

Rise of the Runelords Session Summary 3/9/2008

Spring Break Edition!

Fortress of the Stone Giants - Session One

Bruce, our usual scribe, was absent due to some kind of kitchen re-tiling incident. *Ernest*, your replacement scribe, came on the scene after lunch due to his attendance of South by Southwest (SXSW) Interactive. My tales of being slaughtered on TV by the "Frag Dolls" at Rainbow Six: Vegas only elicited the question "Were they really chicks?" from *Chris*. I apologize in advance for the lower than usual number of trenchant quotes from the group, but I was forced to take these notes on my Blackberry and so am having to fill in a lot of gaps in post.

In attendance were:

- *Paul* (the DM)
- *Chris* (Roscoe Dillon, Shoanti cleric of Gorum and Lord of Fort Rannek)
- *Chuck* (Ravno, Varisian scarf slaughterer)
- *Matt* (Vaelyn, Shoanti Dragon Disciple)
- *Patrick* (Maru Maru the Shoanti monk)
- *Ernest* (Valgrim the dwarven malconvoker)

Road Trip!

As we open, the entire party (and *Roscoe's* wife, who disappeared and reappeared as conveniently as any other party familiar, animal companion, or mount) journeyed back to Sandpoint, having been invited to enjoy the yearly Swallowtail Festival. The jokes the group made surrounding the festival's name were filthy. Everyone paid 50g each for the week-long barge trip to Magnimar. Walking is for hicks. Yay, Spring Break even exists in D&D!

Ice Cube Gets It

Along the way we were awakened at night by a huge snake, a nightbelly boa, noisily crushing a barge crewmember to death. Everyone charged to the attack, but *Valgrim* used a single Ray of Stupidity to fell it. 1d4+1 Int damage means instant nap time for any animal! Yay, Spell Compendium. A quick funeral service and snake roast followed. *Ravno* kept the snake's skin to be made into fashionable pants.

International Die Like A Pirate Day

The next random encounter was more entertaining. A bunch of goons who decided to turn river pirate set up a riverblock with trees felled across the river to block passing barges. A half dozen archers appeared on the fallen trees while a squad of six "pirates" in a small boat approached our barge. We told the captain he and his men could sit this one out in the cabin. As the boat approached, *Valgrim* cast Confusion on the pirates as *Ravno* teleported over to the tree with the archers. Several pirates were confused, and their leader attacked his lieutenant as they closed with our barge. *Roscoe* cast Water Walking on the group, and *Maru Maru* and *Vaelyn* moved to the attack. The archers opened up on *Valgrim*, but only one arrow nicked him as he'd had the foresight to cast Mage Armor and Shield before the melee began. *Valgrim* walked out onto the water to stay out of close combat and cackled as he summoned three fiendish sharks.

The leader decided (well, the Confusion decided for him) to dive into the water in full armor to escape. His lieutenant was so angered at being attacked by him that he followed to the boat's edge and tried to stab him as he swam. One of the sharks leapt from the water and took a chunk out of him, and the others reduced the leader to chum.

Ravno hacked through the archers in record time and the others finished the pirates in the boat. With practiced aplomb, the party bundled up their goods into a neat package as the barge crew looked on with some dismay at their mad looting skillz.

The take was:

- 3 sets of splint mail
- 2 sets of halfplate

- 5 large steel shields
- 5 masterwork bastard swords
- 5 bows

We reached Magnimar without any other events. We didn't stay long; Valgrim got some dwarven cuisine in and then we travelled north to Sandpoint, which we reached in short order.

Spring Break In Sandpoint

Day One: Gossip

The Shoanti in the group convinced us we should stay at the Shoanti-owned White Deer Inn. Our celebrity in Sandpoint was undiminished, and soon *Jargie Quinn*, proprietor of the Hagfish, was hassling us about tricks of Shoanti cuisine to use in the cooking contest as part of the festival. In true Iron Chef fashion, hagfish ice cream was discussed in detail.

Garridan, the Shoanti guy who runs the White Deer, said there had been signs of giants in the region. Valgrim went to set up an audience between Lord Dillon, *Mayor Deverin*, and *Sheriff Hemlock*. He found the mayor "breaking in a new stallion," which caused no end of immature chortling. Every time Valgrim said "Lord Dillon" while wandering about Sandpoint, Roscoe looked around to see who else was in the room.

Roscoe went to the cathedral to talk to *Priest Zantus*. On the way he ran into a gnome telling stories of foreign lands to the local kids. He talked to him about the Forbidden Valley and the gnome said "Come by my shop later, I might have something for you." Roscoe went in and spoke with the priest about the Sihedron marks and weird cult. The priest knew nothing, but said he'd keep an eye out.

Vaelyn went to talk to the local retired gay paladin to try to get him interested in crusading against the bad guys, but was unable to interest him. As head of the Mercantile Guild, however, he was interested in setting up some trade between Sandpoint and Fort Rannek, which was interesting.

Valgrim went to talk to his dwarven buddy *Battlehammer* who leads the Carpenter's Guild; he asked him to come along to lend his hero cred to his side in some lumber dispute. "Anything for a homie!" responded Valgrim. He went along the next day and didn't even say a word, just hung out and looked famous, and it seemed to help. Maru Maru disappeared for the day to "inspect the locals for cultist tattoos" at the local brothel. He reported finding no tattoos, but definitely pushed the tolerance of his monkish resistance to disease in the process.

That evening, the party met the Mayor and Sheriff at the Rusty Dragon for dinner. *Ameiko Kaijitsu*, the proprietress, made a batch of her curried salmon which had won the cooking prize the previous year at the festival, as well as some tea imported from her homeland, which is named something I forget but just means "Japan." We told them all about the mustering stone giant army and the sin cults. This seemed to fall into the category of "moon man talk" to the locals, who imparted such valuable and world-shaking information like that the local armorer was eyeing the abandoned glassworks to expand her business. We urged them to enjoy their untimely deaths and turned in for the evening.

Day Two: Shopping

The next day, we visited the gnome's shop and bought some maps purporting to show the location of the Forbidden Valley of the stone giants for 100 gold, which Vaelyn kindly provided. *Gaven Deverin*, the mayor's cousin, was there looking for maps of the Land of the Linnorm Kings because he was considering chucking his brewing business and heading for the great blue yonder. We convinced him he should instead come to Fort Ranek, a wilderness just as forbidding, and brew there!

We also visited the local Thassilonian sage, *Brodert Quink*, and talked to him about the whole Sihedron rune deal. He told us that in old times, possibly 10,000 years ago, there were seven Runelords that represented seven schools (now called "sins" in modern parlance). He believes that Sandpoint was the border in a war between Alaznist, the Runelord of Wrath, whose capital lay out in what's now the ocean, and Karzog, the Runelord of Greed, whose capital Xin-Shalast lay in the Kodar Mountains. He also

believes that the ruined "lighthouse" was really a device which could project a lance of fire for a mile. He also mentioned a "Monastery of the Peacock Lord" in the Iron Peaks around where the Forbidden Valley was. We had him take us on a trip of the "lighthouse" ruins, which were dedicated to Wrath, but we didn't learn anything from them.

Day Three: Drinking

The next day was the Swallowtail Festival! Zillions of butterflies were released to celebrate Desna turning some blind guy into an immortal butterfly, which we all agreed seemed to be a pretty bad deal overall. We bet on a mule race (well, one pig was entered) - the white mule Valgrim bet on won! Ten gold, come to daddy.

The food contest was as tasty as the local flora and fauna supported, which is to say not very. As the night wore on, we invented a large number of verses to the song "What Shall We Do With a Drunken Goblin." They were all too dirty to record here.

Day Four: Violence

We were rudely awakened the next morning by yelling from the north gate to the city. The party heavies were forced to leave their armor behind as we charged to the rescue! Three stone giants were throwing boulders at the gate. Valgrim put a Haste on the party and a Solid Fog on the giants; everyone else charged to the attack and were able to engage them one at a time.

Before they had felled the first giant, we became aware of another group - two giants with three dire bears - entering the city from the east and ravaging their way down River Street. Valgrim cast Fly and went to take them on until the rest of the party could get there - this took a while. They killed two of the giants in a couple rounds and the third fled, but even Hasted it took them three rounds of running to reach the east gate.

Valgrim flew in and laid a Confusion spell on the two giants. One failed his save and bonked his ally! The other stone giant didn't attack back, but tried to talk sense into him, and the dire bears just kinda sat around looking on curiously. Valgrim did a Ray of Stupidity on one bear, felling it. Unfortunately the confused giant decided to attack Valgrim next and the two giants started tossing boulders at him and he flew around

ducking behind chimneys and the like for his life. He summoned a celestial bison which was promptly dismembered but it got him two rounds of breathing room.

As the party ran to help, Maru Maru witnessed a large red dragon swoop in and breathe fire all over the town garrison! "I see nothing!!!" he exclaimed as he continued to run towards the east gate.

As everyone arrived to fight the second group of giants, Valgrim cast Glitterdust, which unfortunately only blinded the confused giant. Vaelyn ran up to the other giant and busted him with a critical hit from his earthbreaker, felling him. Valgrim and Maru headed after the dragon, as yet another group of stone giants showed up across the river and started pelting people with rocks. Valgrim summoned a gadacro demon and had it try to earthbind the dragon, but with no luck.

Ravno and Vaelyn intimidated the bears into fleeing, and then Roscoe and Ravno went to take on the new giants while Vaelyn went to help Valgrim and Maru with the dragon. Maru hit the dragon with a crit from his sling, which at least got its attention (up till now it was just ravaging the town and hadn't paid any attention to us). Valgrim hit it with a Web, it failed its save, and took 6d6 of falling damage in the bargain! Woot! Vaelyn and Maru Maru moved to attack, but it was terribly hard to hit. It breathed flame on them, albeit to little effect (Vaelyn is immune, being a dragon shaman, and Maru has the legendary monk evasion). Valgrim hit it with a Ray of Clumsiness and gave it a -10 penalty to its Dexterity! This gave Vaelyn and Maru the edge they needed to start inflicting damage on the dragon. The gadacro kept doing Flyby Attacks with flanking, trying to blind the dragon, but it missed every time.

Meanwhile one of the new giants, their leader, apparently, strode across the river and into the town with some goal obviously in mind. Roscoe and Ravno moved to intercept him. He strode up to Roscoe and attacked him with dual wielded picks and gave the unarmored cleric a big ouchy. Ravno moved in and tried to help but the next round the stone giant leader unloaded with an unreasonable number of attacks for an insane amount of damage, and Roscoe fell; a minute of calculation and recalculation revealed that he was still hanging on to life just barely, but was unconscious.

The dragon cast True Strike and prepared to chow down on our heroes. Valgrim dumped his big gun, the Acid Orb, on the dragon, sickening it for a round and causing it

to lose its spell, and immediately flew to help his fallen lord. Ravno decided he needed to go bye bye and teleported away from the giant into hiding on a nearby rooftop. The giant continued on west through the town towards his quarry, whatever it was.

Valgrim flew up to Roscoe and started dumping all available healing potions down his gullet. This got him conscious and then he started healing himself. It took a number of rounds to get him back to fighting trim. Meanwhile, Maru finished off the dragon with a Mexican liver punch and he and Vaelyn went to intercept the giant leader, who Ravno was shadowing through the town. The giant sighted Maru and threw three chunks of a nearby house at him, luckily missing three times. "Just delay him for one more round till we get there!" Valgrim and Roscoe mentally urged the monk, as Valgrim picked up Roscoe (not in his armor, he was light enough to carry) and streaked towards the giant. Maru instead ran right up to the giant and got his ass royally kicked with a full attack and went down.

Arriving on the scene, Valgrim hit the giant with a Slow - no more full attacks for him! A summoned varoot nerra with its Mirror Images died bravely sucking up an attack and everyone charged the giant. Ravno and Roscoe both critted the giant for loads of lovely damage. Maru got healed enough to get up and rejoin the fray.

The gadacro demon wasted its last round on this plane missing the giant's eyes. Valgrim case Enlarge Person on Roscoe. The giant, seeing he was overmatched, blew a long blast on his horn for reinforcements but then Roscoe - that's Lord Dillon to you - cut him down. Some nearby giants left off from attacking the brewery to help their leader, but when they got there to see that we'd wasted him they ran for the hills. The rest of the giants also turned tail and took off.

Day Five: Assessing the Damage

Eighteen townspeople were dead and six had been carried off as prisoners. This does not include the entire Scarnetti family, who were all taken and their manor looted. Vaelyn and Roscoe healed all the survivors up with their freaky powers. We looted the slain. All the dead giants had the Sihedron rune tattoos on them.

Teraktinous (the giant leader) had:

- +2 *hide shirt* (Large)
- *Dwarfbane heavy pick* (Large)
- light pick (Large)

Longtooth (the red dragon) had:

- *Ring of protection +1*
- Warhorn
- *Amulet of mighty fists +1* (which Maru Maru immediately confiscated)
- Gold ring
- Silver armband

Bring Out Your Dead

The next morning, Roscoe used Speak with Dead to interrogate the attackers. Teraktinous made his save, being a colossal buttplug even in death. Longtooth the dragon was more forthcoming, as was a random dead stone giant.

The dragon said that Makmurien promised him glory and riches to go attack Sandpoint. He is based in the Valley of the Black Tower in the Iron Peaks. He controls 7 tribes of dozens of stone giants each, and some number of lamias, and hordes of mooks (ogres et cetera). He wasn't sure what Teraktinous was going for exactly but knows that the stone giant elders can get stones to "tell them things." The party surmised that perhaps he was going for the lighthouse ruins.

The stone giant revealed that Makmurien's stronghold overlooks the Mushkal River. Makmurien himself is usually found deep under the ancient tower in a library. The prisoners are being taken to be eaten or used as slaves. They were just a scouting party sent well away from the actual giantish forces.

Day Six: Flee the Scene

The heroes quickly conferred and decided that we might be able to overtake the giants en route to the Peaks. If we could overtake them and free the prisoners we would;

whether we did or not we need to go to Magnimar to resupply before trying the valley on for size. We mounted up and rode out in pursuit!

And so our heroes' Spring Break followed the time-honored pattern that all good spring breaks do...