

Rise of the Runelords Session Summary 04/06/2008

Attendance

Tim asks, “Has John Carpenter made any movies since *Ghosts of Mars*?” Chuck (Phiravno) offers, “Well, there was the short he did for Subway describing how to make a good sandwich.” Paul points out, “Yeah, but it wasn’t nearly as good as Stephen King’s overview of how to make sandwiches and write books. Really, though, it’s clear that he’s a lot better at sandwiches than he is at literature.” Chris (Roscoe Dillon) drools, “If Stephen King wrote it, I’ll buy it! Wait... I don’t believe that! It’s as if someone is trying to mock me with *words*! *With words!*” Ernest (Valgrim Battlehorn) stays silent and studies his rulebooks, desperately hoping to escape notice. Bruce (Yenneck Grumman) remains completely innocent, offering up only comments on how good Kemberlyn’s barbecue sauce and brisket are. Mmmm... brisket...

Patrick (Maru Maru) shows up later on, explaining that he recently learned that he is anatomically correct. He isn’t yet sure what this actually means. However, he is more than willing to scavenge his way through the ruins of the brisket and the barbecue sauce. And it is his appearance that serves to drive Tim away, howling something about, “savage meat-eating barbarians...”

Matt (Vaelyn) seems to be imaginary this week. Nobody really knows why, least of all Matt, who shows up and announces, “I want some meat-flavored water!”

Character	Player	Race	Class & Level	Notes
Hulmar Benk	Bruce	Human	Scout 7	Chelaxian. Military veteran.
Yenneck Grumman	Bruce	Human	Ranger 9	Another Chelaxian, a Black Arrow
Roscoe Dillon	Chris	Human	Cleric 9, Warblade 1	Shoanti, Skull tribe. Cleric of Gorum
Phiravno	Chuck	Human	Swordsage 4; 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 5	Shoanti, Sun clan

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class & Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Valgrim Battlehorn	Ernest	Dwarf	Conjurer 3; Master Specialist 2; Paragnostic Apostle 1; Malconvoker 4	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.
Vaelyn	Matt	Human	Gold Dragon Shaman 9	Shoanti, Sun clan

In the Canyon

The characters start the session in a canyon, supported by various magical means. Nobody really remembers exactly what means, except that they were mysterious. It turns out that *Valgrim Battlehorn* magically *Enlarged Yenneck Grumman* and cast *Fly* on him. Yenneck in turn carries *Maru Maru*. *Roscoe Dillon* provides *Air Walk* spells for himself, *Phiravno* and Valgrim. And *Vaelyn* is astride a summoned hippogriff. Whew.

And then the characters hear a screeching sound. Vaelyn is convinced that the calls sound more like those of a hunting reptile than those of a bird. Yenneck points out that two shapes just flew across the canyon above the characters, blotting out the stars.

Valgrim suggests, "There's no cover below in the gorge! Let's dart for a cave!" The characters dart. Dart, characters, dart!

Vaelyn darts out ahead of the rest on his hippogriff, thus ensuring that the circling wyverns swoop on him. Vaelyn tells the others, "Don't worry! I'm not afraid at all! These wyverns only have two stingers on their tails!"

Phiravno shudders and tells the others, "They're the color of the night sky. I totally want a pair of boots made from one of those! But for now I can't bear to watch." The hippogriff is deeply wounded, but not killed. Vaelyn heals the creature and flies for the cave. The wyverns savage it again. The hippogriff survives just long enough to drop Vaelyn in the cave, then plummets down to the water. The wyverns scream in frustration, alerting every giant in the county that something isn't all right.

Phiravno watches as Yenneck Grumman and Maru Maru fly into the cave, then decides that this is his opportunity to defeat three wyverns single-handed. He zaps one with a *Wand of Enervation*. The wyvern looks thoroughly enervated. Valgrim tries to

follow this success with a *Ray of Idiocy*, but he fails to make his target completely mindless.

The wyverns close in on Phiravno, Roscoe and Valgrim. Phiravno prepares to make his last stand. Roscoe reprimands him, “Stiff upper lip, man! If we’re going to die, we’re going to die like Romans!” Phiravno looks deeply confused, so Roscoe demonstrates what he means by deeply slashing one of the wyverns. Phiravno is inspired: he draws a dagger and attacks a wyvern with *Obscuring Shadow Veil*, killing it instantly.

Valgrim Battlehorn decides that summoning isn’t going to help him in this case, so he compromises and breathes a spray of acid on the two surviving wyverns. Both are badly hurt. One wyvern responds by grabbing hold of him and nearly tearing his throat out. The other barely scratches Phiravno. Roscoe responds by smashing a wyvern’s skull in, sending the creature’s shattered body tumbling to the ground.

Phiravno unleashes another new trick, his *Strength-Draining Strike*, against the surviving wyvern. It also spirals to the ground, fortuitously letting go of Valgrim along the way.

The Spider Cave

Vaelyn looks around in the cave. He notices that the place is crawling with thousands upon thousands of insects. He roasts a fifteen-foot cone of the cave, clearing some of the population away.

Valgrim observes that the cave dips downward and is still full of spiders. He sends a *Cloudkill* down to obliterate every spider in range. After nine minutes, the cavern is cleansed.

The characters move in to investigate. They swiftly discover that the cavern has not been completely cleansed: a huge undead spider the size of a house lurches out from underneath a pile of spider bodies. Slain spiders spill from cracks in its carapace. Valgrim emphasizes, “See those dead spiders? That was my *Cloudkill*, that’s what that was. The others seem skeptical, so he summons a vor-yugoloth and unleashes it against the undead spider.

The characters are thinking that things are going well when a second undead spider shows up. Both of them start in on the yugoloth. The yugoloth staggers. Phiravno

moves in and slaughters one of the spiders, to ensure that the yugoloth remains in the fight. Roscoe explains, “There’s an easier way to deal with this.” He unleashes his divine power and simply obliterates the creature. This prompts the third undead spider to pop up from its hiding place and attack. It doesn’t last long. Then the characters search for loot. They find:

- Withered skins;
- Old bones;
- A dozen longswords;
- *A Large Longsword +1*;
- *A Halberd +2*;
- Three large warhammers;
- A set of full plate; and
- *A Druid’s Staff* (containing *Rusting Grasp*, cast at CL 12)

Valgrim uses *Prestidigitation* to clean out the cave. The characters set up (temporary) housekeeping while Valgrim picks out a chamber to use as a summoning circle. His intention is to summon up something horrible and bind it to his service.

Mastering the Forbidden Arts

Valgrim creates his summoning circle and fortifies it with a *Dimensional Anchor*. He announces his intention to summon up a *Hell-u-tang* (as he describes it) and then bind it to his service. Roscoe helps out with various curses and buffs, and by explaining to the others that the technical name for the creature is a *Bar-Ligura*.

Vaelyn mourns, “I am concerned that our cleric is being seduced by the dark arts.”

Yenneck offers, “Who’s concerned?”

A few hours later, Valgrim and Roscoe emerge from the summoning chamber with a tamed hell-u-tang following them obediently.

Later in the evening, Maru Maru sneaks into the chamber to talk to the demon (still trapped in the summoning circle). He leads with, “So, what can I get for my soul?” It’s not clear to the others if he actually sold his soul for it, but he does find a secret door in the back of the summoning chamber. Behind it he finds a small tunnel, one so small

that a medium creature would need to squeeze through. He heads down, hoping that it opens out further down.

The Monk in the Tunnel

Maru Maru creeps down the tunnel until he reaches a branching. He thinks that this would be a good time to turn around. Then he hears the stomping of small, metal-shod feet. He observes a gang of diminutive scythe-wielding humanoids rushing him. He attempts to retreat, but finds that they are much faster than he is. The fact that he's only barely able to fit into the tunnel doesn't help. And when he hits one, he finds that they're very, very tough. He thinks, "This thing looks and hits exactly like a redcap."

Back up the tunnel, the demon starts whistling loudly to cover the sounds of combat.

Maru Maru engages in a ferocious retreating action until he gets back to the cave. He takes several scythe-marks along the way. He tells the others all about his experiences when they wake up. Phiravno whispers to Yenneck, "Maru's cutting himself again, but now he's blaming it on little men in red hats." Yenneck nods sagely. They move the carving knives out of his reach.

Maybe the Other Cave Is Better

The characters decide that the upper cave has too many spiders and redcaps, so the characters climb down the cliffs to explore the lower cave. They find that it has a musky smell to it, an almost reptilian scent. The characters conclude that it was the wyverns' cave. They search for loot and find:

- A fire opal (worth 200 gold);
- An ancient *Staff of Heaven and Earth* (7 charges) dating back to the time of the Thassalonians. It allows use of the spells *Air Walk* (2 charges), *Control Winds* (2 charges), *Gust of Wind* (1 charge), *Spike Stones* (2 charges), and *Stone Shape* (1 charge) at a default CL 9;
- 1435 gold pieces; and
- 2987 silver pieces

Roscoe gets the staff, as he is the only one who can use most of its powers. Valgrim busies himself by putting a bag over his hell-u-tang's head so he doesn't have to see its hideous face. The creature cuts two little eyeholes for itself.

The High Dragon Cave, Or So We Hope

The characters decide to hit up the (potential) dragon cave up on the high mountain next. Maru Maru is selected as scout. The bar-ligura makes him *Invisible* and Valgrim makes him *Fly*. He scouts the place, though he can't see in darkness. The place is scattered with the bones of various creatures, ranging in size up to wyvern. After he reports back, the characters use the bar-ligura's *Teleport* power to shuttle up to the cave mouth, then venture inside with torches.

The characters find that the cave is a single huge open chamber. The last fifty feet of the place is piled high with coins, mostly copper. The characters estimate that the copper coins alone weigh 7200 pounds. There are several other valuable items, including a fine linen tapestry depicting monks sparring in a courtyard. Loot items the characters take along include:

- The tapestry;
- Five silver idols (of various subjects) each worth 600 gold pieces;
- One platinum idol of the Runelord Karzoug, Lord of Greed;
- One black opal worth 8000 gold;
- One rich blue diamond worth 1600 gold;
- One water opal worth 1000 gold;
- Fifty-three additional gems worth a total of 3500 gold; and
- 23 platinum pieces;
- A few backpacks-full of random coins (emphasis on higher-value coins)

The characters (except for Yenneck) deduce that this is the former lair of the dragon they killed back at Sandpoint.

Watching the Giants

Once the characters have taken their fill from the dragon's hoard they station some of their keener-eyed folk at the mouth of the dragon cave to watch the giants. They watch the various tribes of giants and giant-kin stomp around going about their business.

Each of the four lesser towers in the fortress has only one giant on watch at a time, armed with a stack of throwing rocks. The gates seem to be guarded by harpies. Nobody seems to go near the Black Tower except the harpies, who enter through openings on the top. Buzzards, crows and scavenging birds circle around the central spire.

The characters decide to go back to the spider cave and try their luck with the redcaps.

Redcap Time Again

The characters go back through the small tunnels to face the redcaps. Vaelyn takes the lead, but the tunnels quickly diverge enough that it doesn't matter: the characters have redcaps coming at them from all directions. Phiravno sees movement and shoots it with his *Scorching Ray* wand. A redcap gets singed. Vaelyn watches them and murmurs, "Come on... come on little ones..." As he gets two in line he roasts them with flame breath. He and Phiravno open up with an ongoing barrage of *Scorching Rays* and fire breath.

Valgrim swiftly casts *Reduce Person* on Vaelyn and hands a cold iron dagger to Yenneck, who has discovered that redcaps are terribly resistant to weapons that aren't made of cold iron.

Vaelyn observes that the two redcaps facing him are doing a little spring attack dance involving a lot of spiked-boot stomping. Yenneck simply observes that the redcap facing him is just cutting him to pieces.

Valgrim flings a *Web* down in front of Vaelyn, trapping one of the redcaps in place. Vaelyn exploits this by hammering one redcap hard and fast. Then he casts a *Reduce Person* on Yenneck to help the ranger fight in the tiny, tiny corridors.

Phiravno tags a wounded redcap with another *Scorching Ray* and puts it down. Vaelyn makes a stupendous strike against its friend, killing it outright. Vaelyn howls out, "I am the champion! I am the champion! No time for redcaps, 'cause I am the champion! Of! The! World!"

Roscoe mumbles, "Great. Now that he's singing there's not a giant sentry in the entire valley who doesn't know we're down here."

The redcap facing Yenneck chops at him again, drawing serious blood. Yenneck asks Roscoe, “Something I was just wondering: these guys dye their caps in the blood of their victims, but who would these guys be using as victims? Giants?”

Roscoe responds, “There you go again, thinking too much at the wrong time. By the way, when we win I’m going to have a pair of their spiked iron shoes bronzed! Say, does that sound abnormal?”

Vaelyn forces his way into the *Web* until he’s in range of the one wounded redcap and unleashes a fiery breath. The redcap gets a bit toasted and is freed from the (ruined) *Web*, only to find Phiravno teleporting next to him. The redcap slashes him with his scythe. Vaelyn crushes his skull with a morningstar, then Phiravno slits its throat.

Maru Maru, after great effort, manages to club a redcap to death. And then sees the creature stand back up again. Maru Maru mercilessly hammers the redcap as it tries to crawl. The redcap falls for the last time. Then Maru Maru moves right past Yenneck to hit the remaining redcap twice from behind.

Vaelyn yells out, “Yenneck! Get out of the way!” Yenneck moves back and Vaelyn shows him how to kill a redcap. Then the characters examine the rather minimal loot:

- Five medium-sized scythes;
- Five shapeless woolen caps dyed over and over in victims’ blood; and
- Five pairs of tiny iron spiked boots

Roscoe takes the boots with the idea of using them to start a children’s soccer team.

The Kobold’s Kave

The characters continue upwards along the small corridors into a larger chamber full of various types of junk, neatly sorted into piles. A single red-skinned kobold with a spear and shield stands in the center of the room. Vaelyn attempts to Intimidate the kobold into friendliness. He boasts that he has killed dragons.

The kobold is intimidated. It cowers and stammers, “Truly you are greater than my master *Mokurian*! He was forced to bargain with the dragon for he could not kill it!” She is *Enga Keckvia*. She explains that she protected a dried riverbed as her territory in the Storval Plateau. When Mokurian demanded access to her road, she fell into a rage

and stabbed him. This impressed Mokurian so much that he gave her a job protecting these tunnels.

Enga Keckvia tells the characters where to find Mokurian (protected by two troll guards) and that there is a Lamia Temple nearby. The characters instruct Enga to take them to the Lamia Temple first.

The Temple of the Lamiae

The characters follow Enga down a corridor, passing a barracks (“Be quiet! Many giants inside!”) and a forge (“Very noisy!”) and another unoccupied barracks. She points out a fork in the corridor: one direction goes to the stairs and Mokurian, the other goes to the Lamia Temple.

The characters enter a cave suffused with incense smoke. There is a dreamlike quality to the place, accentuated by the strange symbols painted upon the walls, interspersed with frightening portraits of three-headed monsters. As the characters enter, two leonine lamia priestesses rise up. They laugh at the characters’ entrance.

Roscoe explains, “We’re the redcap exterminators. We heard that you had a redcap infestation around here.” The lamias suggest that they will let the characters leave if they pledge their souls to Lammashu. The conversation goes downhill after that, with one lamia drawing her claws across the blood-soaked stone altar with a horrific screech. They pray to their foul god to give them power. The characters roll initiative.

The more insightful characters notice that *Xanesha* is standing behind the two lamiae.

Phiravno starts out the gate with a bang: he *Shadow Jumps* behind Xanesha and demands satisfaction for his sister’s death. She responds by stabbing him twice with *The Impaler*. Phiravno staggers back.

Valgrim casts *Haste* and orders his bar-ligura to teleport with Roscoe, taking both of them to engage Xanesha and help out Phiravno. Vaelyn simply runs to join them, hammering Xanesha to punctuate his move. The lamiae respond by enchanting themselves.

Roscoe enchants Phiravno’s scarf into a *Holy Weapon* on the hopes that Xanesha really is evil and will take extra damage from it. Phiravno uses his *Obscuring Shadow*

Veil strike, slashing Xanesha clean across the throat and killing her instantly. Everyone cheers!

Valgrim keeps focus on the fact that there are still two lamiae in the room. He summons an angry vor-yugoloth to deal with them. The priestesses are not impressed. One of them savages Vaelyn with three attacks. The other claws through Yenneck, ripping through him and draining off four points of his Wisdom. Yenneck gives a gap-toothed grin and comments, “Well, aahh nevuh got much use fer weesdum anyhow, a-huh...”

Roscoe muses that Yenneck must have taken some damage to his intelligence too. Or perhaps just didn’t have too much of it to start with.

Vaelyn uses his firey breath to sear both priestesses. Maru Maru finds himself in the blast, but evades the entirety of it. He bounces back to hammer the priestess hard.

Yenneck finds himself in a fine position to strike at a priestess. He exploits this to slash at her with his two blades, inflicting moderate injury.

Phiravno moves in to flank the lamia engaged by the vor-yugoloth, delivering a remarkable slash. The lamia steps in and strikes him six times, stripping the skin and flesh from his bones and killing him instantly. Roscoe steps in and casts a *Close Wounds*, but his talents are unable to bring him back to life.

The second priestess turns upon Yenneck and tears him apart. Yenneck collapses. The return damage from the dragon shaman aura is sufficient to drop her as well.

Vaelyn and Maru Maru step up to the surviving priestess and deliver significant injuries while Roscoe heals Yenneck back into activity. And Valgrim sends his vor-yugoloth to finish her off. Then the looting starts:

- *The Impaler of Thorns* (1/day may unleash a 30’ radius *Burst of Despair*, DC 16; target struck must make a second save or become nauseated. Inflicts 2d6 damage);
- *The Medusa Mask* (made of gold-plated iron, grants +4 bonus on all saves against visual effects; 1/day *Petrify* one target within 30’ for one minute);
- *The Snakeskin Tunic* (+1 AC, +2 enhancement bonus to DEX, +2 to saves vs. poison);
- Two *Flails* +2;

- Two *Periapt of Wisdom* +2;
- Two *Rings of Protection* +2; and
- Two incense burners of silver chased with mithril, worth 400 gold pieces each.

Recovery

The characters pick through the gemstones retrieved from the dragon's hoard. The 1600 gold piece blue diamond plus most of the 3500 gold pieces in other gemstones represent sufficient wealth to provide the material components to cast *Raise Dead* upon Phiravno.

The End of the Session

Each 9th level character gains 3900 experience points. Each 10th level character gains 3000 experience points. Sadly, nobody gains a level.