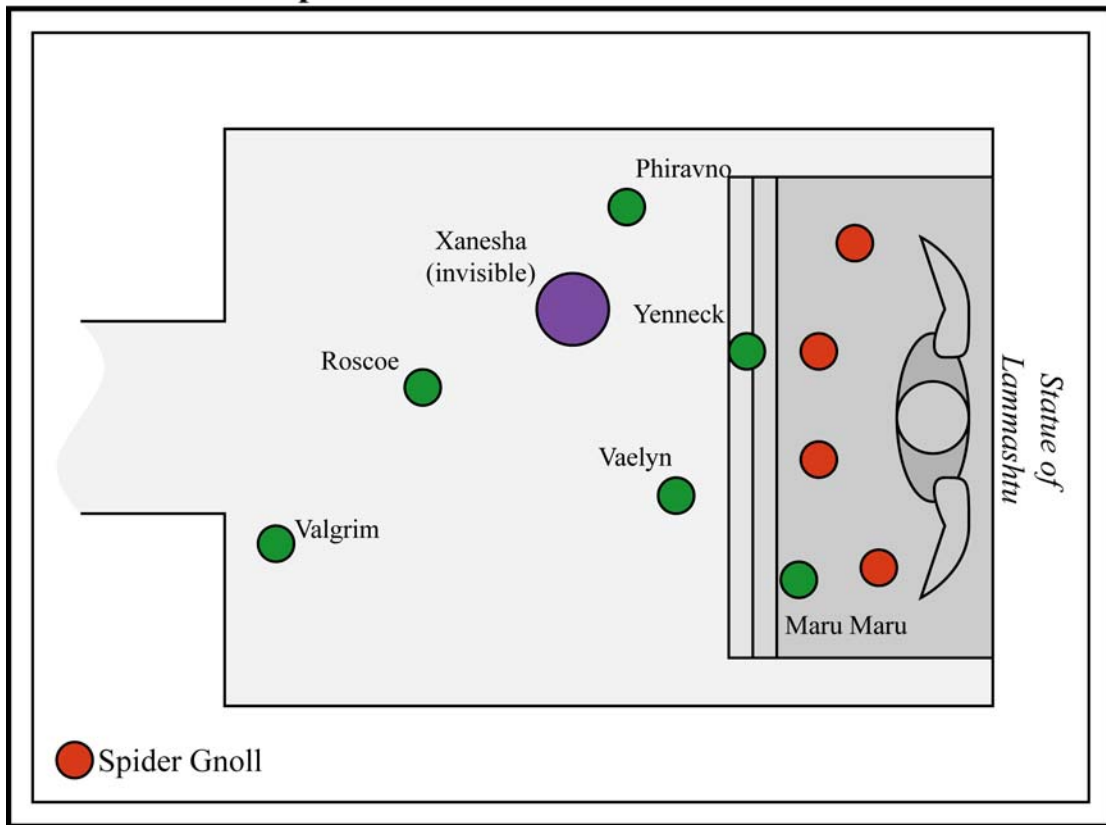
drained down to STR 0. The characters make arrangements to carry the victims out later on.

### *The Horrid Shrine*

The characters continue on past the larder to a chamber with a horrid shrine to Lammashu. Vaelyn complains, “Why do we always run into these things? We need to do something about this stupid cult.”

Roscoe agrees, “Absolutely, and their shrines are all located in the most inconvenient places.”

### **Spider-Gnoll Shrine to Lammashu**



The shrine includes a massive magically-carved statue of Lammashu in her image as a hideous pregnant woman with the head of a three-eyed jackal, grotesque wings, and clawed hands and feet. Carvings around the statue sing the grim praises of the goddess. And four spider-gnolls lurk in the shadows around the statue.

The spider-gnolls lead by volleying *Magic Missiles* at Valgrim Battlehorn, who gasps with pain. He whispers out a *Haste* spell and watches as Maru Maru, Phiravno,

and Yenneck tear off to attack various spider-gnolls. Then he looks back to Roscoe, casts *Enlarge*, and gasps, “Now please heal me!”

Vaelyn moves up to the spider-gnolls and roasts two of them. He hears a horrible whisper behind him as *Xanasha* appears and savages him. He takes marginal reassurance in the fact that she suffers some fire damage in return from his elemental aura. He is less reassured by the fact that she has a bevy of *Mirror*

The surviving spider-gnolls step back and transfix Yenneck with *Rays of Enfeeblement*, sickening him. Yenneck responds by slaughtering one of the spider-gnolls.

Phiravno turns and slashes at *Xanasha* with his scarf. He strikes nothing more than an image. Vaelyn swings with his earthbreaker, connecting with three more images.

Roscoe flings a *Dispel Magic* at *Xanasha*, knocking her from the air and stripping away some of her defenses. Valgrim capitalizes upon this by summoning the vor-yugoloth from the depths of the pit. The creature lumbers forward on a forest of tentacles, prompting Intensity Six checks on the Unnatural column of the Madness Meter. It swings at *Xanasha* over and over again, but for all its fearsomeness it simply manages to clean up the remaining *Mirror Images*.

Phiravno overcomes a sudden attack of the shudders long enough to comment, “That thing is a crime against nature, but even it can’t stop *Xanasha*.”

*Xanasha* returns to striking Vaelyn with the *Impaler of Thorns*, leaving him a shuddering, limp doll. Vaelyn elects to fall, apparently lifeless in spite of the single hit point he has left. Roscoe leaps in with *Close Wounds* to draw him back from the edge. *Xanasha* turns to the vor-yugoloth, whirling through it in an orgy of spear and death. The shredded yugoloth simply deflates as she deftly extracts its internal organs. Yenneck turns both white and green as he fails the requisite Intensity Seven check on the Violence column.

Phiravno bears in with a true scarf strike, inflicting a substantial blow. He brings the blade back in with a sense of doomed contentment, full aware that he has overwhelmingly drawn *Xanasha*’s attention.

Unnoticed in the background, Maru Maru executes the final spider-gnoll.

Yenneck runs up to support Phiravno. Rather to his own surprise, he actually manages to draw blood. He strongly suspects that he may have doomed himself once Xanesha is finished with Phiravno.

Valgrim Battlehorn decides that he'd best do something dramatic. He flings *Glitterdust* at Xanesha. Much to everyone's surprise, the spell succeeds and she is blinded. She responds by casting *Dimension Door* and vanishing. Valgrim announces, "I have that spell too!" He and Roscoe teleport outside only to see her safely in the distance. Xanesha casts *Fly* and escapes.

### **The Rescued Merchant**

The characters crawl themselves out of the cavern and figure out that the nicely-dressed lady they rescued is *Genevieve de Guare*, the owner of a trading company. She is (obviously) quite grateful to the characters for saving her life.

### *Epilogue: A Year Has Passed*

The characters receive an invitation to be Guests of Honor at the upcoming Swallowtail Festival, in honor of their various heroic deeds in service of the town.

### *The End of the Session*

Each character gains 3233 experience points, enough for everyone to move to 9<sup>th</sup> level except for Yenneck Grumman.