

DGD24 Draconic Recovery

By Dan Hass



When the Dragon Cabal launched its wave of assassinations throughout southern Dimgaard, one casualty was Baron Verdadis, the noble leader who had dedicated himself, his family, and his fortune to bettering race relations. Further, the assassins absconded with his body to prevent returning him to life. Can heroes rescue the remains of this beloved leader in time to return him to his position? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 14th level characters – an additional episode in *Encounters with Gold*.

Contents

Adventure Summary.....	2
Preparing the Adventure.....	2
Running the Adventure.....	3
Adventure Background.....	3
Adventure Outline.....	4
Starting the Adventure.....	5
Encounter 1: Near the Crypt.....	6
Encounter 2: Into the Crypt.....	7
Encounter 3: The Cabal Necromancer	8
Concluding the Adventure	9
Appendix 1: DM Maps	10
Path Near Forest	10
Talamet Family Crypt.....	11
Appendix 2: NPCs	12
Baron Verdadis.....	12
Ocrin.....	12
Tusge Verdadis.....	13

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Adventure Summary

DGD24 Draconic Recovery is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 14th 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 *DGD24 Draconic Recovery* 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. *DGD24 Draconic Recovery* 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. *DGD24 Draconic Recovery* 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. cult fanatic, shambling mound, veteran, zombie
- Feats. Alert, War Caster
- Magic Items. adamantine armor, headband of intellect, ioun stone (greater absorption), moon-touched sword (XGE), ring of free action, stone of good luck
- PHB. exhaustion
- Spells. *aid, animate dead, command, dispel magic, freedom of movement, guidance, healing word, hold person, inflict wounds, lesser restoration, light, longstrider, resistance, sacred flame, shield of faith, spiritual weapon, thaumaturgy*

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.

DGD24 Draconic Recovery

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Running the Adventure

DGD24 Draconic Recovery 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 *DGD24 Draconic Recovery* 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).

Encounters with Gold

Encounters with Gold is the 21-chapter Dimgaard campaign centered on the great gold wyrm Rugarth's fixation on returning to power in Dimgaard, and the Dragon Cabal that he inspired to realize that ambition. While *Encounters with Gold* is a continuous storyline, there may be times that a DM needs (or wants) additional related chapters (such as *DGD24 Draconic Recovery*) – perhaps to rehab from a failed chapter, to cover an XP gap, to more fully establish a character, or to delve deeper into the content. Additionally, these can be presented as standalone adventures.

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

After decades of preparation, the Dragon Cabal launched a campaign to establish a holy see dedicated to the great gold wyrm Rugarth in southern Dimgaard. The first stage of their plan was to assassinate key figures that could anchor resistance.

Among those assassinated was Baron Verdadis. In addition to controlling a lucrative barony, the Baron's family has a reputation for diplomacy that bridges the hostility between dragonkin and the One True Faith. By eliminating the head of the family, the Cabal expects to throw the barony and family into disarray for several weeks and prevent their intervention in the Cabal's plans.

DGD24 Draconic Recovery

By Dan Hass

PREVIEW

In conjunction with the assassinations, the Cabal established a hidden enclave where a necromancer named Ocrin would raise the assassination victims as zombies to prevent their being *raised or resurrected*. Ocrin located an abandoned crypt (of the Talamet family) in a hostile terrain (to dissuade uninvited guests).

The Baron's son, Tusge, has managed to learn the vicinity of the necromancer's works, but the barony's primary assets must be dedicated to defending the barony against the Cabal and so cannot aid in the attempted recovery.

Parties of a Different Level

While the adventure is optimized for a party of 14th 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 14. The encounter and hazard scaling should be based on the Party Strength rather than the actual number of party members.

Adventure Outline

The heroes are enlisted to recover the body of the assassinated Baron Verdadis (taken by his assassins), which has been raised as a zombie by a necromancer of the Dragon Cabal.

Near the Cabal's base, the PCs must deal with the dangerous natural environment.

The base (a long forgotten, ancient crypt) is guarded by a sizable contingent of Cabal veterans.

Eventually, the heroes may face the necromancer (Ocrin) directly.

Among the zombies is a surprise – the remains of a Pholtan Templar.

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 twenty-four-hour period (*PHB* 168).

Once the action starts, the PCs can't take a long rest. If they insist, the Cabal learns their location is no longer a secret and evacuates the zombies and personnel to a new, undiscovered location.

PREVIEW