

PW2 A Patron's Outpost

By Dan Hass



A forward element of a demon lord has established a base along the Peka river where the river Styx is quickly corrupting the idyllic northern waterway. Can heroes eliminate this presence before it becomes entrenched? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 2nd level characters. Episode 2 of the Patron Wars.

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Adventure Summary

PW2 A Patron's Outpost is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 2nd 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 Artificer* ([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 *PW2 A Patron's Outpost* 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. *PW2 A Patron's Outpost* 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. *PW2 A Patron's Outpost* 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. cow (VGM), hawk, tribal warrior, wolf,
- Magic Items. *potion of healing*, *ring of free action*, *staff of flowers* (XGE), *stone of good luck*, *weapon of warning*
- PHB. *Beast Speech*, *Book of Ancient Secrets*, *hunting trap*, *Pact of the Tome*, *paladin*, *tiefling*
- Spells. *alarm*, *armor of Agathys*, *bles*, *command*, *detect magic*, *divine favor*, *find familiar*, *guidance*, *hellish rebuke*, *locate animals and plants*, *mending*, *minor illusion*, *mirror image*, *misty step*, *prestidigitation*, *shield of faith*, *speak with animals*, *thaumaturgy*, *unseen servant*
- Other. *oath of conquest* (XGE)

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.

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Running the Adventure

PW2 A Patron's Outpost is made up of 6 events arranged into 3 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 *PW2 A Patron's Outpost* 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).

The Blood War & Dimgaard

The Blood War is the eternal violent war between the devils (lawful evil) of the Nine Hells and the demons (chaotic evil) of the Abyss. Previous implementations of Dimgaard had very little extra-planar activity, and thus no participation in the Blood War. However, the 5th edition incarnation of Dimgaard has seen much more extra-planar involvement, including several significant storylines wholly in the Abyss.

The Story Behind the Story...

The River Styx actually shifted months ago. It mingled with a river in a distant region – beyond the frontiers of Dimgaard – named Nogiborg. For weeks the residents were plagued by the raging Blood War along the banks of the subverted river.

Nogiborg's citizens planned to deliberately redirect the River Styx and end the blight of the Blood War. Their first effort was to change its flow to be wholly contained in the lower planes. However, the magic required for such a significant alteration was beyond their resources. They could alter the River Styx, but only to a place on the Material plane with barriers already weakened.

While the Nogiborg casters had ethical qualms about subjecting another region to the Blood War, ultimately it seemed like the only alternative to being utterly destroyed by the breach.

Adventure Background

The River Styx has experienced a shift in course – as happens from time to time. From the Lower Planes it has blended into the Peka River a few miles upstream from the village of Farjvad. Fiendish elements are sensitive to these changes in the Styx and, as seen in *PW1 Dark Patrons*, Farjvad has become a focus of fiends even when the river's transition was incomplete. This will grow as the Styx's presence becomes more pronounced.

Some of the first elements through the evolving breach are minions in the service of Yeenoghu – eager to exploit the unsuspecting and rich environment. They have set up a base near the confluence of the Styx and Peka, and have begun raiding.

The devils have not sat idly. Martinet, Asmodeus' chief constable, sent what he had immediately available – tiefling

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PREVIEW

conquest paladins. However, the paladin assault was repelled.

Dante Shadowsoul, Asmodeus' agent in Farjvad, has been informed of the situation and instructed to recruit assets to end the threat before the demons can become entrenched.

Parties of a Different Level

While the adventure is optimized for a party of 2nd 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 2. 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 notified that minions of Yeenoghu have set up an outpost a few miles upriver, and there is no one available to disrupt it except them.

On the trip, the PCs see the disruption in the environment from the demonic influx.

As the PCs close in on the outpost, they encounter retreating Asmodeans who have lost a battle with Yeenoghu's gnolls.

Finally, to directly address the gnolls, the PCs must deal with protections the gnolls have in place.

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 because the action won't wait for them to take a long rest.

PREVIEW

Starting the Adventure

Downtime in Farjvad

Farjvad is a well-organized town. Until the influx of demons a few days ago, Farjvad enjoyed a robust river trade. There are enough resources to sustain the village for some time – including adequately resupplying the PCs. Additionally, the DM can justify unusual resources such as magic items from the influx of refugees.

It has been a few days since the action of *PW1 Dark Patrons*. 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. At 2nd level, each PC should have a *potion of healing* or two and melee focused PCs should have a backup weapon or two. The DM can also give the PCs access to Chu (Appendix 2) who can provide resources to the PCs in exchange for downtime favors.

The PCs should have just advanced to 2nd level and may want to discuss their characters or situation. The DM can facilitate this discussion with the following:

Farjvad is a town under pressure. It was shocking a few days ago when momentary portals to the Lower Planes opened and allowed fiends to wander into the town. However, a pattern has been discerned. The river is the focus. The residents have been evacuated to a relatively safe distance and the riverfront is now highly patrolled.

The Major has sent for specialists from neighboring cities, but there has been no response yet. And there are still missing scouting expeditions from well over a week ago.

In this volatile environment, you have found a group of talented individuals to share the dangers. You begin your day with a hearty breakfast at the Farjvad inn and have a chance to discuss your situation.

When the PCs have completed their discussions, the DM can launch the action by reading or paraphrasing the following. However, some PCs may have an issue with working with Dante Shadowsoul – an unashamed agent of Asmodeus. In this case, the DM may need to engineer a different lead in (and note that the PCs likely won't have the documentation from Dante to bypass the Asmodean conquerors in Encounter 2).

Entering the common room is a pale – almost pinkish – curate of the Order of Asmodeus, Dante Shadowsoul. He has assumed a leadership role in the campaign against the demon infestation and become prominent in the village temple. He fixes his attention on your table and approaches.

“Good morning. I bring dire news, and a responsibility falls on you. Late last evening I received news that minions of the demon lord Yeenoghu took a position a few miles upriver. Apparently, the weakened barrier extends far beyond Farjvad's borders.

“These vile creatures have established an outpost and from there are raiding – spreading terror and acquiring resources to strengthen their position.

“Farjvad's militia is too taxed with the town's immediate security to send a detail. But if someone doesn't intervene the Yeenoghu followers could become entrenched to the point that it is beyond our resources to repulse them. So, I come to you with an opportunity to be heroes.”

Dante has secured a stipend to serve as a reward and to cover expenses (the recommendation is 50 gp per PC), and the PCs would have rights to any loot claimed that isn't obviously looted from an owner that can be discerned.

Dante will provide a document sealed with his signet (which is a pentagram of Asmodeus). Dante will inform the PCs that Asmodeus has other assets – some not local – attempting to address the situation, too. The document will identify the PCs as allies should a conflict arise with such an unknown force.

Dante reiterates the situation's urgency. The outpost is about five miles upstream, and if not eliminated today – before they can become firmly established – it will take a much greater force to dislodge them.

When the PCs are ready, the DM should present Encounter 1.

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Encounter 1: Disrupting the Environment

Random Encounters

The *DMG* p.85 has a section on random encounters. In Dimgaard adventures, the first encounter is often isolated from the storyline, and heavily skewed towards combat. This serves multiple purposes.

The DM can use it to gauge the PCs' combat effectiveness to modulate the subsequent encounters. However, if the encounter goes badly, the PCs can still successfully complete the adventure.

The random encounter also presents the DM with an opportunity to tailor the adventure. She can substitute an encounter she has designed for the particular PCs in her campaign and still complete the storyline of the adventure.

Finally, there may simply be a different encounter that the DM believes would be more interesting to present to the players.

There are *Dimgaard Encounter Galleries* that may offer alternative encounters that make substitution an easier task.

Map. Path Along River

Background. The rampaging gnolls have disrupted the territory of wolves.

You have covered most of the territory between you and the reported location of the gnolls without a problem. But there is a growl from the undergrowth near you.

Running the encounter. The wolves are stressed, making them vicious.

Skills Usage & Treasure

It is desirable to deviate from random loot as treasure at times. One way is using skills to extract valuable components from the carcasses of defeated creatures. Harvesting poison (*DMG* 258) is the precedent for this: it requires a DC 20 skill check to successfully extract loot from the carcass; the carcass can yield only one item, and a failure destroys the carcass without any loot being extracted.

In this case, wolf skins are valuable for a variety of reasons – winter clothing, specialized leather goods, trophies. A DC 20 Leatherworking tools check harvests the hides with a recommended value of 50 gp per successfully harvested hide. Here, depending on the player description, the DM could use Dexterity, Intelligence, or Wisdom as the base for the skill; Nature or even Medicine could also be used.

Scaling the encounter. There is 1 **Peka Wolf** per PC. If there are 6+ PCs, add 1 additional wolf to the total.

(Peka) Wolf. *MM* 341.

¹**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

¹**Hit Points** 15 (2d8+6)

¹**CON** 16 (+3)

¹**Saving Throws** Int -2, Cha +0

¹**Bestial Intelligence.** Spells and effects that rely upon reason and understanding have no effect on the wolf. For example, the DM may decide that the wolf is immune to *vicious mockery*.

¹**Bestial Determination (1/day).** Damage that would reduce the wolf to 0 hit points instead reduces it to 1 hit point.

Concluding the encounter. The PCs are now in close proximity to the Yeenoghu outpost. However, because of the raiding, livestock have escaped from surrounding farms, and the violence has them on edge.

Hazards (Traps)

It is not possible to present 6+ combat encounters in a single session – that would leave little time for anything else.

To allow for story building, character development, and roleplaying, Dimgaard adventures simulate the results of a combat encounter with hazards – a type of trap, environmental effect, disease, or similar mechanic. These can be applied to the party and resolved with minimal session time spent. By implementing 2–4 of these events, the session has time for non-combat encounters and activities.

Stampedes are a hazard often presented. Players may want to enter initiative, and the DM should resist this. Resolving the hazard should involve only a single die roll by each player. The player options are deliberately restricted and enumerated to allow for compact, efficient presentation.

Stampede

Creature event

In a blur of horns and fur the undergrowth parts and bovines stampede toward you.

There is 1 **cow** (*VGM* 207) per PC; if there are 6+ PCs add 1 more to the total. The cows surprise the party and each attack a random party member with its **Charge** once and then runs on. If a PC has a passive Perception of 12+ or cannot be surprised, the PC can take a single action before the charges to do one of the following: 1) move to a safe location where the PC cannot be targeted; 2) shove another party member to a safe location; 3) wave off one or more cows so that it doesn't charge the party at all with an ability check that is a 15+ – typically the check is Wisdom (Animal Handling), but the DM may allow a different check such as a Performance-based check – depending on the PCs' actions; a 15+ waves off 1 cow, and for each 3+ that the check exceeds 15, an additional cow is prevented from attacking.