

Rise of the Runelords Session Summary 03/23/2008

Attendance

Bruce (Yenneck Grumman) staggers in and exclaims, “Did you know that when you tell the deli people, ‘I want two pounds of this and a half-pound of that...’ they’re actually referring to real weight! I thought it was just a figure of speech!” He shudders and straightens his spine as he puts down three massive bags of randomness. *Chris* (Roscoe Dillon) observes, “I think your spine is still a bit crooked there.” *Paul* helps out by explaining, “It means that he’s evil and dishonest! You know, as within, as without. It’s simple Medieval psychology!” *Georgina* moves her chair slightly away from Paul and comments, “If that’s the way you guide your life, that explains an awful lot.” *Chuck* (Phiravno) looks up, disoriented. He doesn’t seem to really know where he is. The others aren’t sure why until they realize that he spent the last twenty-four hours watching *The Guild* and *Two Hot Girls in the Shower* on YouTube.

Patrick (Maru Maru) enters. The others tell him, “We got you a horse!”

Ernest rushes in later on, explaining, “Sorry... late... Easter... Barely... escaped... with life... and sanity...” The others sagely nod their heads, understanding immediately how dangerous children are on such a day.

Character	Player	Race	Class & Level	Notes
Hulmar Benk	Bruce	Human	Scout 7	Chelaxian. Military veteran.
Yenneck Grumman	Bruce	Human	Ranger 8	Another Chelaxian, a Black Arrow
Roscoe Dillon	Chris	Human	Cleric 8, Warblade 1	Shoanti, Skull tribe. Cleric of Gorum
Phiravno	Chuck	Human	Swordsage 3; Swashbuckler 3; Rogue 3	Varisian.
Artkel Certor	Ed	Human	Fighter 9	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 4	Shoanti, Sun clan
Valgrim Battlehorn	Ernest	Dwarf	Conjurer 3; Master Specialist 2; Paragnost 1; Apostle 1; Malconvoker 3	Fascinated by all manner of unusual creatures.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class & Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
"Gutterspike" Zook Beren	Tim	Gnome	Divine Mind 7	He rides a clawfoot, and he admits that gnomes have stupid names.
Vaelyn	Matt	Human	Gold Dragon Shaman 9	Shoanti, Sun clan

Last Session, In Brief

The characters (less *Yenneck Grumman*) successfully defended the town of Sandpoint against an assault by giants, dragons and termites. Eighteen townspeople died and the entire Scardetti family was abducted by giants.

After Them, Men!

The characters resolve to get horses and head out after the giants early the next morning. *Yenneck Grumman* is able to determine that four giants with a large wagon approached Sandpoint from the south. They looted the Scarnetti manor, kidnapped the nobles, then knocked over a wagon to start the fire that consumed the structure. He tells the others, "It's terrible! The Scarnettis have been kidnapped! We must inform the authorities at once!"

The others look at him askance. At last, *Roscoe Dillon* tells him, "Actually, we already know that. We've known that for over 24 hours. Where have you been?"

Phiravno offers, "I think he was off chasing the dragon again. And not the dragon dragon, if you know what I mean. Wink wink."

Maru Maru tells the Varisian, "Back off, hop-head. I don't need your dream-weeds to achieve enlightenment."

Four Giants and a Wagon

Yenneck Grumman ignores them and proceeds to track the giants to a massive deserted campsite. He turns his nose up at the prospect of eating leftover aurochs and continues along the path. It isn't long before the characters come upon four giants and a wagon.

Maru Maru runs the giants down, followed by *Vaylen* on horseback. The giants respond by flinging huge rocks at them. *Phiravno*, *Roscoe* and *Valgrim Battlehorn* ride in. *Valgrim* observes, "You see the way that *Maru Maru* and *Vaylen* have let themselves

get far ahead of the rest of the group? I predict that the giants will surround them and beat them into paste soon.”

The others watch as the giants do, in fact, surround the two and slam them around with huge clubs. Maru Maru howls, “Oww! My bones! And my organs!”

Roscoe simply stands back and casts *Prayer*. Valgrim decides that stronger measures are necessary, so he casts *Confusion* on three of the giants. One giant fails his save and becomes *Confused*.

Vaylen smashes into one giant, inflicting a moderate scratch upon its cliff-like flank. The confused stone giant follows suit, giving his comrade quite a bruising. The giant responds by clubbing Vaylen twice, shattering his collarbone and fragmenting his ribs. Roscoe quickly launches a *Close Wounds* spell to keep Vaylen standing. Another giant advances upon Valgrim. The creature’s club drives Valgrim into the ground. Phiravno watches the fates of his friends and resolves that he will not be next. He agilely evades the fourth giant’s attacks, then strikes back to inflict a long, ragged scarf-strike upon his foe.

Valgrim draws out a well-worn card from his deck and summons a vor-yugoloth. He orders it to rain down pain upon the giant. It slashes away huge gibbets of giant flesh away. The giant looks quite disturbed, but not so disturbed as to be unable to hammer Yenneck Grumman with an attack of opportunity. Then the giant turns to swing twice at Valgrim, attacks that the agile dwarf easily avoids. Roscoe helps his comrade out with a *Cure Major Wounds* spell. Valgrim’s vor-yugoloth helps out even more by rending the giant from behind. And then Valgrim finishes the creature with an *Acid Splash*.

Vaylen, recognizing that he is near to death, decides that he will unleash his mighty flame breath and then tumble away to safety. He smiles in evil satisfaction as one of the giants crisps with a fatty crackle, then moves out of reach.

The giants ignore the retreating dragon shaman, preferring to smack Phiravno and Maru Maru around. Phiravno responds by slashing a giant across the jaw, ruining the creature’s youthful good looks forever. Maru Maru presses the attack, jabbing the giant twice more in its ruined jaw. The giant complains, grumbling something about violations of union rules. Its slope-browed companion decides to file a grievance with Phiravno, delivered through two bone-crushing club strikes. The upset giant takes inspiration from

slope-brow and delivers an additional grievance to Maru Maru. Maru Maru staggers, but does not fall.

By this time, the giants are so wounded that even Yenneck can walk in and strike one down. Maru Maru finishes the other. And the *Confused* giant suddenly runs over across the horizon for no readily apparent reason. The characters loot only:

- Three suits of giant-sized hide armor

The Hostages Rescued

With the stone giants dealt with, the characters rescue the Scarnetti family members: *Titus Scarnetti* and his family. They also notice that the wagon also contains a variety of fine goods presumably owned by the Scarnetti family. Phiravno helps himself to a glass of wine.

The characters hook their horses to the wagon and accompany the Scarnetti family back to Sandpoint. Titus Scarnetti promises, “If you escort us back to Sandpoint, I shall gladly pay you a reward of one thousand pieces of gold!” The characters accept by reflex.

A Quick Trip to Magnimar

The characters make a rapid side journey to Magnimar to sell old loot. Roscoe Dillon does quite well in the negotiations, getting a 5% premium on magical items and a 10% premium on art objects. The characters decide to keep *Teraktinus’ War Horn* so they can place it as a trophy in their castle, to commemorate their victory over the giant leader. The remaining loot amounts to shares of 2021 gold pieces. Both Yenneck Grumman and Vaylen hand portions of their money (and some experience points) over to Valgrim Battlehorn, who obliges them by upgrading their *Chain Shirts +1* to *Chain Shirts +2*, turning Vaylen’s *Earthbreaker +1* into a *Giant-Bane Earthbreaker +1* and turning Roscoe’s *Great Sword +1* into a *Giant-Bane Great Sword +1*. And then things just get wildly out of hand as characters run rampant through the magic item bazaars with handfuls of gold coins in hand. By the end of the day, Maru Maru mourns that he has only 71 gold pieces left. Just as he says this, a wrinkled gnomish trader pops up and offers to sell him some magic beans for only 71 gold. Maru Maru contemplates this offer very seriously until the others drag him away.

Walking Into Giant Land

The characters ride up the Lost Coast Road and Ember Lake, ultimately reaching the Storval Stairs and the uplands. The whole journey will take them 13 days, and it isn't uneventful.

Two days into the journey, Yenneck and Vaylen are on watch at night when Yenneck hears something snuffling around the camp. Something large. Yenneck sneaks out to see what it is. The dire boar spots him at thirty feet. Yenneck persuades it to go away.

Two days later, the characters reach the town of Galduria, a place with a surprisingly hard name to spell. Though it is primarily a lumbering town, it is also the home of the *Twilight Academy*, a well-known (if recent) school of magic with an unconventional approach to education. There is a rumor among rumor circles that the Twilight Academy's masters donate substantial sums to the government of Galduria to cover over magical mishaps and spells gone wild. The characters stay in town for one night. Vaylen spends some time on campus, asking if anyone remembers the magician *Lyra* from when she studied here. He learns that she was a bitter and insecure student whose only friend was her cat. Some instructors are certain that she cheated on her exams. Valgrim Battlehorn stops by with a different goal: he intends to trade forbidden secrets with the masters of the Twilight Academy.

All of the characters hear all manner of stories about giant problems in the area. Cattle and locals have gone missing, homesteads have been attacked, and a gang of ogres has been tormenting the countryside.

An Ogre Aside

It doesn't take long for Yenneck to pick up the ogres' tracks. It takes even less time for the characters to hear the approach of a pack of the brutes, accompanied by some number of panicked cattle. The characters move into ambush position.

There are four ogres, loaded down with stolen goods. One of them has a cask of brandy weighing at least 300 pounds strapped to its back. Another is carrying two cows. A third cow runs in front of them. Roscoe is amazed, "Look at the size of that cow!" Then Valgrim casts *Enlarge* on him, making him look even more amazed. Roscoe

doesn't take long to regain his balance, though: he moves right in front of the ogres and casts *Divine Might*.

The ogres advance, driving themselves into an atavistic fury along the way. Maru Maru exclaims, "They're barbarians!"

Vaylen comments, "Seriously, I don't think there was much chance that any of them would be mild-mannered city-dwellers." An ogre responds to his clever commentary by decking him upside the head.

Yenneck simply steps out of hiding and slashes an ogre twice. The ogre wheezes through its punctured lung. Then Maru Maru steps up and executes it.

Valgrim decides to do one better: he summons up two huge monstrous centipedes. One centipede clatters out, "We are here to maaaaate with you!" at an ogre, then buries its mouth-parts into the beast. The ogre suffers substantial amounts of violent fanging damage. Behind it, another ogre howls out (in ogrish), "I am being violated by the fanging! It is fangulating me!"

Phiravno steps out with his scarf and tells an ogre, "Don't worry about the centipede! Worry about me! I shall bladeulate you!" He then proceeds to unload a tremendous amount of injury upon the unfortunate ogre. The ogre staggers. Then Roscoe steps up and cleaves the ogre in two.

The surviving two ogres flee. The characters give chase, with Maru Maru and Yenneck Grumman in the lead. The centipedes and the monk manage to wear the creatures down and kill them. Their loot includes:

- A chest containing 6000 silver pieces;
- Three barrels of brandy, each worth 400 gold but each weighing 300 lbs;
- Four suits of *Large Hide Armor +1*;
- Four *Large Clubs +1*; and
- Four *Rings of Protection +1*

The characters take the silver and gear. They content themselves with filling their waterskins with brandy.

The Giantish Aftermath

The characters come upon a devastated merchant's wagon, clearly destroyed by giants. Nothing valuable remains, but ten goblins are rummaging around the ruins. One has dressed itself in human clothing and is gesturing grandly at the others.

When Valgrim announces himself, most of the goblins immediately attempt to hide. All except for the one wearing human clothing, who answers, "Goblin? I am no goblin! I am a human merchant!" Valgrim strikes up a conversation.

From the back of the party, Roscoe pipes up, "I don't think he's a human, man!"

Valgrim shoots back, "Do you speak goblin? No? Zip it!"

Roscoe whispers to Maru Maru, "He's always saying that he can't tell the difference between us humans. Perhaps he can't tell the difference between a human and a goblin." The characters leave the goblins alone.

Camping in the Lowlands

A couple of days later, the characters have made camp in a low-lying gully. Roscoe and Maru Maru are standing watch when they hear a strange, mystical song trailing through the woods. They decide that they will follow it. It draws them into the copse. And then they come upon a harpy sitting in a tree. Noticing that the singer is not actually a woman, both characters decide to butcher her instead. They are stymied in this goal by her ability to simply fly away. Roscoe and Maru Maru solemnly agree to never tell the other characters about this ever.

The Creepy Little Town of Wolf's Ear

At one time, back when the government of Magnimar went on a crusade against lycanthropes, the town of Wolf's Ear was something of a leper colony for shapechangers. This went on until the Lord Mayor bankrolled a pogrom against them by the Church of Erastil. Officially, any incidence of lycanthropy still in Wolf's Ear is just an unfounded rumor. The characters notice that a lot of houses have wolfsbane tied to the lintels, doubtless due to the rumors. And when they stop at the local inn, the tavernkeeper carefully examines each of their palms.

Sadly, nothing really happens all night long.

The Goblin-Snake

The characters take the road between the Churlwood and the river, a very claustrophobic path, ending at the town of Ravenmoore. It is clear that they are getting further and further from the center of Magnimarian civilization.

Up ahead on the road, the characters see a snake hanging from a tree. They notice that it has a very odd head, a head evocative of a goblin. Phiravno comments, "I don't think that creature is natural. But it looks like a goblin snake."

Maru Maru mocks the Varisian, "Seriously, what else would it be."

Vaylen moves forward on his own. As he approaches, it shrieks and belches at him. He responds by roasting it with flame breath. It falls from the tree, roasted through. Vaylen moves over to wash in the river.

Something is Fishing

Later that night, Vaylen and Yenneck are on sentry duty. They hear some splashing sounds from down the river. Vaylen takes advantage of his *water breathing* trick to swim over and check it out. He comes upon a dire bear, fishing. He swims back and tells Yenneck, "Nothing to be concerned about."

Ravenmoore: Welcome to Our Little Town

The characters arrive in Ravenmoore and head directly to the inn. The innkeep is willing to serve them beer, but is unwilling to admit that there are any rooms available. Neither is he willing to explain anything else about the town. The characters look through the main streets of the town. They find that shops generally do not admit what sort of thing they might sell. The largest building in town is the remarkable-impressive temple, but Roscoe notices that there is no indication on the temple exterior to indicate which god it is dedicated to, and no response to his knocks on the door.

Ravenmore is also the last bit of civilization the characters will see for a while.

The Storval Stairs

The Storval Stairs are an ancient Thassalonian monument along the edge of the Storval Ridge. The ridge at that place is only 400 feet high. The stairs themselves are 2 feet high each, so climbing them takes a certain amount of effort.

As the characters approach, they hear a loud noise as of stone hitting stone. Four stone giants run across the top of the stairs to take station next to large piles of throwing boulders. The characters withdraw for a bit of planning.

The plan the characters devise is gloriously simple: Maru Maru, Phiravno and Yenneck sneak up to the ruins surrounding the Storval Stairs, then climb up through the ruins. When they attack the giants, that is the signal for Valgrim to cast *Dimension Door* and bring Roscoe and Vaylen into the fight.

Maru Maru starts the fight by running in and bruising one giant's thigh. Yenneck delivers a nasty gash to the giant's other flank. Phiravno settles for simply irritating the giant's spine. Maru Maru explains, "That's not how you do it. Watch me!" He reaches in and tears entire giant vertebrae out of the hapless creature's back. It is critically injured. Phiravno is apparently inspired by this display: his next strike slices the creature's neck clean through.

Valgrim makes horrible eldritch gestures and brings Roscoe and Vaylen into the fight. Roscoe hammers the creature, leaving remarkably vicious-looking wounds. It turns and delivers crushing damage to him. Vaylen responds by smashing the giant four times with his earthbreaker, killing the giant instantly.

Two surviving giants move in and hammer Yenneck hard. He staggers from the impact. His return strike inflicts substantial damage to one of the giants, though he is somewhat disappointed to see that the giant is only lightly wounded. Valgrim notes that Yenneck is in poor shape, so he uses *Benign Transposition* to swap Yenneck with Roscoe. Roscoe takes advantage of this to inflict even more wounds on the creature. And then Phiravno puts the giant down.

The last giant retreats away. The characters run it down, as usual. And then they turn to looting. It includes:

- 3306 silver pieces;
- A carved mammoth-bone statuette of a mammoth worth 700 gold pieces;
- An eyepatch with a mock eye of blackstar sapphire and moonstone worth 900 gold pieces;
- A mithril anklet worth 1000 gold pieces; and
- A jeweled dwarven gold crown worth 4000 gold pieces

Valgrim inspects the items carefully for runes and whatnot to understand its provenance. He fails to see anything, so Phiravno fills him in: the crown is the *Lost Crown of the Pallgreves*. The Pallgreves are one of the oldest clans of Janderhoff, and the crown might be worth much more than standard market value to them.

The Iron Hills Patrol

The remainder of the journey is through the broken mountains and low hills of the Storval Plateau proper. The characters make it almost to the Iron Peaks without incident, right up until they run into a patrol of two stone giants and three dire bears.

Maru Maru and Yenneck move up quickly to engage the bears, aided in large part by Valgrim's *Haste* spell. They deliver some damage, and in return the bears claw pieces off them.

The giants observe Roscoe as he moves up and casts *Prayer*. They pull back and pelt him with rocks. He yells out, "Ow! Stop that! Stop that, I say! Hey, are you listening to me?" The giants do not seem to care at all about whatever it is that Roscoe is yelling.

Phiravno scampers up and slashes the wounded bear with his magic scarf. The bear has a magical experience, for suitably blood- and organ-stained values of magical.

Vaylen charges in at one of the unwounded bears, delivering a significant scrape.

Valgrim points out, "Don't waste your time on those! Watch this!" He shoots one bear with a *Ray of Stupidity*, reducing the creature to negative INT and felling it.

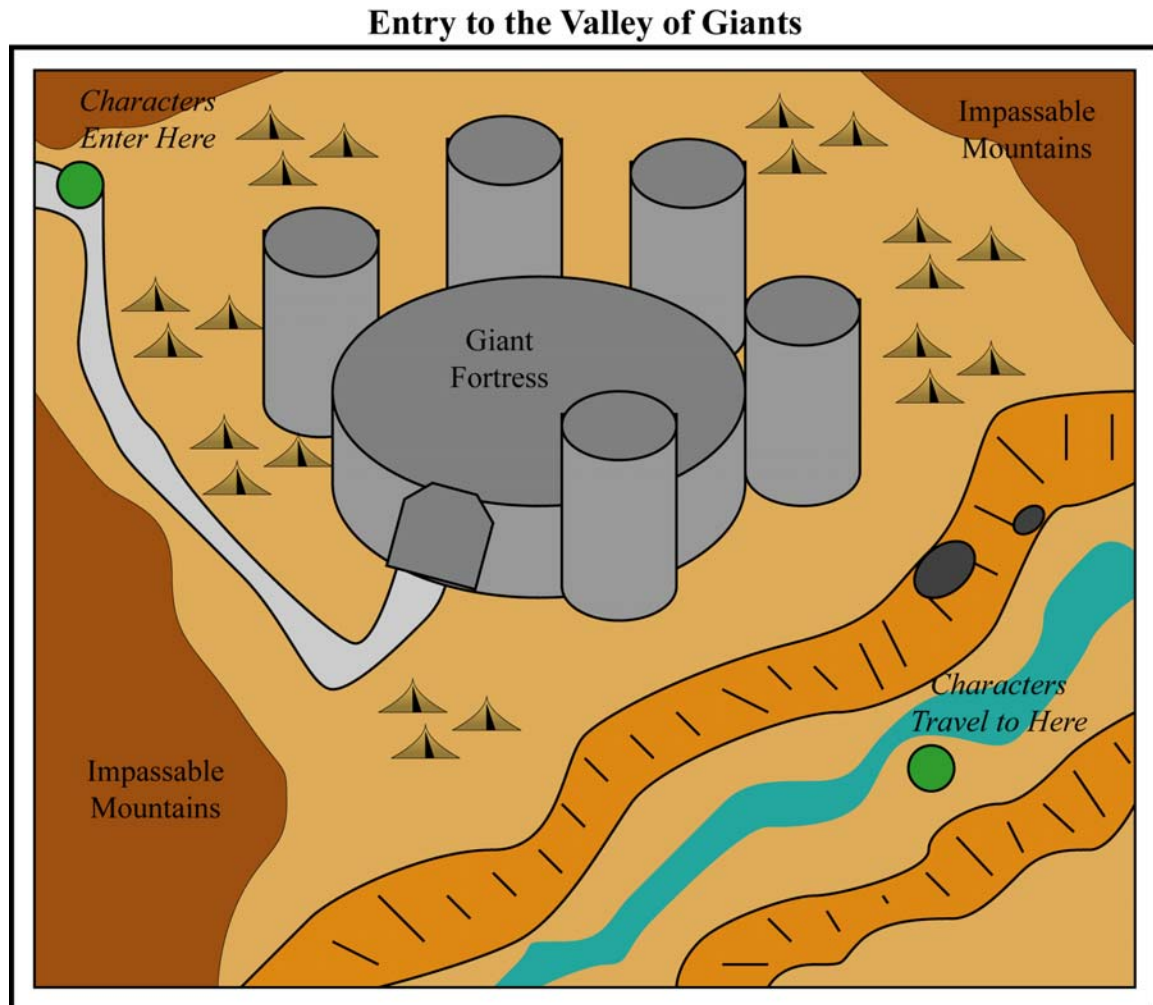
Phiravno goggles at the downed bear. He tells the others, "Look! It's too stupid even to move!" The others agree that it is so.

The two giants make a command decision that the front-line bears are done for. They move back further, blowing horns and sounding noisemakers as they go. Valgrim comments, "Oooh! They're bringing us more experience points!" Phiravno doesn't even hear him, as he's too busy chopping apart bears.

Valgrim sighs and decides that if nobody else is going to stop the giants then he'd better. He casts *Confusion* and stops them in their tracks. Then the characters watch the two giants club each other to death.

Entry to the Valley of Giants

The characters observe the entry to the Valley of Giants. The entry to the valley is blocked off by a huge fortress dominated by the Black Tower. Seven large camps surround the fortress. All of them are clearly occupied by substantial numbers of giants and their allies.



The characters look at the remarkable number of giant camps, then decide to use magic and tricks to get themselves down into the gorge.

The End of the Session

Each 8th level character gains 6567 experience points. Each 9th level character gains 5058 experience points. Everyone levels!