

EG14 Draconic Sanctum

By Dan Hass



For weeks the Dragon Cabal has terrorized southern Dimgaard with the assassinations of influential citizens. However, everyone who observed the campaign realized this was a prelude – but to what? The answer threatens the lives and freedom of all who aren't a part of the Dragon Cabal – even other dragonkin. Can heroes slow the Cabal's onslaught? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 14th level characters. Episode 14 in *Encounters with Gold*.

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Adventure Summary

EG14 Draconic Sanctum 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 *EG14 Draconic Sanctum* 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.

EG14 Draconic Sanctum 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. *EG14 Draconic Sanctum* 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, archer (VGM), auroch (VGM), banshee, commoner, gold dragon wyrmling, guard drake (VGM), mage, veteran, young white dragon,
- DMG. razorvine, social interactions
- Feats. Mage Slayer, Sharpshooter
- Magic Items. ioun stone (greater absorption), moon-touched sword (XGE), ring of free action, stone of good luck, weapon of warning
- PHB. cleric (life), paladin
- Spells. *dissonant whispers*, *fireball*, *fly*, *forbiddance*, *freedom of movement*, *glyph of warding*, *guidance*, *harm*, *invisibility*, *longstrider*, *toll the dead* (XGE); Monster Slayers (encounter 4) have an extensive spell list.
- XGE. paladin (conquest), ranger (monster slayer)

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

EG14 Draconic Sanctum is made up of 8 events arranged into 4 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 *EG14 Draconic Sanctum* 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).

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 convinced 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

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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, 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*.

The Dragon Cabal attempted to eliminate significant threats; the subjects of *EG11 Draconic Assassinations*, *EG12 Draconic Machinations*, and *EG13 Draconic Interference*. 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 escaped the assassinations.

While some of the assassination attempts were unsuccessful, most were. And the Cabal leaders see southern Dimgaard sufficiently destabilized to launch their full offensive. They have infiltrated hundreds of veterans of campaigns from throughout the cosmos, and they have magical means to bring additional forces quickly into the area.

They realized that even though Odill is a failed state, the sheer number of residents will preclude it as the first target. They plan to quickly subjugate the towns and villages that form the economic system centered on Odill, and then deal with Odill's autocrat, Prince Grail Bloodgood.

In the very early hours, over a dozen strike teams launched direct attacks to take control of key points. Some of these were immediately successful – such as the villages of Fallcrest and Greenville, which were leaderless after the assassination of their rulers a few days ago.

Others that the Cabal thought would fall quickly are proving more troublesome. One of these is the secret shrine to Bahamut near the Verdadis barony. It is critical because it has a permanent *teleportation circle* (and is working to reestablish it) and is an important symbol to moderate dragonkin. The shrine suffered greatly in earlier action, and the Cabal leaders presumed the attendants would readily join the Cabal rather than face the threat of destruction. When Curate Oktec (leader of the shrine's attendants) did not immediately accede to the Cabal's demands, the Cabal used *forbiddance* to isolate the shrine.

Now, the attendants have fortified the shrine and refuse to surrender. The entire

region is engaged in open warfare, and no one the Curate has managed to contact (via *sending*) can commit to a relief mission, but Oktec is devoted to resisting the Cabal.

The Cabal is now in a difficult position. Bahamut is an important patron to many major Dimgaard dragonkin. An atrocity against the shrine's keepers could trigger a severe schism. Further, the Cabal's patron Rugarth has a complicated history with Bahamut. Rugarth considers himself a peer but Bahamut does not. This tension may not withstand another direct assault by the Cabal on a shrine dedicated to Bahamut – even one in a remote location.

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 Dragon Cabal begins its offensive, and Wulxan solicits the PCs to prevent the fall of the Bahamut shrine.

The PCs must face the challenge of reaching the shrine.

The shrine is surrounded, and the PCs must gain access through the Cabal's soldiers.

In the shrine, Curate Oktec is on the verge of surrendering and joining the Cabal unless the PCs persuade him differently.

Cabal zealots make a final attempt to win the day.

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, without timely aid, Curate Oktec surrenders the Bahamut shrine and joins the Cabal.