

Rise of the Runelords Session Summary 08/17/2008

Attendance

Paul emerges from *Clone Wars* musing, “The way they did all the close-ups as if the whole thing was done in oil paints was very interesting, and it really pointed out the fact that Obi-Wan is a terrible lying bastard.” *Chris* (Roscoe Dillon) leaps to Obi-Wan’s defense by pointing out, “That’s not surprising – all of the Jedi were lying bastards. He’s just a product of his environment.” *Bruce* (Yenneck Grumman) offers, “I don’t know. If I’d been that General that captured Obi-Wan, first thing I would have done is to have him encased in carbonite. Or concrete. Whatever.”

Ernest (Valgrim Battlehorn) shows up later and tells everyone, “I’m here to sow confusion and dissent! And when it’s done, I’ll describe what I’ve done as ‘management’. Whaddaya think?” The others find that they are too busy cracking each others’ skulls open to extract the sweet, sweet brain-meats inside.

Matt (Vaelyn) and *Patrick* (Maru Maru) show up eventually.

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Class & Level</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Yenneck Grumman	Bruce	Human	Ranger 9, Warblade 5	Another Chelaxian, a Black Arrow
Roscoe Dillon	Chris	Human	Cleric 13, Warblade 1	Shoanti, Skull tribe. Cleric of Gorum
Phiravno	Chuck	Human	Swordsage 5; Swashbuckler 5; Rogue 4	Varisian. Recently killed by a lamia, hopefully soon back with us.
Artkel Certor	Ed	Human	Fighter 9	Shoanti, Spider clan.
Maru Maru	Patrick	Human	Monk 9, Tattooed Monk 5	Shoanti, Sun clan
Valgrim Battlehorn	Ernest	Dwarf	Conjurer 3; Master Specialist 2; Paragnost 1; Apostle 1; Malconvoker 7	Fascinated by all manner of unusual creatures.
Vaelyn	Matt	Human	Gold Dragon Shaman 14	Shoanti, Sun clan

Approaching Xin-Shalast

The characters look over the grand city of Xin-Shalast and reflect upon their tactics. They are able to see hundreds of giants of different types living in the wreckage

of the city. *Valgrim Battlehorn* volunteers, “I have a great idea! I could bind a shadow demon! Now, I haven’t summoned one of those before because their best trick is making everyone within sixty feet insane. That doesn’t play too well in dungeons, but it could be really good out here.”

Roscoe Dillon thinks, “I like the idea of disrupting a lot of giants, but even confused and insane giants sound like bad news.”

Valgrim continues, “There’s one other detail. Some of the creatures killed by a shadow demon will rise up as allips. It can control up to nine of the things, but after that they’re on their own.”

Yenneck Grumman asks, “What exactly is an allip?”

Roscoe explains, “It’s a dangerous undead that makes people confused and crazy. It might be a worse problem than the original giant.”

Phiravno shudders, “This could be a cure that’s worse than the disease.”

Roscoe defends Valgrim’s plan, “But we’ve seen several groups of giants down there, and I bet they’re not all friendly with each other. Anything that sets them to fighting with each other helps us out.”

Maru Maru looks down at the city and comments, “Do you people realize that there’s a jungle covering part of that city? And that it is right next to a glacial flow? Does this concern anyone else? No? Okay, fine then.”

The Scouting Mission

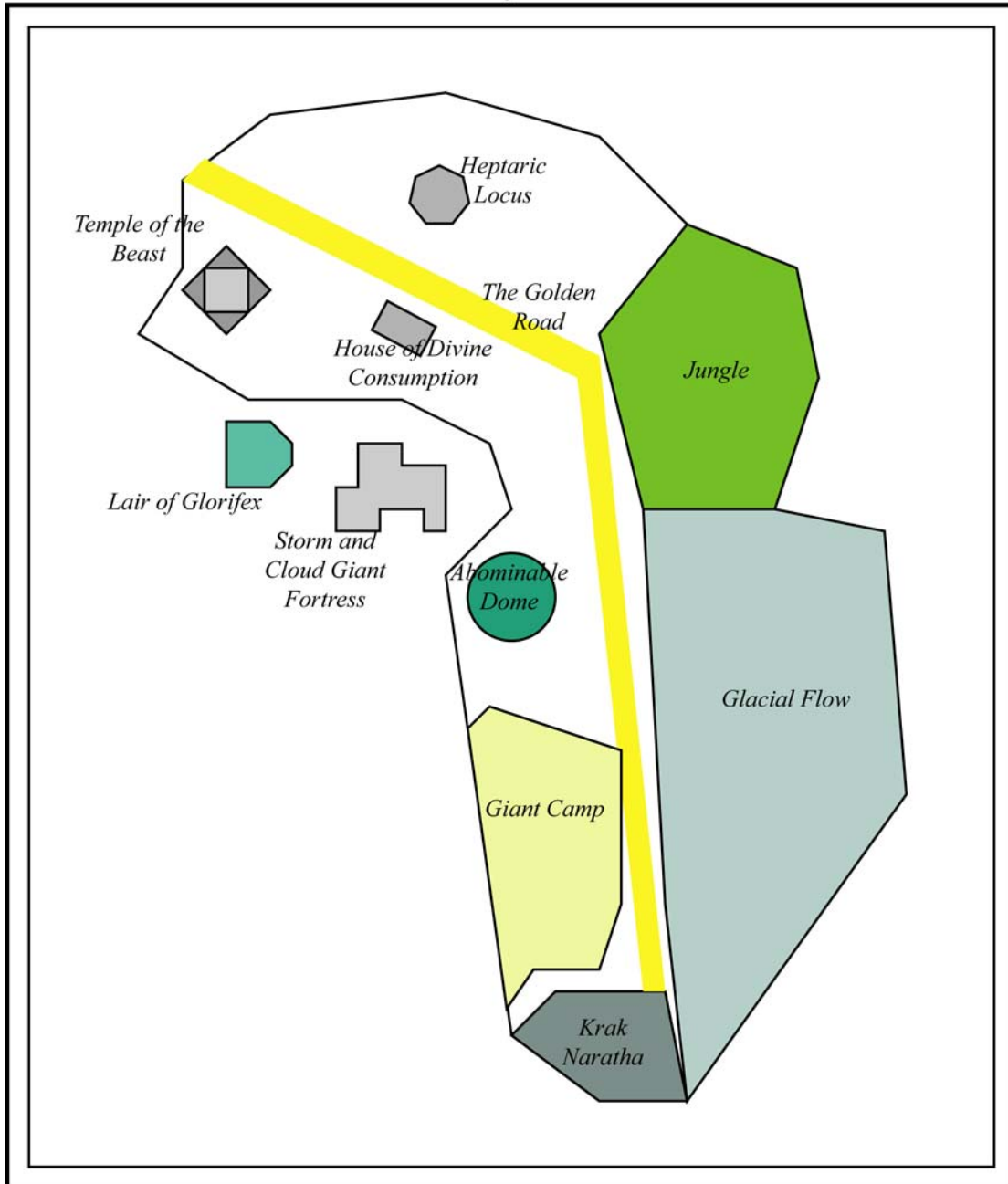
After some discussion, the characters decide to send some of their number down into the giant-dominated section of the city in a scouting mission. *Phiravno*, *Yenneck* and *Maru Maru* slip into a ruined building on the edge of the giant camp, then signal back. Valgrim teleports himself and *Vaelyn* in.

Vaelyn tries spying on the giants with his *Wand of Clairvoyance/Clairaudience* while Yenneck perches on the building roof to keep a lookout. Yenneck spots one heavily-tattooed stone giant talking to the other stone giants. He points the giant out to Vaelyn, who quickly learns that the giant is trying to foment rebellion against “that so-called Rune-lord” and leave this accursed city.

The characters immediately start plotting to determine how to exploit this incipient revolution. Yenneck suggests, “We need to Swift Boat the Runelord!” The

others aren't totally sure what he means by this until he explains that his plan involves killing random stone giants and leaving sirhadron scars and warnings to not betray the Runelord carved on the bodies.

The Grand City of Xin-Shalast



The others like this plan because it involves killing giants, but Roscoe offers an alternate plan of having himself and Valgrim talk to the rebel giant leader with *Message* spells. Much to their surprise, the giant agrees to the meet. He steps into the building

chosen as the meeting place and thunders, “I am Gyukak! Who are you, mysterious whisperer?”

Roscoe is very grateful to find that *Gyukak* speaks common. Gyukak explains that he is completely dedicated to the cause of giantish freedom, and he has a plan. All he needs is a distraction to occupy the runegiant troops and he can lead his people out of the valley. He suggests that the characters should either attack the blue dragon *Glorifex* or attempt to scale the Mar-Massif. He describes several features of Xin-Shalast:

- The fortress of Krak Naratha at the mouth of the valley is garrisoned by lamia and runegiant soldiers.
- The Jungle is an unnatural place sustained by hot vents. Giants and lamia sent in tend not to come back.
- The Abominable Dome is occupied by yetis (also known as abominable snowmen).
- The House of Divine Consumption was once the greatest temple to the Runelord Karzoug. It is now being reconstructed by lamiae.
- The Temple of the Beast is dangerous to enter – avoid it.

The characters attempt to negotiate an agreement with Gyukak. The negotiations hit a bit of a snag when the characters realize that Gyukak’s plan is to move his giants back into their traditional range on the Storval Plateau, abandoned all these many years. The various Shoanti characters point out that their people currently live on the plateau. Valgrim offers, “Well, that depends on what you mean by ‘live’.” As the Shoanti characters get more and more upset, Yenneck points out that from the Chelaxian point of view there really isn’t anyone important living on the Storval Plateau anyway. On the other hand, Gyukak is perfectly willing to give the characters free passage through his camp before he takes his people out of the city.

The characters slip past the giants on their way to the Abominable Dome.

The Shrine of the Abominable Snowmen

Valgrim Battlehorn suggests that the characters should attack the Yetis in the Abominable Dome. The route there takes them two and a half hours. The structure is a stone dome 500 feet high, capped with a second dome to bring the total height to 700

feet. The interior of the dome is entirely open, with a heap of rubble 100 feet high at the center. The whole heap is run through with tunnels and caves, and is topped with a crude humanoid shape constructed from bones bound up with sinew.

Vaelyn takes in the scene. His voice is almost inaudible, “Abominable...”

Valgrim isn’t listening. He’s too busy flipping through his notes and saying things like, “This looks like a good fight for some pain devils!”

As the characters approach, three yetis clamber out from among the gaps in the rubble. They are towering humanoids with thick white fur and slavering toothy maws. Yenneck is overcome, “Awww... Aren’t they adorable! Who’s the cute yeti? Who’s the pretty yeti? Ohhhh, *you* are! *You* are!” Roscoe rolls his eyes and once again wonders if brain damage is a prerequisite for entering ranger school.

Valgrim doesn’t concern himself with this sort of problem. He simply casts *Cloudkill* on the yetis. He assures the others, “That cloud will keep on going into the mound, which should roust out any other yetis that are in there!”

Yenneck comments, “Control your aggro, dude!”

Maru Maru howls a blood-curdling battlecry and rushes at the yetis. Two of them charge him in response. One yeti claws and grabs hold of Maru Maru, dragging him close and squeeeeezeing him. From the distance, Valgrim sings out, “We like to squeeze it, squeeze it!” Maru Maru just screams.

Yenneck Grumman screams too, but he screams in anger! He charges into a yeti, unleashing his horrible *Elder Mountain Hammer*. The yeti shrugs and absorbs the blow.

Phiravno dances up to the yeti and rips it to shreds with his scarf. Yenneck’s jaw drops as he sees the Varisian flense off yeti skin and yeti flesh with nothing more than a few scraps of silk. The yeti roars with agony.

Valgrim Battlehorn cries out, “Legion!” and summons up a pair of fiendish giant crocodiles.

Yenneck observes, “Won’t those crocodiles simply curl up and freeze to death in the cold?”

Valgrim calls out, “No! For they are fiendish and have cold resistance! Your real-world biology is worthless in the face of magic!” As he boasts, a fiendish crocodile

tears the spine out of the yeti Phiravno savaged. The yeti collapses into two misshapen pieces.

The second fiendish crocodile latches down upon a second yeti and shakes it vigorously in its jaws. The yeti squeezes Maru Maru, but his *Fire Shield* strikes it down.

The third yeti gives Yenneck a vicious clawing, leaving him torn and bloodied. Yenneck responds with an array of attacks that the yeti barely bothers to acknowledge. Phiravno moves in to help out, leaving the yeti critically wounded.

The second array of yetis falls upon Valgrim's crocodiles. The crocodiles find themselves in a realm of suffering. Vaelyn moves in to help, which he interprets as spraying fire across both the yetis and the crocodiles. The critically wounded yeti burns and falls.

Yenneck and Phiravno move in on a yeti. Yenneck stabs the creature, distracting it so Phiravno can slash its throat and utterly destroy it. The other characters move on the single surviving yeti. The process doesn't take long.

Phiravno cuts down the last of the yetis, then looks up at the thirty-foot bone statue. It leers at him. He tells the others, "It was looking at me!" Valgrim sends his crocodiles to destroy the thing.

Yenneck reports that even though only six yetis attacked the characters there are signs that many more are in the area. This is not enough warning to stop the characters from spending three hours searching for loot. They find:

- A mithril breastplate.
- A cobra-shaped platinum armband with rubies for eyes (worth 2000 gold).
- A *Ring of the Ram* (with 5 charges).
- A *Vicious Kukri* +2 with the unholy symbol of Lamashtu etched on the blade.
- A *Bronze Griffin Figurine of Wondrous Power*.

During this time, both Vaelyn and Phiravno are fatigued by the low air pressure. Vaelyn uses his powers to restore them.

Morgeev of the Spared

While the characters search the Abominable Dome they hear the rattle of falling rock. They see a humanoid creature with a blubbery and soft body picking his way through the rubble. Vaelyn calls out, “Look! He’s a walrus man!”

Valgrim greets the creature.

He introduces himself as *Morgeev* and explains that the characters are the ones who have been prophesied to lead his people, the Spared, to freedom. His people have lived in tunnels dug underneath the city for ages, but recently their tunnels have broken into parts of the Hypogeum, the undercity that lies under the city. A creature they call the *Hidden Beast* escaped from the Hypogeum into their tunnels and is now killing them.

Valgrim offers up, “It’s a mole-man. And I think that having access to the tunnels underneath the city would be a pretty badass advantage. Let’s follow him!” The others agree.

Morgeev leads the characters across into the portion of the city buried in rubble. He explains that it is the former Slave Quarter and promises to show the characters a passage directly to the lair of the Hidden Beast. He tells the characters that the Hidden Beast has dominated many of the Spared, but there are many holes in its defenses.

The Earth Cyst

The characters follow Morgeev’s directions into the lair of the Hidden Beast. The place was once a grand gallery, long since buried by the ice flow. A desiccated skeleton sits upon a rotting throne. It sees the characters and booms out, “Which one of you would give your life to me?” A variety of enslaved skulks stand around the edges of the chamber.

Maru Maru simply runs to the attack. Yenneck follows him, attacking one of the skulks. He is more than a little upset to see that the creature is almost completely resistant to his attacks: only the fire damage affects it, and even that heals at an accelerated rate. A pair of skulks strike back, inflicting heavy damage and draining two levels. Yenneck is rather shocked and surprised. Then Vaelyn spews flame across three skulks and Maru Maru. Only one skulk is not fast enough to avoid the burning entirely.

Valgrim casts *See Invisible* and notices that there is also a huge monstrous creature with ten tentacles lurking in the corner. He strongly suspects that it is the boss of the situation.

Roscoe decides that the skulks are likely to be undead. He invokes the power of Gorum and obliterates two of them. They turn into smoke and ash.

The Hidden Beast decides that now is the time to appear. It casts a *Lightning Bolt*, catching Yenneck, Vaelyn and Roscoe in the path. It has a *Mirror Image* spell going, so when it shows up it shows up in spades.

Valgrim responds by summoning three vor-yugoloths to oppose the Beast. The yugoloths' array of attacks are sufficient to peel away all of the images, and even extend to a bit of damage on the Hidden Beast.

Yenneck rather desperately fences with one skulk to no useful effect. The other surviving skulk moves in to help. Yenneck only barely manages to escape alive, and not even that alive.

Roscoe notices that the skulks are tearing Yenneck to pieces. He calls down the wrath of Gorum on them, destroying one of them.

Then the Hidden Beast moves into the fray, targeting Maru Maru. Maru Maru confidently proclaims, "I am invulnerable! I have a 35 AC! Nothing can touch me!" Then the Hidden Beast hits him eight times, pulverizing him and leaving him level-drained. Maru Maru moans weakly, only barely comforted by the fact that his flame shield inflicted damage back upon the Hidden Beast. But then the Beast grapples him and constricts him. Maru Maru cries, "I just took ninety-seven points of damage... sobb..."

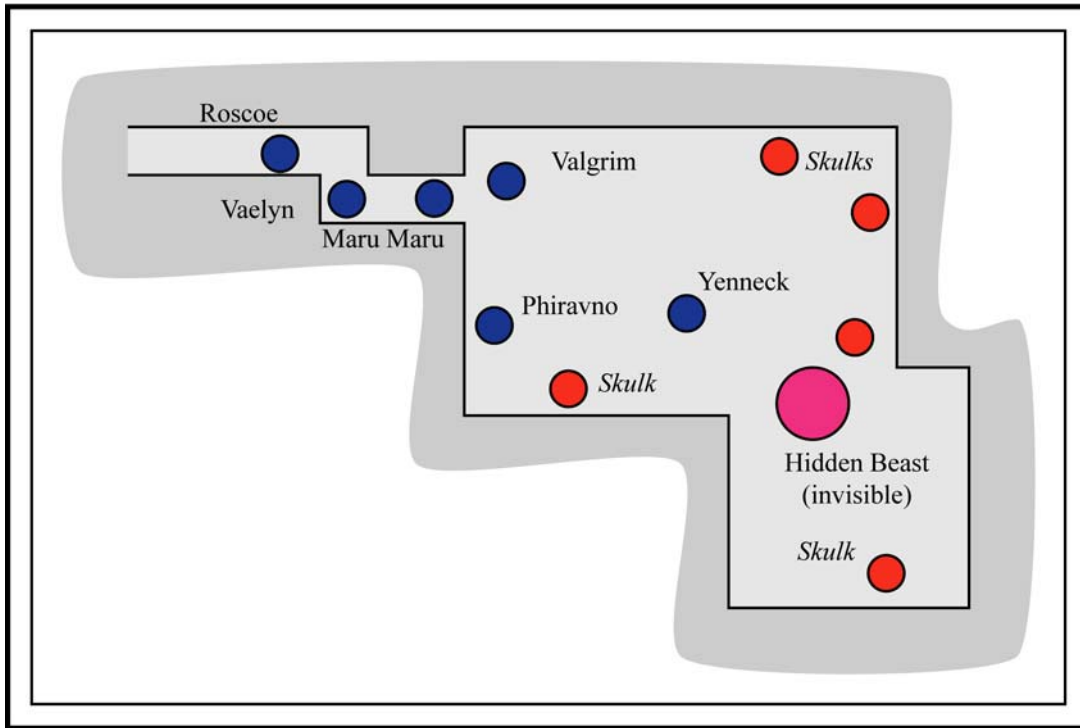
Valgrim calls out, "Do you want out?" He can't understand Maru Maru's response, so he casts *Baleful Transposition* and swaps the last skulk with Maru Maru. Valgrim hopes to goodness that the decapod Hidden Beast rams its ovipositor straight through the skulk.

The Hidden Beast lets the skulk go. Yenneck sighs with disappointment. The skulk moves around and attempts to hit Vaelyn. The dragon shaman's armor saves him. He responds by attempting to roast the Hidden Beast with his fiery breath. The Beast acknowledges the attack, barely.

Roscoe obliterates the last skulk with the power of his god. He tells the others, “Okay, I’ve done my part. You guys take out the Hidden Beast”

Phiravno launches his *Obscuring Shadow Strike* at the Hidden Beast, delivering a serious wound to it. The Beast responds by striking him ten times, critically wounding itself on Phiravno’s fire shield in the process. Fragments of Phiravno fly across the room.

Lair of the Hidden Beast



Valgrim, horrified by Phiravno’s death, casts a *Dispel Magic* and eliminates the Hidden Beast’s *Displacement*. Then his yugoloths slam the Beast three times, inflicting minimal damage.

Yenneck moves up and unleashes the *Elder Mountain Hammer* against it, slashing clean through its body. The Beast dies with a surprised expression on its face, then transforms into a cloud of gas that seeps into holes in the dais.

Roscoe swiftly casts *Revivify* on Phiravno, bringing him back to life, while Valgrim orders his yugoloths to rip up the dais. They tear it apart to reveal a shaft into the ground, ten feet across. Vaelyn swiftly reverses two of Yenneck’s negative levels and two of Maru Maru’s negative levels.

Feeling much better, Maru Maru attaches a rope on the edge of the hole and clambers down the hole. He finds the Hidden Beast at the bottom, helpless as it reforms its body. He destroys it, then loots it:

- *Bracers of Armor +5.*
- *A Ring of Invisibility.*
- *A Sirhadron Ring.*
- Four sets of *Padded Armor +1*
- Four *Rings of Protection +1*
- Four *Bucklers +1*

The Sirhadron Ring is a plain gold ring adorned with seven black sapphires in a sirhadron symbol. It grants a +3 deflection bonus to AC, a +3 resistance bonus to saving throws, provides a continual *Endure Elements* effect, and allows the wearer to change the appearance of their clothing at will.

The Prophecy Is Fulfilled!

The characters go back to Morgeev and ask for lodgings. He is very grateful, and is more than willing to provide the characters with a “very safe” tunnel to sleep in. Along the way, he takes them to see the murals showing the heroes that are meant to save Morgeev and his people. The characters note that the murals are incredibly crude. They also notice that the other Spared never seemed to have believed in the prophecy, though considering that the Hidden Beast had been preying upon them for thirty years they are willing to treat the characters as honored guests.

The characters also divide up some of the treasure. Valgrim takes the *Ring of Invisibility*. Vaelyn takes the *Sirhadron Ring*. Yenneck takes the *Bronze Griffin Figurine of Wondrous Power*.

When asked, Morgeev explains that the Jungle is “Very bad, very bad! There is nothing there except the Green! Hates all animal life! Its goal is to grow over all of the world! It is very, very patient!” The other characters reflect that the Green isn’t making much progress towards its goal.

Morgeev also tells the characters that there is a secret tunnel up to near Karzoug’s Head. The only problem is that an immense mountain roper lives along it, subsiding

upon a diet of crag spiders and adventurers. Phiravno moans, “Does everything that lives around here have tentacles?”

Morgeev goes on to explain that there are many dangers associated with going up the mountain. In particular, the tunnel opens out just underneath the Death Zone where the air becomes too thin to breathe. The fortress is also defended by the Occlusion Field, a force that pushes folk away from the place, like gravity. It also creates intense vertigo, and once every minute pulses to create intense, wracking pain. It is only those who bear the signs of the Runelord’s favor who can approach through the defenses.

The characters decide to continue on their current path of righteous assassination, starting at the House of Divine Consumption. Morgeev is not happy with that plan: he says that the place is inhabited not only by the regular lamia but also the harri-dans and matriarchs of the race. Valgrim picks up on this and delivers an impressively scholarly lecture on the various offshoots of the fragmented blood of the lamia race. The characters conclude that attacking the lamia will be long and difficult, and that attacking the dragon Glorifex is going to be both easier and more profitable. With this idea, Morgeev tells the characters that there is a secret way into the old Tax Building where Glorifex lairs.

Lots and Lots of Summoning

Valgrim decides that attacking a dragon requires some fire support. He starts summoning up glabrezu demons. The first two decline his commands, leaving him with the third, who is more than happy to sign up and explains, “My name is Ned!”

Roscoe comments, “I bet he likes cake. And he’s always hungry.”

The Attack on the Blue Dragon

The characters approach the Tax Building through a secret passage Morgeev shows them. Vaelyn opens the secret door to see that the *Alarm* in the passage has already alerted the dragon. As soon as the door opens the characters get hit by a bolt of lightning.

Valgrim responds quickly, hitting Glorifex with a *Reverse Gravity*, sending the creature crashing into the ceiling. His glabrezu follows up with a *Chaos Hammer* that does practically nothing. And then he summons up two amnizus that blanket the area

with *Quickened Fireballs*. Glorifex barely acknowledges the attack, then clobbers one amnizu with a bite.

The characters charge forward to attack the dragon. Valgrim's glabrezu sets the tone by *Teleporting* directly behind the dragon and thundering out, "Squeal, piggie!" in Abyssal.

Valgrim casts *Enlarge Person* on Vaelyn and watches as the dragon shaman storms in and swings his earthbreaker at Glorifex. His strike is strong and clean, but still glances off the creature's scales. Glorifex responds by flapping into the air, lining up half of the group, and blasting them with lightning. Valgrim scuttles out of the way, grateful for the *Energy Resistance* Roscoe gave him.

Yenneck charges headlong into Glorifex, unleashing the *Elder Mountain Hammer*. His blade smashes through scale and skin, leaving the great lizard lightly wounded.

Roscoe moves in and shoots a *Moon Bolt* at Glorifex, stealing away four points of the great lizard's strength. Valgrim backs him up by ordering another volley of amnizu *Quickened Fireballs*, followed with a *Greater Dispel Magic* to strip away Glorifex's *Mage Armor*. And then his glabrezu catches the dragon in a pincer action (as it were).

Glorifex turns to Yenneck and attacks all-out. Yenneck staggers and bleeds, lashes out with the *Bonecrusher*, and moves out of range. Phiravno calls out, "Do not fear, my feeble nature-loving comrade! I shall strike the miserable worm down and save your precious skin!" He executes the *Shadow Blade Technique* and leaves Glorifex critically wounded. He reassures Yenneck, "I have its attention now! You can come back!"

Roscoe steps in and casts *Righteous Wrath of the Faithful*, granting everyone some very nice bonuses. The glabrezu is so inspired by the chaotic aura of divinity that Roscoe inspires that it steps straight into the dragon, tearing it to steaming shreds. The characters promptly loot the body, finding:

- A *Sirhadron Ring*.
- A *Ring of Cold Resistance (30)*.
- 64,000 silver coins.
- 21,000 gold coins.

- 520 platinum coins.
- A golden coffer worth 1400 gold pieces.
- 35 assorted gemstones worth a total of 12,000 gold.
- A silver bracelet worth 25 gold pieces.
- A jade comb worth 300 gold pieces.
- A pair of red silk gloves embroidered with gold thread worth 800 gold pieces.
- A glass display case for the gloves worth 100 gold pieces.
- A suit of masterwork mithril half-plate.
- A masterwork breastplate
- A suit of *Banded Mail* +2.
- A *Wand of Lightning Bolt* (CL 6, 23 charges).
- A leather bag containing four frozen *Potions of Cure Light Wounds*.
- A frozen *Potion of Owl's Wisdom*.
- A flask of *Oil of Magic Vestment* +4.
- A bejeweled ivory scroll tube worth 300 gold pieces.
- A scroll of *Unseen Servant*.
- A scroll of *Keen Edge*.
- A *Ring of Evasion*.
- A *Rod of Extend Metamagic*.

Once the dragon's body is stripped of wealth, the characters haul it out of the fortress and set it on fire in full view of the valley. This prompts a great alarm from below. The characters are able to see lamia, including giant lamia harridans, streaming out of the structures below. Decrepit-looking lamia kuchrime flap into the air, so Valgrim sends the two amnizu up to engage them while the characters *Teleport* to safety. Valgrim leaves behind a *Cloudkill*, a *Freezing Fog* and a *Solid Fog* in Glorifex's chamber as a surprise for the lamia forces.

The End of the Session

The session ends with the characters safely ensconced back in the tunnels. 13th level characters each gain 5958 experience points. 14th level characters each gain 4754 experience points. This is enough to bring Valgrim up to 14th level, finally.