

PW4 Patron's Ultimatums

By Dan Hass



Devils and demons are vying for the upper hand in the Peka River region (because of the confluence with the recently emerged River Styx). Regardless of which ultimatum the Major accepts the village will suffer. Can heroes make a sufficient impression to establish independence for Farjvad? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 4th level characters. Episode 4 of the Patron Wars.

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Adventure Summary

PW4 Patron's Ultimatums is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 4th 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 *PW4 Patron's Ultimatums* 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.

PW4 Patron's Ultimatums 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.

PW4 Patron's Ultimatums 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. aasimar (VGM), acolyte, dire wolf, gas spore, gray ooze (psychic), guard, hobgoblin, jackalwere, noble, quasit, scout, spy, swarm of rats, thug, violet fungus
- Feats. Sharpshooter, Shield Master, War Caster
- Magic Items. *cloak of elvenkind*, *ioun stone (absorption)*, *moon-touched sword (XGE)*, *oath bow*, *ring of free action*, *stone of good luck*, *sword of wounding*, *vicious weapon*
- PHB. Portent, tiefling
- Spells. *detect thoughts*, *dispel magic*, *firebolt*, *freedom of movement*, *glyph of warding*, *hellish rebuke*, *invisibility*, *longstrider*, *magic jar*, *minor illusion*, *shield of faith*, *thaumaturgy*, *thunderwave*
- Other. Alchemist (UA), brown mold (DMG), green slime (DMG)

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

PW4 Patron's Ultimatums 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 *PW4 Patron's Ultimatums* 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).

Graz'zt

Graz'zt is different from other demon lords in that he is not completely destructive. He seems to want a functioning cosmos – just one with him as the absolute ruler and with no power sharing.

Also, Graz'zt's plans are often subtle and complex. Their success hinges on capitalizing on opponents' weaknesses that are not perceived – indeed they are sometimes seen as an asset. For example, he may use an opponent's decisiveness by presenting what looks like a vanishing opportunity to lure the opponent into a cataclysmic trap.

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 involvements, including several significant storylines wholly in the Abyss.

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 demon lord Yeenoghu attempted to establish an outpost (the topic of *PW2 A Patron's Outpost*) but was thwarted. Following that attempt was an expedition of the demon lord Zuggtmoy, Lady of Fungus. Her minions corrupted the environment around the Abyssal breach (the subject of *PW3 A Patron's Expedition*).

The Peka River has now fully merged with the Styx across the several miles of waterway between the northern and southern planar breaches.

Within Farjvad, the Order of Asmodeus has taken over the administration of the village's temple. Their knowledge of demonology has been essential to

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quarantining the demonic incursion to the riverfront. With Dante Shadowsoul (the senior Asmodean in Farjvad) advising the Major (the ruler of Farjvad) the populace has become confident that it can manage the demonic situation.

The situation has drawn the attention of the solar Viryn. He is disturbed to see the village of Farjvad fall under the influence of Asmodeus. He views this as a corruption and has dispatched servants to oust the fiendish influence from Farjvad.

The clan-based hamlet of Farberg has only a dozen families. It sets several miles from Farjvad off the Peka River on a tributary. It appeared safe from the influence of the River Styx. However, now that the breaches are fully formed, the fiends are expanding beyond the Peka. Farberg drew the attention of the demon lord Graz'zt.

Unlike many demons, Graz'zt often has subtle and devious plots. Investigating the situation, he realized the importance of Farjvad in controlling the contested area. He also determined that Farberg is on good terms with Farjvad. His agents captured Farberg easily and are occupying it. The Farberg residents are compliant for several reasons. First, the occupiers have guaranteed their safety in the face of impending violence. Second, the occupiers have used magic in a variety of ways to make the population more receptive. A Farberg delegation has been tasked with delivering a respectful gift to the Major – an amulet (that is actually a *magic jar*) – under the auspices of ensuring ongoing good relations with Farjvad.

The Farberg delegation arrived last night and met with the Major this morning. The demon in the *magic jar* possessed the Major and immediately issued orders expelling the Order of Asmodeus from Farjvad.

of his most effective tools: Dante Shadowsoul.

Before an irreversible error occurs, the PCs are asked to discover why, and in the course of their investigations, they learn that Graz'zt is secretly working within Farjvad – using the loyalty of its citizens to undermine its defenses.

The PCs have a chance to reveal a Graz'zt cell and eventually should discover that the Major is possessed by a quasit using *magic jar*.

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 agents of Graz'zt seek them out – including the possessed Major.

Parties of a Different Level

While the adventure is optimized for a party of 4th 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 4. The encounter and hazard scaling should be based on the Party Strength rather than the actual number of party members.

Adventure Outline

As the fight against the fiends continues, the Major takes an unexpected turn against one

Starting the Adventure

Downtime in Farjvad

Farjvad is a well-organized town. Until the influx of demons a few weeks 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 about a week since the action of *PW3 A Patron's War*. If the PCs were successful in returning safely to Farjvad in a timely manner, they have earned downtime (5 days is recommended). 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 this point, each PC should have at least one *potion of healing* to revive an unconscious ally. The DM may decide it is time to introduce *revivify*. While likely no PC can cast it (as it is a 3rd level spell), a PC with *revivify* on the PC's spell list can activate a *spell scroll* (obtainable as part of Downtime from the alchemist Chu or the temple to the One True Faith). If this is not the case, and the DM wants the party to have one casting available, Chu can use **Infuse Magic** to infuse a stone for the party.

The players may want to discuss elements of their characters or the situation. The DM can facilitate the discussion with:

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 discussions are complete, the DM can launch the action of the adventure by reading or paraphrasing:

The Major's requests for aid appear to have elicited a response. Emissaries from the delta city of St. Aurelius arrived last evening and are appraising the situation and have a meeting with the Major in the afternoon.

Additionally, the fiendish dangers have expanded and refugees from threatened communities are arriving into Farjvad.

Entering the common room is Dante Shadowsoul with concern on his face. He quickly moves to your table and says, "Something strange is afoot. I received a message from the Major that myself and the other members of my Order are to vacate the town's temple and leave Farjvad.

"This is extremely unexpected. If the Order of Asmodeus vacates Farjvad – not only will it be bad for Farjvad, but it could be devastating for the entire region.

"I know that the Major met with a delegation from the hamlet of Farberg this morning. I need to find out what happened in that meeting, but I cannot move freely. I would ask you find the Farberg citizens and either bring them to me at the temple or discover what caused this sudden change."

Dante Shadowsoul and the PCs

Dante is an enthusiastic member of the Order of Asmodeus, and some PCs may have issues with collaborating. By this point in the story, Dante's importance to Farjvad is well-established. He has been pivotal in fending off the demons. And he has been an effective intermediary with the devils.

One point is to force the issue so that reticent PCs recognize the fact that Farjvad is in a better position with Dante running the One True Faith in Farjvad.

Dante will offer the gratitude of the Order of Asmodeus (which may be very valuable in the future). If it is necessary, Dante can offer a reward of the DM's choosing (100 gp per PC is recommended), however he will be sincerely offended.

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Encounter 1: The Dangerous Streets

Graz'tz's Agents' Actions

Graz'tz has a long history of dealing with adventurers drawn to volatile environments like Farjvad. He knows that loose ends like the Farberg delegation can unravel best-laid plans. His agents would see potential sources of information silenced.

Graz'tz has sent human warlocks in his service to infiltrate and manipulate Farberg and has agents throughout Farjvad disguised as adventurers and refugees.

The Farberg delegation has completed their task and will be leaving at day's end. Locating them is a task that requires the entire party.

Locating the Farberg Delegation

Skills challenge

Locating the Farberg delegation is not easy. It will require the party's combined effort.

It requires 3 successful DC 15 group checks by the party to locate the delegation. If a group check exceeds the target of 15 by 5+ it counts as two successful group checks. Each group check represents about an hour of activity. The players describe what the characters will do to locate the delegation, and the DM decides which skill to apply to the group check (which doesn't have to be the same for each PC). The most likely check is Intelligence (Investigation) to put together the clues, but players may make a case for other checks. Any PC can gain advantage on 1 ability check by "spending" 1 renown (which the PCs may have accumulated in previous episodes). After each group check the DM should check for a random encounter (Appendix 3).

Map. Farjvad Streets

Background. While stable, the streets are still dangerous. As the PCs' investigation proceeds, they come to the attention of agents of Graz'tz who conjure dire wolves to eliminate the Farberg delegation. When the PCs locate the delegation, they find them unconscious and unstable.

In the street ahead are the bodies of three men matching the description of the Farberg representatives. In the street are snarling, oversized wolves.

Encounter Difficulty

This encounter uses the guidelines from XGE rather than the XP budget method from the *DMG*. This results in an encounter that is **hard** for a typical party but may be deadly for parties that are not optimized. If the encounter turns out to be more difficult than the DM expects, a well-timed Farjvad defender capable of casting *dispel magic* to eliminate the summoned wolves is within the story's framework.

Running the encounter. When the PCs arrive, the delegates have just been rendered unconscious. As "special nonplayer characters" the Farberg delegates make death saves. The wolves are summoned and instructed to kill the delegates; however, they don't have the intellect to determine if a victim is unconscious or dead. PCs have a chance to get the wolves' attention and save the delegates from death.

Scaling the encounter. There is 1 **Dire Wolf** (*MM* 305) per PC.

Summoned Creatures

In general, summoned creatures are indistinguishable from the naturally occurring examples. Usually, their complete hostility is a cue to their true nature. The DM can add a colorful description when the creatures are killed. For example, "With the killing blow, the creature evaporates into a cloud of multi-colored smoke punctuated with sparks." The DM may decide that there are other mechanisms for detecting that the creatures are summoned (for example, an Intelligence (Arcana) check).

As summoned creatures, each can be eliminated by targeting it with a *dispel magic*. In this case, each creature is the product of a 3rd level spell.

Concluding the Encounter. If the PCs rescue at least one of the delegates and interview him, the PCs can learn that the delegates were tasked with delivering an amulet to the Major. The delegates don't consider that they have done anything wrong. They can relate that there is an influx of strangers – all human – into Farberg, but to them this is a natural reaction as populations are disrupted by the fiendish activity, and communities consolidate for better defense.

Farberg has never worried about its relationship with Farjvad, but it is very important to the new arrivals, who insisted on the gift to the Major. If the players don't pick up that there is manipulation in play, the DM can offer direct information in response to a DC 15 Arcana check that will indicate residual enchantment magic in the delegates' auras (indicating charms, among other things).

After consideration, the Graz'tz agents attack.