

Rise of the Runelords Session Summary 05/04/2008

Attendance

Matt (Vaelyn) staggers in late, bearing a sandwich. He gasps out, “I brought this from McAllister’s, but it almost cost me my life!” He crawls off scene to recover. *Chris* (Roscoe Dillon) points out, “Well, you could take his sandwich.” *Paul* moans, “No, I’ve got a McDonalds Cheeseburger sitting in my stomach like a brick.” *Chuck* (Phiravno) offers, “See, that’s why Tony Stark eats at Burger King.” *Patrick* contributes, “At least its not sitting like a platinum brick!” *Bruce* (Yenneck Grumman) chuckles, because when it comes to writing session summary introductions he’s a Viking.

Hours later, *Ernest* (Valgrim Battlehorn) staggers in, admitting, “I’ve been trapped at Chuck-E-Cheese for hours! Oh, the humanity!”

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class & Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Hulmar Benk	Bruce	Human	Scout 7	Chelaxian. Military veteran.
Yenneck Grumman	Bruce	Human	Ranger 9, Warblade 1	Another Chelaxian, a Black Arrow
Roscoe Dillon	Chris	Human	Cleric 10, Warblade 1	Shoanti, Skull tribe. Cleric of Gorum
Phiravno	Chuck	Human	Swordsage 4; Swashbuckler 3; Rogue 3	Varisian. Recently killed by a lamia, hopefully soon back with us.
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
Valgrim Battlehorn	Ernest	Dwarf	Conjurer 3; Master Specialist 2; Paragnostical 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 10	Shoanti, Sun clan

Underneath the Stone Giants’ Fortress

The characters start out the day in the ancient Thassalonian tunnel complex underneath the stone giants’ fortress. *Valgrim Battlehorn* (who is otherwise very silent)

examines the great cauldron. One of the former dwarf captives tells him that *Mokmurian* made two of them light the fire underneath the cauldron. Once the fire was lit, Mokmurian placed a wide variety of unsavory ingredients inside, then forced a stone giant who had been disobedient to step inside. When the giant came out he was rune-covered and deformed, and Mokmurian controlled his mind. Mokmurian ordered the giant to kill the other dwarf.

The characters take this information with a degree of unease, then move on.

The Hall of Armor

The characters move on through the compound, entering a massive chamber with deeply chilled air. Two dozen ice-covered giants, trolls and ogres in heavy armor stand motionless, as if they had been frozen in the midst of a battle.

As the characters enter the room, several of the frozen creatures spring to life. One of them slams *Yenneck Grumman* into a wall with his meaty fist. And from the back the Headless Lord casts an aura of fear upon the characters, sending *Enga Keckvia* fleeing.

Phiravno observes, “I guess she’s not so impressive without her rage and her fear immunity.”

Roscoe Dillon shoots back, “Well, duh.”

Phiravno ignores him in favor of attacking one of the creatures. He squeals out, “Aiee! They don’t have organs! Or vitals! My sneak attack is useless! *Useless!*” He still dishes out over forty points of damage, tearing away armor to reveal gray, necrotic flesh. The undead giant doesn’t seem particularly upset.

The Headless Lord steps forward, emitting an aura of dark necromantic power that strengthens the undead giants. *Yenneck Grumman* muses, “Is there actually such a thing as *light* necromantic power?”

Roscoe moves up to the front and launches a turning attempt. The undead giants do not respond. The Headless Lord mocks him, “Haar haaaaar haaaa! We mock you for your feeble turning attempts!” *Roscoe* wonders how it is that a thing with no head is able to mock him.

Vaelyn and *Yenneck* step up to two zombies. *Vaelyn* engulfs them in flames while *Yenneck* steps in and starts chopping like a butcher. The zombie looks marginally

hurt. Vaelyn complains, “Butchers are supposed to produce tasty meats, but nothing about these things is tasty!” Yenneck ignores him in favor of keeping up the chopping and hacking.

Phiravno loudly announces, “I no longer wish to live!” He teleports behind the Headless Lord. The Headless Lord brandishes his massive axes at the varisian. They start to glow with a terrible black light. Phiravno dodges right, then left, then straight into an axe blade.

Maru Maru invokes his Wasp tattoo and unleashes a variety of attacks that glance harmlessly off a zombie’s heavy armor plate. Roscoe recognizes that things are going poorly, so casts *Mass Cure Light Wounds*. Phiravno feels refreshed and healthy. The Headless Lord feels slightly injured.

Revitalized and healthy, Phiravno steps in and cuts at the Headless Lord. The Lord staggers and oozes. Phiravno exults, “Haha! Take that! *Now* who’s your daddy? And who says that *Book of Nine Swords* is overpowered?”

The Headless Lord responds by slashing twice at Phiravno, inflicting terrible slashing cuts before collapsing. Phiravno staggers back, terribly hurt. Roscoe tumbles through the zombie screen, displaying tremendous agility for a big man in full plate armor, and drops a big healing spell directly upon the wounded swordmage.

Vaelyn emits another massive gout of flame at two zombies. Roscoe comments, “I think that one zombie gets a penalty on his reflex save: he’s got gum on the bottom of his shoe.”

Phiravno answers, “That’s all well and good, but I’m getting concerned about Vaelyn: he must have eaten at Taco Bell for a *week* with what he’s emitting. Thank goodness its all coming out of the front end so far. It’ll be bad when that stuff works itself through his digestive tract.” Yenneck reserves comment: he’s too busy going at a Nordic-looking zombie hammer and tongs.

Roscoe yells out, “Hey, guys! Look what I can do!” He calls down a *Flame Strike* on two zombies. The zombies burn with a foul-smelling smoke. Roscoe gives himself a cheer, right until an upset zombie cracks him in the skull. Roscoe complains, “Hey! I think I chipped a tooth! Bad zombie! Bad zombie!” He steps up and gives the zombie a vigorous thumping.

The characters stomp into the remaining zombies and cut them apart, then examine the highly subpar looting situation. They come up with:

- Two *Runehill Hatchets*, technically large-sized but usable as battleaxes by medium creatures;
- One set of *Large Full Plate +1*;
- Seven sets of large masterwork full plate;
- Four sets of large masterwork half plate; and
- Seven large masterwork heavy steel shields

Roscoe mourns, “If only we had someone size large to use some of this gear!”

The Scanderig, Boogeyman of the Dwarves

The characters see a large and small corridor leading out of the cold room. The characters submit to some poor behavior from Yenneck on the subject of the kind of corridors that giants like to use, then elect to travel down the larger corridor. They find themselves in a room that is magically darkened. The room is small, only twenty feet across, but with a ceiling some hundred feet up.

As the characters are looking around, something hammers through a wall and steps in. The characters look at the creature’s bloated frame and the fiery maw in its belly and recognize it as the *scanderig*, a creature out of ancient dwarf lore: it is the dwarf equivalent of the Boogeyman, a creature whose favorite food is misbehaving dwarf children. It rumbles at the characters, “Ha hah haaa.... My lair! Begone!”

Phiravno moves in with the *Staff of Heaven and Earth*. He uses it to injure the creature. The scanderig responds by belching a searing mass of smouldering slag out of its belly maw. Phiravno burns. The others pile in, but they cannot distract the creature. It attempts to consume Phiravno entirely, but fails. He flings himself away from the scanderig’s burning mouth, slashed and bleeding. Maru Maru manages to hammer a dent into it. Roscoe swings his blade into its side with a very satisfying clang. None of them are confident that their efforts are really bothering the scanderig, except for Vaelyn: he manages to hammer it into rubble.

The Hounds of Tindalos

The characters continue into the complex. The runic decorations on the walls become more dense, and more ornate. The corridor ends with a massive carved double door that the characters swiftly determine is sealed with magic. They spend some time trying to open it, with no result.

A side door proves more profitable: it opens onto a giant room with walls smoothed over into even curves. Scorch marks adorn the walls, and a large pillar stands in the center of the chamber. As the characters examine the room, they hear the sounds of excited ground-hogs. Seriously, it sounds like the barking of a hound.

The characters move in. As they do, three creatures with many-jointed limbs and horrific fanged mouths emerge from behind the column. Phiravno recognizes them as *Hounds of Tindalos*: this is why there are no corners in the room.

Yenneck moves forward to engage. The hounds respond by tearing him to shreds. The others duck and look away as gibbets fly. Yenneck reports back, "Don't worry! I'm okay!" Roscoe picks a tooth fragment out of his cheek and raises an eyebrow.

Phiravno runs up and launches *Obscuring Shadow Veil* at one hound, tearing flesh, skin and bone away from its flank. The hound snaps in agony. Roscoe casts *Bless Weapon* upon Yenneck's blade, transforming it into a mighty weapon against evil. He hopes very desperately that the hounds actually are evil. Yenneck swings the blade snicker-snack and proves that Roscoe is correct. The hound howls in a rage born of the furnaces of the maddened birthing of the universe. Yenneck gets a bad nosebleed.

Vaelyn runs up and attempt to purge the hounds with fire. He determines that they can be burned, but actually getting them into contact with the flame is hard.

Phiravno launches his scarf at another hound, inflicting ghastly injury. The creature's ichor hangs in the air like unnatural dust-motes. Yenneck screams as his sanity ebbs, then strikes out with his blessed weapon to divide a hound into four pieces. The creature falls. Even in death its existence is an insult to reality.

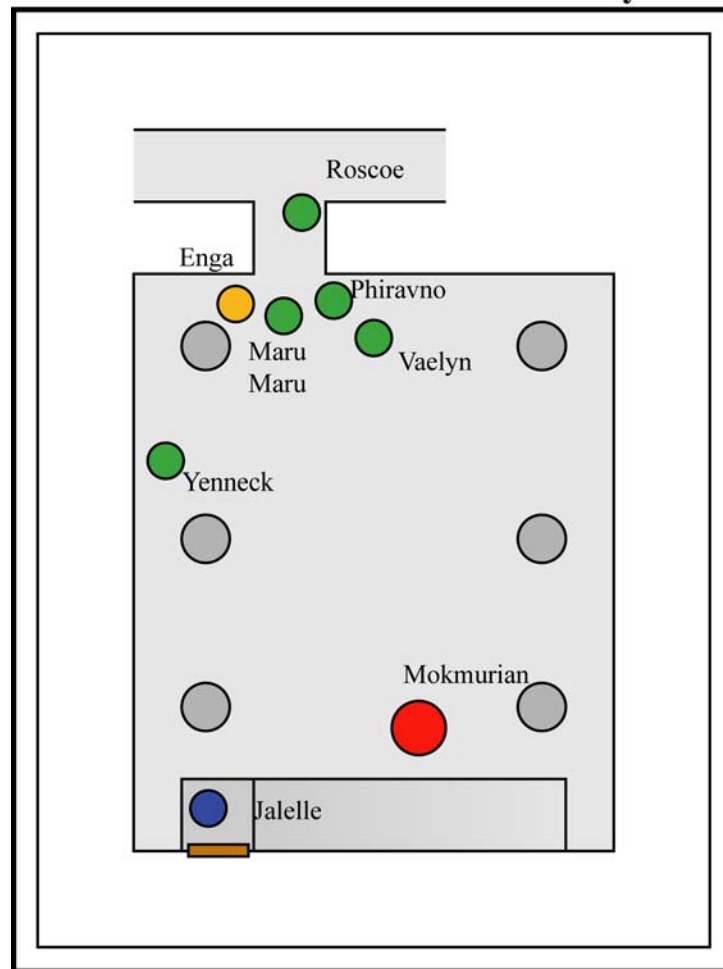
Maru Maru moves in on the last hound and bludgeons it to death. He steps away from the body, his hands covered in strangely-crawling ichor.

Mokmurian's Chambers

The characters move beyond the hounds' chamber into a great hall bordered with columns. The whole place looks like it might have been a lecture hall, but has been converted into an arcanist's laboratory. Floating in the center of the chamber is Mokmurian, the stone giant wizard. The head of the Headless Lord sits upon his desk. Phiravno's sister *Jalelle* sits in the corner of the room.

Mokmurian laughs at the characters, "Ha ha ha! You have come here to your DOOM!"

Mokmurian's Arcane Laboratory



Roscoe groans, "Geez, we only just got here and he's already monologuing!"

Yenneck offers, "At least that means he's not killing us." He moves into the room and hides behind a pillar. Mokmurian responds by casting a spell to fill the room with magical fog, then hitting Yenneck with a *Melf's Acid Arrow*.

Maru Maru charges into the fog and finds that it is almost solid: he is slowed to move five feet per round. Yenneck fights his way in as Roscoe casts *Windwall* to push away a passage through the fog. Mokmurian decides he doesn't like this at all, so he shoots Roscoe with a *Scorching Ray*, then blankets everyone except Yenneck with a *Fireball*.

Enga runs forward, heedless of Maru Maru's safety, and flings an entire *Necklace of Fireballs* at Mokmurian. It is at this point that the characters find that he has lots of fire resistance and a good reflex save: Mokmurian doesn't even give the characters the satisfaction of laughing at them.

Then Phiravno shows the others how to do something useful: he hits Mokmurian with a *Ray of Enervation*, stealing away a variety of high-level spells from him. Phiravno exults, "Four negative levels! Boo-yah! How you like them apples? Uh-huh! It's my birthday! Uh-huh! It's my birthday... Oh. Now I've got his attention..."

Mokmurian agrees through his actions: he hits Phiravno with *Disintegrate*. The feeble shadow that remains behind croaks out, "I'm... still... alive... Don't fuck with... the... Varisian..."

Maru Maru notices that Mokmurian is paying attention to Phiravno, so he runs up on the stairs and flings himself into the air at him. Mokmurian barely even notices the attack. He's too busy paying attention to Phiravno's second *Ray of Enervation*. This gives Roscoe a fine opportunity to hit Mokmurian with a *Dispel Magic*, stripping away *Resist Energy* and *Stoneskin*. Roscoe reports, "The good news is that I killed two of his buffs! The bad news is that he's still got about a dozen left!"

Phiravno is about to congratulate Roscoe when he realizes that Mokmurian has cast *Baleful Polymorph* on him. Phiravno only barely manages to avoid being shapechanged into a bunny, then takes his revenge in the form of four more negative levels from a *Ray of Enervation*.

Roscoe casts *Blood Wind* on Maru Maru, who responds by hitting Mokmurian with a respectable uppercut. Roscoe apologizes, "Sorry, man, but that's the only one of those I've got."

Vaelyn flings Enga at Mokmurian. She hits him and clings on for dear life. She chirps out, "He's grappled now! He's lost his dexterity bonus!" Phiravno is confused: he

doesn't understand where the sparrow-like chirping is coming from, but that doesn't stop him from *Enervating* Mokmurian again. Mokmurian sends a *Scorching Ray* back at him. Phiravno barely dodges it, aware that he can't take too much more punishment.

Roscoe suddenly remembers that the *Staff of Heaven and Earth* can produce a *Air Walk* effect, something that would be very helpful right now. He quickly casts this upon Maru Maru and tells him to go smash! Maru Maru obliges.

Valgrim Battlehorn shows up in the nick of time. He is a bit confused by the mass of solid fog with a five-foot tunnel cut through it. He decides that something must be done, so he summons up a pack of three Arcadian Avengers. They swoop in and attack with swords, totally unaware that Mokmurian's defenses remain unthinkable high. One of them manages to actually connect, thanks to the fact that Mokmurian is distracted by Enga.

Valgrim orders his bar-lgura to cast *Dispel Magic* on Mokmurian, stripping away *Greater Magic Weapon*. There is a weak cheer from the grandstand. And another strike from the Arcadian Avengers. Then Valgrim stomps in and casts *Enlarge* on Vaelyn.

Roscoe follows up on his successful *Air Walk* plan and puts another enchantment on Yenneck, who exploits this by walking up to Mokmurian and slashing him. Mokmurian responds by stepping down and swinging at Phiravno, who dodges to save his life. Phiravno rather desperately draws out his scarf and strikes him, slaying him.

Mokmurian's body falls, then spasms. His head turns to face the characters. In a strangely accented voice, he speaks, "So these are the heroes of the age. More like gasping worms to me. Soon to be crushed into the earth when I return... Karzoug will rise again. Fools, all of you. Is this all you can manage in ten thousand years?" And then he falls still.

The bar-lgura takes a few of Mokmurian's internal organs as souvenirs then vanishes, having fulfilled the terms of his service. The characters are more interested in the rest of the loot:

- *A Wand of Bear's Endurance* (13 charges);
- *A Defending Spell-Storing Greatclub +1* (storing *Vampiric Touch*);
- Bracers of Armor +4;

- *Robe of Runes* (+4 enhancement bonus to INT, and allows recall of up to 4 levels of spells per day. Recalling a spell gives a +2 enhancement bonus to attack rolls and spell DC's for one round);
- *Fog-Cutting Lenses* (goggles that allow the wearer to see through normal and magical fogs and mists, but don't work well in clear air: -4 to hit and 20% miss chance);
- *Bag of Holding (Type II)*;
- A huge and ancient-looking key;
- 500 gold pieces in diamond dust;
- Mokmurian's spellbooks (most of the spells in the Player's Handbook, up to 7th level spells);
- Various books on spellcraft;
- Various arcane lab equipment weighing several tons (worth 1500 gold);
- 12,000 gold pieces in a chest;
- 1100 platinum pieces in a chest;
- An amber and sapphire necklace worth 4000 gold;
- A set of ivory runestones worth 1400 gold;
- A scroll of *Contact Other Plane*;

The characters also find a single page map showing the Lost Coast of Varisia, with four locations marked. One of those is on Sandpoint and reads, "Hellfire Flume Ruins. Foundation stones from each would know where the traitor Xalasia dwelt, and perhaps where he hid his key to Runeforge."

Valgrim Battlehorn thinks carefully, but he has never heard of Runeforge. Neither has Maru Maru.

Maru Maru takes the *Bracers of Armor +4*.

The Sealed Doors

The characters try the great key upon the double doors. The doors open upon a brightly lit chamber with carven walls. Padded seats surround a thirty-foot hole in the floor.

As the characters enter, a three-legged clockwork moves towards them and addresses them in Thassalonian. Valgrim tells the others that this is a library. He asks the librarian for information about Runeforge. Valgrim learns that Runeforge was once a legendary place of learning and discovery for students of the arcane, originally created as a place where the agents of the seven Runelords could perform research. It was well defended, not least because the Runelords were terribly competitive and prone to sabotaging each others' projects. Their last great project was to find a way for the Runelords to escape the impending destruction of their empire. Each Runelord's faction came up with a separate answer for their own patron. The one thing the library does not include is the actual location of Runeforge.

Valgrim continues to research, asking about the *Runelord Karzoug*. He learns only that he was the Runelord of Greed, who ruled over an area called Shalast in the ancient Thassalonian Empire.

Valgrim's third question is on the identity of *Xalasia*. All he learns is that near the end of the Thassalonian Empire, a man named Xalasia commanded one of several Hellfire Flumes on behalf of the *Runelord Alaznist*. He was apparently allowed fairly wide berth so long as he was able to come up with improved means for the production of sinspawn.

The Runelord Alaznist was the Runelord of Wrath. She ruled the nation of Bakrakhan, which shared its eastern border with Shalast. The two nations were locked in enduring war until Bakrakhan was destroyed and sank under the sea.

Valgrim also looks for a way to destroy the *Runeslave Cauldron*. He learns that under the Runelords the giant races were used as expendable labor. The Runeslave Cauldrons were constructed in Gastash, the Domain of Gluttony. Some of the Runelords used them mercilessly upon their giantish slaves to ensure their loyalty. As far as Valgrim is able to determine there is no specific technique to destroy a cauldron. He concludes that flinging it into a volcano would be a good start.

Valgrim deduces that *Xin-Shalast* was probably the capital of the nation of Shalast. He asks the library about its location. Xin-Shalast is a legendary lost city rumored to be located in the Kodar Mountains, one of seven that made up the ancient Thassalonian Empire. The Palace of Xin-Shalast stands upon the mythical mountain

Mhar Massif which pierces the sky and lies at the headwaters of the Sacred River *Alph*, which is sacred to Desna. Apparently even in the days of the Thassalonian Empire the location of Xin-Shalast was a secret – no maps show its location.

Mhar Massif is said to serve as a bridge to strange realms beyond Golarian. The Lower City of Xin-Shalast stands at its foot. The Palace of Karzoug is at its peak. The mountain is said to be the site where a god attempted to break through from another world into Golarian, only to be barely stopped. The entire mountain still shows the scars of this event: the visage of the god is stamped into the south face of the mountain, reaching up 1500 feet. The original Runelord of Greed *Kaladurnae* selected this mountain for this capital. Each successive Runelord of Greed ordered artisans to reshape the features of the face to match their own. But the entire place stands underneath a magical effect keeping it from the eyes of the curious.

Jalelle's Story

Phiravno's sister Jalelle was originally abducted from the family home by the Skinsaw Cultists. From there she fell into the hands of *Xanesha* and the lamiae. Xanesha finally handed her over to Mokmurian as a gift. Since then she has been working for him as a translator.

She offers one other interesting tidbit: there is a stone giant elder taking refuge in the *Shrine of the Ancestors*, a site holy to the stone giants that Mokmurian had urged the giants to neglect. The characters walk to the shrine, using Mokmurian's head as a safe passage.

The characters find *Conna*, the stone giant elder, at the Shrine. She is appropriately grateful when she sees that the characters have killed Mokmurian, but is not eager to travel to Sandpoint with them. She claims that she is the only one who will be able to bring order and stability to the giant tribes. She wants to bring them back to the ancient ways. She agrees to help the characters later, if they can bring a foundation stone. The characters leave Mokmurian's head with her and extract a promise from her to take the Runeslave Cauldron and dump it into a volcano. She agrees.

With that, the characters pack up and head back to Fort Rannek.

The End of the Session

10th level characters each gain 5500 experience points. 11th level characters each gain 4304 experience points. Everyone except Yenneck moves to 11th level.