

PW3 A Patron's Expedition

By Dan Hass



Parties from the Lower Planes and those who serve them are probing along the Peka River. Even this limited engagement is devastating the surrounding communities. Can heroes alleviate the suffering imposed by this incursion? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 3rd level characters. Episode 3 of the *Patron Wars*.

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Adventure Summary

PW3 A Patron's Expedition is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 3rd 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 *PW3 A Patron's Expedition* 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. *PW3 A Patron's Expedition* 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. *PW3 A Patron's Expedition* 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. acolyte, death dog, dretch, giant wasp, guard, manes, needle blight, myconid myconid adult, spore servant, myconid sprout, owl, thorny (VGM), thug, twig blight, vegepygmy (VGM), vine blight, violet fungus
- DMG. razorvine
- Feats. Alert, Mage Slayer
- Magic Items. *cloak of elvenkind*, *ioun stone (absorption)*, *stone of good luck*, *vicious weapon*
- PHB. ranger: favored enemy & natural explorer
- Spells. *goodberry*, *hellish rebuke*, *thaumaturgy*
- XGE. Monster Slayer: hunter's sense, slayer's prey

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

PW3 A Patron's Expedition is made up of 10 events arranged into 5 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 *PW3 A Patron's Expedition* 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).

Zuggtmoy and Myconids

In their natural state, myconids are highly organized. They share a hive mind coordinated by a sovereign and work to improve their environment based on the premise that a better area serves all creatures, including their colony.

However, the demon lord Zuggtmoy twists the natural path of all fungi – including myconids. She is an autocrat who rules them and works to spread strife and chaos. The source of her animosity is unknown, but it is persistent and has been documented since the early days of the cosmos.

Among naturally occurring myconids, Zuggtmoy is the most hated by the sovereign myconids who guide the hive minds. However, it is known that occasionally a rogue myconid decides to revere Zuggtmoy as a sort of fungi hero. Because of the reputation of the Demon Queen, these deviant myconids take measures to hide their inclinations from the sovereign. However, the sovereigns' abilities to monitor the minds of the myconids in the colony are extensive, and usually the deviation is discovered and corrected – but not always. Sometimes a Zuggtmoy worshipper manages to free itself from the myconid colony to pursue its demonic worship.

Adventure Background

The river Styx has altered course and insinuated itself into the Material Plane. Several miles upstream from the village of Farjvad, it has merged with the Peka River, forming a breach to the Abyss. Several miles downstream it diverges from the Peka River and enters into the Nine Hells, forming a breach to that realm.

The Abyssal breach was the first to form. When it began to manifest a few weeks ago, it immediately disrupted river traffic. The Major – the noble who rules Farjvad – sent an expedition on a flatboat to explore the problem but it fell under attack from the fiends. The survivors took refuge at a farm and have been under constant threat for over a week now.

In the meantime, the demon lord Yeenoghu attempted to establish an outpost (the topic of *PW2 A Patron's Outpost*) but was thwarted. Following that attempt is an expedition of the demon lord Zuggtmoy. The Demon Queen's cultists have corrupted the

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area around the farm and are attempting to eliminate the Farjvad detail.

Young tieflings from the Nine Hells – eager to prove their mettle – traversed the distance and engaged the demons but were wholly defeated. Among the tieflings was a favorite of Asmodeus named Daki. She was killed and has been converted into a myconid spore servant.

After surviving the night, the PCs have a chance to find Daki's remains before trying to return to Farjvad.

Sentient fungi opposed to Zuggtmoy present an opportunity for the PCs.

Before the PCs can reach safety, they must address a rival party attempting to garner the prestige of returning Daki to the Nine Hells.

Daki?

Many – perhaps most – tieflings claim a prominent archdevil or demon lord in their ancestry. None want to admit the truth that by far the most common fiendish taint is from the corruption of an incubus or succubus with no royal fiendish influence.

Daki is an exception – her royal assertion is true. The circumstances of her conception are unclear, as she never knew her human mother. Her father, though, is Bune – a senior vassal of Asmodeus.

When Daki was born, her fiendish appearance incriminated her mother who was ritually purified by torture that killed her. Daki was slated to be unceremoniously killed, but devils and cultists rescued her and transported her to the Nine Hells.

Daki knows who her father is and is proud of it. However, every tiefling claims royal fiendish lineage, so her claims are usually discounted.

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, the final two members of the Farjvad party are killed, and several members of the rescue party are also killed after learning what happened, and Bune's tieflings retrieve Daki's remains.

Parties of a Different Level

While the adventure is optimized for a party of 3rd 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 3. 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 approached by Dante Shadowsoul and asked to investigate the lost detail from Farjvad while also tasked with retrieving the remains of a tiefling named Daki.

Moving upriver, the PCs encounter the demonic breach and its effects on the immediate environment.

In the surrounding forest, the influence of Zuggtmoy, Lady of Fungi, becomes evident.

At an isolated cottage, the final two of the Farjvad party are under siege.

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 *PW2 A Patron's Outpost*. If the PCs were successful, they have earned downtime (4 days is recommended). If not, then the downtime is necessary to recover from the failure. 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 players may want to discuss elements of their characters or the situation before the action starts. The DM can facilitate the discussion by reading or paraphrasing:

Farjvad is under assault from the riverfront where there is a breach to the Lower Planes. The Major asked nearby cities for advisors and reinforcements.

Originally only demons appeared, but recently, devils have been arriving. Often the demons and devils immediately engage each other in combat, and if the residents stay clear, there is no danger as the "winner" is dealt with by Farjvad's militia.

In this environment of violence, you have found a group of talented individuals to share the danger with. You begin the day with a hearty breakfast in the common room of the Farjvad inn.

When the players have completed their discussions, the DM can launch the action by reading or paraphrasing:

The primary news of the morning is about a rescue mission. Several days ago, the Major sent a detail upriver to investigate the disruption of river traffic. It hasn't been heard from since it left Farjvad, and there are plans to send a party to rescue them.

As the breakfast dishes are cleared, Dante Shadowsoul, the young curate of the Order of Asmodeus, enters. While some are uneasy at the high profile of the Asmodean, his knowledge of how to fight demons has been of great value to Farjvad.

Dante fixes his gaze on your table and approaches. "Just who I was looking for. I'm sure you've heard of the planned rescue mission. I'm afraid that I have issues with that action being carried out by the Farjvad militia. I'm hoping to persuade you to take on that task today."

Dante needs a party to retrieve Daki's remains. (Daki is now a myconid spore servant of Zuggtmoy.) Presenting Daki – preferably *raised* – to the devilish leaders will garner great renown. Dante will try to be vague about his motives for retrieving Daki – preferring to provide only a description sufficient to identify her body.

Dante is sure that a mission organized by the Major will make no effort to deliver Daki to him – viewing her (correctly) as an evil devilkin. Further, Daki's disappearance is known among the devils that have begun to cross over through the southern breach, and there is likely a race to retrieve her.

Dante can relate that the original Farjvad detail was on a low draft boat. They almost certainly encountered the planar transition area. This area will be obvious, but Dante doesn't know exactly how. It could be visual, or noxious fumes. Dante hasn't seen it, but he is sure the PCs will recognize it.

From there, the detail will need to be tracked down. And there is likely a great deal of demonic activity.

Dante can delay the Major's expedition with excuses that appear reasonable but not for long – tomorrow morning at the latest.

The PCs can use a flatboat or proceed along the river's shoreline. Since they are proceeding upriver, they are equally fast.

It takes several hours to reach the detail's abandoned boat: the site of Encounter 1.

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Encounter 1: To the Breach

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 or Boat (*DMG* 314)

Background. The presence of the River Styx has disrupted the ecology of the entire region. Predators target prey they would normally not attack.

The Peka River is known as an idyllic river, but its waters have become murky and its humidity is acrid – now forbidding.

Running the encounter. The River Styx will eventually so pollute the Peka that contact with it will affect creatures, but not yet.

The wasps have been warped by the influence of the Abyss. They have grown to giant size and have a hunger that cannot be satisfied. They attack relentlessly.

Scaling the encounter. There is one **Styx-influenced Wasp** per PC.

Styx-influenced (Giant) Wasp. *MM* 329.

¹**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

¹**Hit Points** 25 (3d8+12)

¹**CON** 18 (+4)

¹**Saving Throws** Wis +2

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities poison

¹**Beastial Resistance (2/day).** If the wasp fails an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw, it instead passes.

¹**Burst of Speed (1/day).** The wasp Dashes as a bonus action.

¹**Flyby.** As an owl (*MM* 332).

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 DC20 skill check to successfully extract loot from the carcass; the carcass can yield only one item; a failure destroys the carcass without any loot being extracted. Rather than poison, a player may propose an alternative (but still only one useful reward per carcass). For example, if the wasps have natural armor, the DM can decide a check involving Leatherworking tools can extract a carapace valuable for making non-metal armor. The suggested value of wasp poison or a usable carapace is 200 gp.

Concluding the encounter. The PCs reach the breach. The DM can read or paraphrase:

Ahead, the river roils as if there is a fast-moving inflow, but there is none visible. A shallow-draft boat has been beached and pulled high up on the bank. Immediately beyond there is a dense forest.

The heroes are already so close to the breach that its pollution affects them.

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.

The Breach

Poison

The churning river generates a fowl smelling mist that immediately tests your fortitude.

Each party member suffers 11 (2d10) poison damage. A successful DC 11 Constitution saving throw halves the damage. If the save fails by 5+ the victim is poisoned. A long rest ends the poisoned condition. Creatures with proficiency with Alchemists' supplies or a Poisoner's kit have advantage on the saving throw.