

EG13 Draconic Interference

By Dan Hass



After decades of planning, the Dragon Cabal is making its move to seize control of south-central Dimgaard. However, there are some key Cabal elements that are vulnerable. Can heroes slow the evolving Cabal plan long enough to prevent an overwhelming Cabal campaign? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 13th level characters. The 13th episode of Encounters with Gold.

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Adventure Summary

EG13 Draconic Interference is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 13th level characters. It requires a *Player's Handbook® (PHB)*, a *Monster Manual® (MM)*, a *Volo's Guide to Monsters® (VGM)*, a *Xanathar's Guide to Everything® (XGE)*, and a *Dungeon Master's Guide® (DMG)*. It also uses selections from *Unearthed Arcana* ([here](#)).

While the encounters include scaling for 1-8 characters, parties of 1 or 2 PCs and 7 or 8 PCs are fringe circumstances that may play oddly. Specifically, parties of 1-2 are highly susceptible to a single bad die roll, and 7-8 can slow play dramatically. Ideally a party will be 3-6 PCs.

The Digital copies of the encounter maps are available [here](#).

Campaign Choice

While *EG13 Draconic Interference* is designed to fit within almost any setting according to Dimgaard principles (**low prep time, strong themes, smooth presentation, highly scalable**), it was written using the Dimgaard campaign as its primary influence, and is indicative of the themes in Dimgaard. The Dimgaard campaign guide can be found at www.dimgaard.com.

Preparing the Adventure

It is always a good idea for the DM to read through an adventure before running it. *EG13 Draconic Interference* is no different. There are some rather complex encounters that will benefit if the DM spends a few minutes deciding how she will play them. *EG13 Draconic Interference* can be run with a lot of interaction between the PCs and NPCs depending on the inclinations of the players and DM. The module deliberately gives **just enough** information about NPCs to move the plot along, leaving a lot of room for a DM to individualize these to her campaign. In the encounters, the module deliberately gives **just enough** information about NPCs to move the plot along, leaving a lot of room for a DM to individualize these to her campaign, while Appendix 2 has more detailed information about prominent NPCs. It makes things smoother if the DM spends a few minutes deciding how she will deliver the NPCs' interactions. Some DMs revel in the opportunity to assume the personas of multiple NPCs over the course

of a session while others prefer a summary approach. The decision is a matter of style and showmanship. Similarly, many players look forward to opportunities to interact "in character" while others prefer to summarize. Neither approach is "correct"; both are valid ways to collaboratively build a story, but the DM should try to anticipate her players' preferences (and decide her own) and prepare accordingly. To aid in this process Appendix 2 contains entries for the NPCs in this adventure (taken from the DGN series available on www.dmsguild.com).

A battlemat or dungeon tiles may be helpful, but not necessary.

Items for Review

- Creatures. air elemental, bard (VGM), guard drake (VGM), veteran
- DMG. Short Term Madness
- Feats. Alert, War Caster
- Human Determination, Spear Master
- Magic Items. headband of intellect, moon-touched sword (XGE), periapt of proof against poison, stone of good luck, weapon of warning
- PHB. cleric (life)
- Spells. *clone*, *counterspell*, *forbiddance*, *glyph of warding*, *guards and wards*, *hallow*, *hold monster*, *sacred flame*, *teleportation circle*, *temple of the gods* (XGE); Brutgik has an extensive spell list.

Dimgaard Philosophy

Dimgaard's primary principle is that D&D should be an entertaining experience. In particular, it should be fun and interesting. The "best" D&D is a collaborative storytelling event where the DM provides the framework and supporting details, while the players contribute by roleplaying the heroes (their characters) that results in epic tales.

"Epic" implies that the heroes be challenged and that success is a question to be decided by the heroes' deeds and choices. *The Lord of the Rings* is only an epic because the reader doesn't know until the final pages if Frodo, Aragorn and the rest will achieve their objectives or die, fruitless, in their efforts.

A great Dimgaard session (and really any D&D session) is where there is the finest line between success and failure and the heroes *just* manage to win (occasionally, just surviving is "winning"). But for those narrowest of victories to have true meaning, they cannot be foregone conclusions, and likely there will be times when the PCs fail – Boromir comes to mind or Gandalf's expedition to Isengard where he was captured.

Running the Adventure

EG13 Draconic Interference is made up of six events arranged into three encounters. Some are hazards that can be applied in only a few minutes but encounters with NPCs and other creatures that involve combat or roleplaying will take longer. But since the action occurs in a single adventuring day, it should use a single game session.

Often the PCs' actions determine the type of interaction. A combat encounter may evolve into a roleplaying encounter when mistaken identities, misunderstandings, or action based on false assumptions are corrected, thus ending the violence. Other times conversations, interrogations, or negotiations can become heated and erupt in violence changing a roleplaying encounter into a combat encounter.

Dimgaard adventures give the DM opportunities to reward good roleplaying. Good roleplaying can garner an easier path to achieving the desired outcomes. However, it takes stellar roleplaying to completely avoid combat. The world is a dark and violent place where opponents with short tempers often find violence the most direct route to achieving their goals.

The encounters in *EG13 Draconic Interference* challenge PCs in different ways. The combat encounters are expected to meet the definition of **hard** (DMG p.81), but additionally there are encounters to test the PCs' ability to deal with diplomatic situations and pose difficult questions about their characters' morals.

Modification "Exploits"

Technically each encounter uses a **medium** XP budget per the encounter building guidelines. And for many parties a **medium** encounter may turn out to meet the definition of **hard** as PCs may be built for roleplaying and the party may not have optimized their tactics.

Modifications have been made to the creatures that do not increase the calculated CR of the creature but do increase the challenge of the creature. These are denoted with a ¹. These are not intended to be used with all parties, nor does a DM need to use every suggested modification. The DM should gauge the effectiveness of the party and decide which of these to use (keeping in mind the definition of **hard** encounters).

Ancient Black Dragon: Braindryt

During the Great Reduction, when archfey forced the ruling dragons to vacate Dimgaard, Braindryt was a young dragon. Unlike other dragons, he did not leave. He had mastered the ability to change his appearance and remained in Dimgaard – moving, hiding and masking his appearance. For thousands of years, he maneuvered through the evolving cultures of Dimgaard with no hint of his true self or existence.

The lack of other true dragons suited him – as black dragons are known to fear and hate other dragons.

Several centuries ago, Braindryt began to build a covert organization to serve him. Many of these are dragonkin that are his progeny – where he had mated with females of other races while masked as one of their kind to infuse their bloodline with black dragon heritage. But others are outcasts who have rallied to his banner without his direct influence.

Braindryt's long term goals are unclear – if he has any besides his own survival and indulgences. However, as a black dragon, he definitely doesn't want to see a revival of true dragons in Dimgaard.

Akrok & PCs

Akrok is an evil dragonkin. Some PCs may have a difficult time cooperating with him. 5th edition is much more accepting of opposing alignments, and Dimgaard has always had a philosophy that actions determine alignment.

The objective of Akrok as an ally is to incrementally insinuate himself into the PCs' trust by initially presenting clearly aligned goals and doing so with total honesty. If the PCs simply cannot accommodate an affiliation with an evil dragonkin, Akrok's resources are significant. He can find a more accommodating agent to represent his interests with the PCs.

However, one desired effect is that the player realize that difficult situations lead to complex alliances. Southern Dimgaard faces the serious prospect of falling under the domination of the Dragon Cabal, and Braindryt's aid is essential to prevent Cabal hegemony over the entire region.

Dragon Cabal

In the distant past, Dimgaard was ruled by powerful dragons. However, archfey succeeded in driving these dragons out of Dimgaard to make room for emerging races – particularly the elves. Among these dispossessed dragons was an ancient gold dragon named Rugarth. For thousands of years Rugarth has seethed at the injustice dealt him.

A few decades ago, one of Rugarth's half-dragon progeny convince Rugarth to begin a campaign to regain his rightful territory. Rugarth began to send agents into Dimgaard and build an organization (the Dragon Cabal) to support his return. The Dragon Cabal is working to convince dragonkin of all types to set aside their differences and unite to restore dragons as the rulers of Dimgaard. In the process, they will subjugate all the non-dragon races (or eliminate those who refuse to submit).

Adventure Background

The frontier of southern Dimgaard has a history of draconic activity, but a few months ago, it spiked. The half-orc wizard Cebak hatched several green dragon eggs intent on raising them to serve him. He planned to establish an empire using them as the core of his force of conquest. (This is the subject of *DGD6 Green Socialization*, *DGD7 Green Rescue*, and *DGD8 Green Mastery*.) This population of very young green dragons drew the attention of dragonkin, including Orthis, the leader of a cell of the Cult of the Green Dragon. Orthis' cell occupied a forest near Tallywood (in the Alshon region) with the cooperation of Lord Hambis, but the evil nature of the cultists could not be tolerated by surrounding communities and the cult was eliminated. (This is the subject of *EG1 Draconic Awareness* through *EG4 Draconic Refugees*.)

The Verdadis barony took in some of the dragon cultists who showed hope of reform, but in the subsequent weeks (as addressed in *EG5 Draconic Crimes*, *EG6 Draconic Wedge*, and *EG7 Draconic Evidence*) other parties were revealed: The Dragon Cabal with a goal of restoring dragons as rulers of Dimgaard; the Order of Pholtus hoping to exterminate all dragonkin; and a mysterious black dragon.

In the face of the rise in draconic activity, the Verdadis sent an ill-fated mission to explore the important city of Odill. The

mission agents were killed by the Cult of the Green Dragon and animated to protect its hidden shrine in the sewers of Odill – the subject of *EG9 The Dragon's Challenge*.

From the capture of the Cult's shrine, the heroes learned of the Cult's success in establishing a lair for a green dragon and were able to confront the dragon – the subject of *EG10 A Dragon's Reward*.

In the meantime, the Dragon Cabal has completed its preparations for a broad campaign to eliminate threats throughout Dimgaard – including the Verdadis barony, the hidden shrine to Bahamut, and the PCs in Odill – the subject of *EG11 Draconic Assassinations*.

In Odill, human members of the Dragon Cabal infiltrated the city and assassinated several prominent citizens. While Wulxan (an agent of the Order of Metal) and Prince Grail Bloodgood were targeted, they both managed to escape the assassinations.

In addition to the assassinations in Odill, several nobles who rule fiefs near Odill were similarly targeted – including Baron Verdadis. In each case, the killings were completed to preclude *raise dead* – the bodies were burned when there was time, or the corpses were taken by the killers. Baron Verdadis was beheaded and the murderers escaped with his head.

Braindyryt's assets were spared from the assassinations for several reasons. First, Braindyryt is quite secretive, and the Cabal doesn't have a full vision of the size and capabilities of Braindyryt's organization. Second, the dragon actively avoids engaging in current affairs and is therefore not an obstacle to the Cabal's plans. Finally, the Cabal doesn't realize Braindyryt's fear and hatred of other dragons and presumes that since the Cabal's goal is returning dragon rule to Dimgaard that Braindyryt will become an ally. Braindyryt's agent, Akrok, located the leaders of the assassinations (the topic of *EG12 Draconic Machinations*).

The assassinations phase is complete, and the Dragon Cabal is about to launch its full offensive. They have secretly established several permanent *temples of the gods* (from *XGE*) at key locations throughout south-central Dimgaard. Some are already permanent from casting the spell every day for a year. To efficiently move resources, several *temples of the gods* also have a permanent *teleportation circle* and several others are days away

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from having a permanent *teleportation circle*.

The Dragon Cabal has now moved to the forefront of Braindyryt's concerns. While he won't reveal the extent and power of his organization, he will aid others in their efforts. As Braindyryt has focused his attention in the aftermath of the assassinations, he has learned the location of many of these *temples of the gods*. He is actively recruiting parties that can deal with these while keeping the nature of his organization secret.

Parties of a Different Level

While the adventure is optimized for a party of 13th level characters, the DM can present the module to PCs of a different level. The DM must calculate **Party Strength** by summing the PCs' levels and then dividing by 13. The encounter and hazard scaling should be based on the Party Strength rather than the actual number of party members.

Adventure Outline

The PCs are informed by Akrok that all south-central Dimgaard is about to erupt in war – the Dragon Cabal is just days away from launching a broad campaign to seize control. However, there is an immediate option the PCs can achieve to reduce the effectiveness of the Dragon Cabal: attack a secret Cabal base and eliminate a key half-dragon caster.

The PCs must gain entry to the base, which involves engaging the guard drakes and dragonborn who protect it.

At the camp, the PCs must deal with magical protections before being able to face the half-dragon Brutgik.

Rests

The PCs are expected to complete 6+ medium or hard combat encounters without taking a long rest. Even short rests should be cautiously allowed since many PCs' resources recharge on a short rest. The PCs begin the adventure having just completed a long rest and they can benefit from only one long rest in a 24-hour period (*PHB* 168).

Once the action starts, the PCs can't take a long rest. If they insist, Brutgik completes the process of creating permanent effects, which allows for an overwhelming reinforcement via *teleportation circle*.

PREVIEW

Starting the Adventure

Downtime in Odill

Typically, downtime involves a great deal of individual activity, but in this environment, the DM should emphasize acting together. PCs who insist on venturing out alone may disappear. This can be explicitly related by the staff of the Sanctum of Fharlanghn.

With safety addressed, simply because of its large population, the DM can justify any resource the DM chooses. This can include research opportunities from eccentric sages or in secret libraries. The markets of Odill vary from stable, well-organized, and reputable shopping areas in the high-income district, to black market bazaars.

Information about downtime and other activities prior to launching the adventure. The *PHB 187*, *DMG 127*, *XGE 123*, and the *Dimgaard Campaign Guide* all have suggestions for downtime activities and the DM may develop some of her own. There are also several (playtest) options available through the *Unearthed Arcana* ([here](#)).

PCs' Resources

Managing the PCs' access to extraordinary equipment is another tool to modulate the difficulty of the encounters. If PCs are underpowered, downtime can contribute resources (potions, scrolls, etc.) to increase their effectiveness. Stronger parties may not need this type of support.

By 13th level, the party should have an ample stock of *potions of healing* (at least a couple per PC). And *revivify* should be in the party. Also, each should have a useful magic item.

The PCs likely have just advanced to 13th level and may want to discuss their characters and situation. The DM can facilitate the discussion by reading or paraphrasing the following:

The city of Odill has been recovering from the wave of terror that resulted from the assassination of many leaders both in Odill and the surrounding communities – including Baron Verdadis. The city is still unstable. However, in this maelstrom of chaos and danger, the Sanctum of Fharlanghn works diligently to maintain a safe haven. Here you have found a group of likeminded souls to share adventures with. You begin the day with a hearty breakfast in the common room of the Sanctum.

When the players have completed their initial discussion, the DM can launch the action of the adventure with the following:

As the breakfast's remains are cleared a well-dressed man with a dusky skin tone enters the common room. This is Akrok, a secretive but well-funded influencer who seems to have information about everything that happens in Odill. As always, he takes a seat without invitation.

"Things are moving quickly. And those who would see the area spared from draconic domination must move equally quickly. It is important to my patron that draconic domination be avoided, and thus it is also important to me – and I presume you and your patrons and allies.

"Unchecked, the Dragon Cabal has the resources in place to take possession of all south-central Dimgaard and establish a Cabal-based Draconic Sultanate. We have activated every asset available, and still the issue is in question. Now is not the time for philosophical differences to prevent securing our positions against a common foe."

As conveyed by Akrok, Braindyryt has confirmed that in the next few days the Dragon Cabal will launch a campaign to take control of south-central Dimgaard and establish a draconic sultanate. From that base, the Cabal expects to expand to eventually dominate all Dimgaard.

The Cabal has been secretly assembling the resources for this offensive for decades, and it is imminent. As things stand, it will overwhelm the region. Conventional nobles lack the capacity to exert power beyond their immediate locales, and the One True Faith would take weeks to assemble a counterstrike; by then the fate of the region will be sealed.

In the broad effort to prevent the Cabal takeover, Braindyryt (through Akrok) proposes the PCs proceed immediately to a location where the Cabal will complete a permanent *temple of the gods* in the next day or two. The Cabal will also finish a permanent *teleportation circle* allowing them to bring large numbers of assets to bear in the region from distant parts.

Successfully *disintegrating* the temple won't suffice. The party needs to eliminate a gold half-dragon caster named Brutgik.

Akrok can offer a reward (1,500 gp is recommended), but he is not a combatant.