

## JADE REGENT SESSION SUMMARY 07/08/2012

### ATTENDANCE

*Chris* comments, “I was running *Rise of the Runelords* for my Friday group. They finally got to the clock tower encounter with the lamia matriarch and all her gnarly spells.”

*Bruce* groans, “I remember her... she almost killed all of us!”

*Paul* exults, “I remember her! She almost killed all of you!”

*Patrick* comments, “I bet the Friday group was much more successful and used better planning than we did.”

*Chris* explains, “They have an almost all-barbarian party, except for one occasional participant who plays a cleric.”

*Paul* muses, “They must be very familiar with the character generation process.”

*Ernest* arrives. He is crestfallen to hear that he missed hearing about squirrels getting it on in Bruce’s front yard.

*Tim* appears a bit later, explaining, “I’ve brought tea! Migraine tea!”

*Paul* notes, “That’s just the sort of tea I’ve been looking for... tea that gives me a headache. Brew some up right now!”

<i>Character</i>	<i>Player</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Level</i>
Harwynian Fallingleaf	Bruce	Elegant Elven Transmuter	7
Yoshihiro Kaijitsu	Ernest	Tien Reckless Mounted Archer-Knight	7
Jacob Frostfang	Matt	Ale-Loving Kellid Party Sorcerer	7
V’lk	Chris	Mute Feral Elf Stabber (and Oracle)	2/5
Gobo Samarillian	Patrick	Blind Gnomish Fortuneteller	7
Bjorn the Unlucky	Tim	Ulfen Woodsman	7

### INTO THE STORM TOWER

The characters have managed to defeat *Katiana*. Even though she opposed their goals, even though she was some kind of Outsider, the characters are forced to admit that

she probably wasn't a member of the *Army of the Five Winds* and most likely wasn't an oni. *Yoshihiro* speculates, "She might have been a swan-may!"

*Harwynian* is skeptical, "She didn't behave like most swan-mays I've heard of."

*V'lk* explains by gesture that he is going to carry along *Katiana's* wings as trophies. His desire is to use them, plus the scalps of the enemies he's collected so far, to make a particularly ghoulish cloak. *Yoshihiro* makes him stash the wings in the back of one of the cargo wagons so they don't get in the way.

The characters dice for her *Headband of Mental Superiority* +2 (bonus to INT, CHA and WIS, plus a +2 bonus to Use Magic Device). *Gobo Samarillian* wins the contest, and as a gesture of politeness he gives *V'lk* his *Headband of Charisma* +2.

*V'lk* suggests that the group should start using *Gobo* in master-blaster configuration with either *Jacob* or *Bjorn*. He very pointedly does not include *Gobo* in these discussions, most of which involve diagrams of a sort of gnome-sized backpack that the larger characters could wear. He is grateful for this discretion when *Bjorn* suggests, "Instead of a backpack, perhaps we could trade out for a simple leash?" *V'lk* strongly suspects that this isn't legal because *Gobo* is a gnome, not a halfling.

The group decides that *Harwynian* should carry the *Cube of Frost Resistance* because he normally hangs in the center of the group and *Yoshihiro* should carry the *Gem of Brightness* because he needs to be more "clubby". Because the *Cube* can be left on all the time to create a comfortable environment *Harwynian* becomes a lot more popular than he's ever been before.

*Katiana's* solid metal bikini (so-called *Breastplate* +1) goes to *Shalelu Andosana*. All the characters who aren't actively trying to positively impress her look forward to the day when she starts wearing it... what there is of it.

## ACROSS THE HIGH ICE

It is a five hundred mile trip from the Storm Tower to Dead Man's Dome where the caravan will again pick up the Trail of Angafye. At one time there was a mighty watch tower on the top of Dead Man's Dome, but that was a long time ago: two centuries ago the tower was attacked by an army of giants and undeads. One lone hero delayed the savage monster army to allow the remaining caravans to escape, then collapsed the tower

on top of the attacking force. The story claims that the lone hero still guards the ruins, possibly in horrific ghostly form.

The total journey would take 13 days at normal travel speeds, except that every other day the characters must slow to allow some hunting. With this, the journey will take 17 days through the bitter cold. Most of the characters are heavily dressed in furs and cloaks, except for Harwynian. Ever so often, random caravan members just walk up to Harwynian to hug him (and thereby enjoy the effects of the *Cube of Frost Resistance*).

## **THE NORTHERN LIGHTS BRING VISITORS**

Late one night the Northern Lights appear above the caravan. The whole sky ripples with colors and shapes. On the fifth day, a pair of glowing orbs descends from the aurora. The orbs claim that they are omens of good luck, and that they will help guide the caravan safely through the High Ice. They state that they are wind spirits.

Gobo doesn't trust them. He thinks that they are a bit too eager to help.

Bjorn announces, "They are will-o-wisps! They are aberrations! Killed my second cousin's brother once! Attack! Attack!" He flings his starknife at them.

Yoshihiro has bought their story, "Hey! Behave, Bjorn!" He finds himself in a strange dilemma: who should he trust more – Bjorn, or a random wandering monster? Bjorn's record on this sort of decision hasn't been particularly good in the past.

Fortunately, his debate is short-lived as the will-o-wisps attack. They swoop down upon Bjorn and electrify him! The others are impressed with the beautiful way the electrical flares outline Bjorn's twitching body against the harsh natural backdrop. Harwynian resolves to remember the image so he might immortalize it in paint later on.

Yoshihiro yells out, "Hey! Leave our ranger alone!" He unleashes a flight of arrows at them. The will-o-wisps evade easily. Several other characters unleash attacks, again to no avail. Harwynian casts *Haste* in hopes of changing the situation a bit.

Gobo demonstrates one way to hurt a will-o-wisp: he brings down the dark vacuum of the stellar void upon them. They are quite put out by this display and turn their attacks upon him. Gobo crackles from the electric discharge. Bjorn rushes to help the gnome, successfully stabbing a wisp with his starknife.

Jacob triggers a cold *Elemental Aura* and moves adjacent to the wisps. He is disappointed by his lack of success. Harwynian tests out a *Slow* spell and notes that it is also completely ineffective against the wisps. Gobo rolls his eyes and casts *Protection from Energy* while V'lk heals him.

Then the wisps turn invisible and flee fifty feet straight up. They have no taste for direct confrontation. Yoshihiro follows them with arrows, destroying one of them. Harwynian casts *Cat's Grace* on him to help out against the steadily-building range penalties. The second, critically wounded wisp disappears into the aurora as Yoshihiro fires a final shot. He isn't able to tell how his final arrow does (though he tells the characters that he hit).

## **FAREWELL TO THE BOREAL EXPANSE**

On the seventh day of the journey the characters see a mirage. None of them understand what it is supposed to be a mirage of, so they ignore it. Two days later they depart the Boreal Expanse, which turns out to be the highest and coldest part of the High Ice. It is cold enough that it is dotted with naturally-occurring gateways to the Elemental Planes of Ice and Air, making mephits and elementals relatively common.

It is about this time that a blizzard sweeps down upon the caravan, forcing them to circle the wagons and take refuge. The characters' native guide *Ulf* assures them that the storms can last for days. Even hunkering down isn't completely safe – the caravan can end up getting buried under the snow. The characters take a vote and elect to continue on, protected by the *Cube* and the *Banner*. They travel two abreast, with the tail wagons protected by magic.

The first two days are good – the caravan proceeds at half speed. The caravan encounters another of the black stone monoliths on the second day. As the first one they found, there is another pile of human remains nearby. *Koya* casts *Speak With Dead* to learn their story. She finds that they were travelers who were captured by Katiyana and her hordes of undead. She dragged them to the monolith, scored their bodies with the sigil of Sithhud, and sacrificed them all. Unable to burn the bodies, the characters continue on.

Through two more days of blizzard the caravan continues to make slow progress. After four days the weather breaks and the caravan is in the (relative) clear: everything around is difficult terrain due to the new snowfall. Within a day the weather turns quite pleasant allowing the caravan to make substantially better time. In two more days the caravan reaches *Dead Man's Dome*.

## **DEAD MAN'S DOME**

The characters are disappointed to find that there is no settlement at Dead Man's Dome, nor is there much of a monument. There is, however, a small army of undead forming up around it. As the characters reach within fifty miles of the area they recognize that they are being paced by undead outriders. The characters drive their animals hard as Yoshihiro sings very bad arctic cowboy songs, managing to reach the Dome before the undead are able to fully surround the caravan.

The Dome is completely ruined, but the ruins provide good cover for the caravan wagons. The characters circle the wagons and prepare their defense against two waves of frostfallen skeletons, frost-wights and four frost spirits. With each wave a cold wind blows across the defenders, carrying upon it Katiyana's mocking laughter.

As the first wave of undead rushes towards the caravan, Yoshihiro calls out to the spirit of the Dome's ancestral champion for aid. The champion steps forth and engages the manifested spirit of Katiyana. The undead warriors rush past the struggling spirits and attempt to spread dread through the defenders. Bolstered by supernatural aid and Yoshihiro's aura of courage, the caravaneers stand fast and shatter the assault.

The caravan enjoys a moment of respite between attacks, using it to repair damage and heal. But they only have a moment before the second wave of undead are upon them. The characters make excellent progress against the undead, but suffer several significant strikes. By the time the ancestral defender is able to end the last of the undead the caravan is practically destroyed.

## **RESTING PLACE OF THE ANCESTRAL DEFENDER**

Yoshihiro salutes the brave ancestral defender. He gestures "follow" and heads into the ruins. The characters leave the rest of the caravaneers to fix the wagons and heal their wounds and follow him. The warrior leads them to the place where he fell and

shows them a terracotta *Talisman of the Warrior*. The talisman is magical, and allows the owner to reroll an attack roll once per day with an additional +1 bonus and take the best result. It also allows the owner to cast *Spiritual Ally* once per day (CL 7). Jacob takes the talisman, promising to do his best with it.

Bjorn leaves his prized set of false teeth behind as a tribute to the honor and bravery of the fallen warrior.

#### ***FINDING VALVABLE SUPPLIES***

The characters recognize that the Dead Man's Dome can be scavenged for badly-needed repair supplies. After a day of scavenging they come up with enough found items to almost finish the work of repairing the caravan.

#### **VL-ANGORN**

The caravan continues on to the village of Ul-Angorn. The place is fairly small, located on the shore of an arctic salt lake. It has a population of 625 and a trade limit of about 650 gold. Most of the residents are humans, with a few dwarfs and whatnot to meet Golarion's diversity laws. The locals make a good living fishing the depths of the lake, and have built the place into the largest of the Eritaki villages in the Ruunuvas Basin.

V'lk discovers that fermented fish is a local delicacy. He goes to town on it, fully understanding that he will be horribly sick later. Harwynian steers clear of the things.

Under Yoshihiro's direction, the characters replenish the caravan stores (160 gold) and repair supplies (250 gold). The characters think this is very reasonable, especially considering where they are. The villagers turn out to be welcome customers for Storm Tower curios, allowing the caravan to come out net positive. The characters spread around a fair amount of extra money (at least by local standards) feasting, thanking their hosts, and getting their animals healthy.

V'lk risks getting the caravan thrown out a day early by shopping around for a craftsman willing to make a cloak out of two huge bat-wings and a pouch full of scalps. To his surprise, he is able to find a leatherworker who will do the job for him for only 100 gold coins.

Yoshihiro looks around for an appropriate set of trophies to distribute among the group as mementos of their trip across the Crown of the World. He finds some creepy local dolls and passes on them. V'lk finds them afterwards and does not pass, sensing an ideal opportunity to put something scary into Bjorn's bedroll. Yoshihiro finally buys a crate of walrus-horn scrimshaw of the Storm Tower bearing the legend, "I survived the Crown of the World." He gives one to each of the people in the caravan.

The characters give their NPC companions a variety of gifts with the idea of improving (or reducing) relationship scores. V'lk makes a point of buying a very, very creepy (and anatomically correct) doll and sneaking it into *Sandru Vhishki's* bed. He's not trying to upset Sandru, he just thinks this sort of thing is very funny.

## THE ABDUCTION

As the characters are preparing to depart, Sandru comes around asking, "Have any of you seen Ameiko? I can't find her anywhere." The characters commence a search. Bjorn is able to determine that someone came into her wagon. She left with the newcomer, then their tracks suddenly stop as if the two of them teleported or flew away. He uses magic to detect their scents – her companion has an almost human scent, but with something ogriish underneath it. From the snow patterns he decides that Ameiko and her companion probably flew away.

The characters decide to leave the caravan behind and take horses to pursue Ameiko's captor.

The characters travel out of the village. Bjorn is able to lead them to a landing site and provides a direction to ride. The characters ride hard through the next day. The trail leads them to a small hunting outpost, no more than three buildings. Bjorn scents the air and comments, "There are probably a few hunters around here."

The characters decide there is only one chance to make a first impression, so they send Jacob the drunkard in. After all, he does have a lot of Diplomacy skill. He leads the group in explaining to the local hunters that the characters are looking for Yoshihiro's sister. The hunters explain that they are uninterested in family politics – the sister and her husband arrived seeking food.

At this moment, a cabin door opens and a man the characters have never seen before emerges. He gestures, and Ameiko follows him out. She says, “Yoshihiro! I leave it to you to go and rule the lands of Minkai alone.” The magicians in the group all spend a bunch of spells and skill checks to figure out that she is *Charmed*. The non-magicians roll their eyes: of *course* she has been *Charmed*.

The man speaks, “I am Seijiro, and she will come with me. You should go away.” As Yoshihiro draws close, *Seijiro* embraces Ameiko and takes flight. Yoshihiro draws out *Suishen* and flies after him. V’lk casts *Dispel Magic* and eliminates the *Charm* on Ameiko. Ameiko immediately whips out a dagger and tries to stab Seijiro, but her blade glances off his surprisingly-good defenses.

Harwynian casts *Haste*, allowing Yoshihiro to *Air Walk* up to melee range with Seijiro. Seijiro drops Ameiko twenty feet onto the snow, draws a greatsword, and swings it at Yoshihiro. Yoshihiro evades, shouting, “Duck and roll!”

Ameiko picks herself up off the ground and starts singing a Bardic song to inspire courage just as Bjorn fires a volley of arrows up at Seijiro. Harwynian casts *Cat’s Grace* upon him to help his accuracy.

Overhead, Yoshihiro hacks away at Seijiro with *Suishen* as he’s never hacked before. Yoshihiro slashes him twice, leaving Seijiro spraying blood like a red rain over the white snow far below. But so quickly, Seijiro starts to regenerate the damage. Then he backs off five feet and hits Yoshihiro and Jacob with a *Cone of Cold*. Yoshihiro does okay, thanks to *Suishen*’s cold resistance. Jacob is almost frozen stiff.

V’lk decides to bring the fight to the ground. He casts *Dispel Magic* upon Seijiro’s flight, watching eagerly as he flutters down to the ground nearby. Bjorn takes the opportunity and shoots Seijiro twice, taking him down. The characters mash him into burned pulp, just to make sure that he doesn’t get back up.

### ***AMEIKO’S STORY***

Ameiko describes how Seijiro showed up, cast a *Charm* on her, and persuaded her to go away with him. The dead ogre mage wasn’t carrying any distinguishing equipment or other identification (no Army of the Five Winds ID card), leaving the characters to wonder if he was just a random wandering molester or if he actually had some advance information about the characters.



### **OBFUSCATING THE CARAVAN**

The characters spend some time discussing their new cover story. After too much discussion, the new story is that they are from Magnimar. All agree that they will address Ameiko differently to make it less obvious that she is a Minkai Princess-in-Training. Everyone will wear appropriate (and locally-purchased) cold weather gear, regardless of their level of magical protection, to further obscure their nature.

### **HOW ABOUT THE HUNTERS?**

The next subject of debate is whether the hunters at the camp are just locals, or are actually evil. Bjorn is something of a hunter himself, so he ingratiates himself with them by asking about local hunting techniques, at the same time using Sense Motive to assess their motivations. He concludes that they're just ordinary guys.

V'lk isn't happy about Bjorn's technique, but he eventually accepts the results. He was secretly hoping to have a Hunting Camp Massacre Moment.

### **ACROSS THE OVORIKHEER PASS**

The next stage in the characters' journey is to traverse the twenty-mile Ovorikheer Pass to ascend back to the five thousand foot height of the High Ice, cross over it, and then descend back to the ground. The journey isn't as smooth as everyone would have liked: the characters are sickened by fumes from the geothermal vents along the pass.

Away from the High Ice, the characters reach the ice-covered Domagalki Forest. They are quickly set upon by a giant snow spider. It attempts to sneak up on the caravan, but does such a bad job of it that the characters are easily able to intercept and engage it.

The characters start shooting arrows at the poor creature at 180 feet out. The spider runs towards the characters. They fill it full of arrows. As it gets closer, it realizes its danger and runs away. It doesn't get far: Jacob shoots it down with a *Magic Missile*. V'lk runs out to pick up the body and carve out some legs. As he starts carving, he discovers that the hairs on the creature's back are barbed and poisonous. V'lk ends up becoming nauseated. Bjorn follows him quite enthusiastically, with another suggestion: dig out the fangs and take the venom! The two of them try it, and end up poisoning themselves. Bjorn takes 15 STR damage and V'lk takes 20 (though he runs out of STR at 14). Yoshihiro has the two of them dragged back to the caravan under guard, with strict

orders to stay away from the spiders. Gobo does his best to help them recover the damage. They have to be sewed into their bedrolls to inhibit their feeble attempts to return to trying to scavenge the spider's corpse.

### **TRADING AT JAAGIIN**

Soon enough, the caravan reaches the lands of the Osman Confederation, an alliance of Eiritaki villages. Their town of Jaagiin stands upon the shores of Lake Buriyiim. The town is moderately-sized and prosperous, with a small population of elves and gnomes beyond the human majority. The town elder is actually an elf.

The characters spend some time trading goods brought across the High Ice, netting a good profit and buying some additional trade goods. Bjorn shops around for a *Spiked Heavy Shield +1*. He is quite happy to find one, and trades out his *Steel Shield +1* for it. The characters unpack their adventuring loot from the trip and sell it, collecting proceeds of 1538 gold each (and 32 additional coppers).

*Belindyfess Spiritforge the Wizard* (also a dwarf) teaches Harwynian several spells: *Ice Storm*, *Dimension Door*, *Stoneskin*, *Flame Arrow*, and *Gaseous Form*. Luckily for the rest of the party, dwarven snow wizardesses specialize in actually useful spells.

### **THE GATES OF DESNA**

The characters head out of Jaagiin and towards the Wall of Heaven Mountains. The weather is quite pleasant for most of the trip. As the characters approach the mountains a violent storm blows in. The mountain peaks ahead shudder with avalanches that close the mountain passes. A violent blizzard approaches the caravan with horrible speed.

The characters consider their options. Their guide Ulf suggests trying to make the dwarven Dells at the foot of the mountain; even he does not think there is enough time to make it. From the map, it is possible to reach the town of Ketskerlet, several hundred miles away. *Koya Mvashti* suggests that a better destination might be the tunnels carved underneath the mountains by the devotees of the goddess Desna: they should be within two days' travel, reachable before the storm expands out to engulf the characters.

The characters are concerned about traveling through the Mines of Desna, but that still seems like the best option. They use the *Gem of Brilliance* and Suishen to create

light, allowing the caravan to travel both day and night to stay ahead of the storm. By the second day the characters reach the Darker Road and the Gates of Desna.

The Gates of Desna is named for the twin statues flanking the gates. One statue is long gone and destroyed, but the second is still there: a crude statue of a standing woman with outstretched hands and butterfly wings. The characters do their best to show appropriate respect to the statues as they pass.

A quarter mile beyond the statues, the road leads into a cave mouth flanked by stone pillars and a lintel carved with stars. For finding the Gates of Desna, each character gains an additional +5 on their next Resolve check. The caravan may also use the Fortune Teller wagon bonus one additional time. Behind them, the storm rages with Katiyana's anger at seeing them escape her revenge.

The tunnels were dug by nomad artisans who were only interested in digging when they had to. As a result, the path is mostly natural caverns. It twists and turns unpredictably, with several steep slopes and hard ascents.

The first odd thing the characters find is a cairn of stones and skulls. The skulls are all painted in monstresque patterns. Everyone agrees that this doesn't seem very Desna-esque. Koya inspects them and proclaims that they are a shrine to the Tien god Funeyoshi, god of undead, dishonor and graves. Such a thing should not be on the Path of Desna. The characters pickaxe it into bits.

## **THE END OF THE SESSION**

The caravan is starting a journey through the underground paths beyond the Gates of Desna. Everyone goes up to 8<sup>th</sup> level! Huzzah!