

EG15 Draconic Escape

By Dan Hass



War has gripped southern Dimgaard as the Dragon Cabal makes its move. The defenders were destabilized and are fighting to regroup. Can heroes rescue the important assets from the beleaguered city of Odill before it falls? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 15th level characters. The 15th episode of *Encounters with Gold*.

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Adventure Summary

EG15 Draconic Escape is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 15th 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 Feats* (UAF) ([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 *EG15 Draconic Escape* 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. *EG15 Draconic Escape* 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. *EG15 Draconic Escape* 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. commoner, mage, salamander, thug, veteran, young white dragon, wyvern
- Feats. Alert, Mage Slayer, Shield Master, Spear Master (UAF)
- Magic Items. adamantine armor, moon-touched sword (XGE), ring of free action, ring of protection, staff of flowers (XGE), stone of good luck, vicious weapon, weapon of warning
- PHB. fighter (champion), paladin
- Spells. aid, armor of Agathys, bless, command, divine favor, find steed, fireball, hold person, lesser restoration, shield of faith, spiritual weapon, teleport
- XGE. paladin (conquest)

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

EG15 Draconic Escape 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 *EG15 Draconic Escape* 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).

Order of Metal

While most chromatic dragonkin are organized into cults, the metallic (usually good) dragonkin have formed an affiliation known as the Order of Metal. It works toward the improvement of everyone's conditions, and in particular has a goal of peaceful coexistence and cooperation between all races.

The Order operates in some cases with individual agents tasked with monitoring or helping a specific situation or location. An example is the gold dragonborn Wulxan who operates in and around the city of Odill.

The Order of Metal was formed centuries ago, and there is a frustration among younger dragonkin at the lack of progress. Many younger radicals favor more militant action.

Adventure Background

Southern Dimgaard has a history of draconic activity, but a few months ago, the activity spiked. The half-orc wizard Cebak hatched green dragon eggs. He planned to establish an empire using them as the core of his force. (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, a leader within the Cult of the Green Dragon. Orthis' cell occupied a forest near Tallywood (in the Alshon region), but the evil nature of

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the cultists could not be tolerated by surrounding communities and the cult was eliminated. (The subject of *EG1 Draconic Awareness* through *EG4 Draconic Refugees*.)

The Verdadis barony took in some of the dragon cultists hoping of reform, and in the subsequent weeks (as addressed in *EG5 Draconic Crimes*, *EG6 Draconic Wedge*, and *EG7 Draconic Evidence*) other parties emerged: 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.

The Dragon Cabal destabilized the region with a wave of terror – especially assassinations; 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. The Cabal leaders saw Southern Dimgaard sufficiently destabilized to launch their full offensive (in *EG14 Draconic Sanctums*).

For generations, dragonkin have adopted two strategies to avoid the persecution against them rife throughout Dimgaard; those with softer features live disguised in larger human communities, but those whose features are too extreme to disguise as human dwell in hidden enclaves. As part of the Dragon Cabal's offensive, in addition to the human towns and villages it has conquered, the Cabal has also taken subjugated dragonkin enclaves (many willingly).

The Verdadis barony has withstood the Cabal so far. Dragonkin that are opposed to the violence of the Cabal are in a difficult situation. The humans – under pressure from the Dragon Cabal – group all dragonkin as a threat, while the Cabal either impresses them into the Cabal's service or executes them as race traitors. The Verdadis barony – a historic refuge for peaceful dragonkin – is the only haven for the dragonkin who resist the Cabal.

In Odill, the Cabal has breached the walls, and the war wages in the streets. Prince Grail Bloodgood realizes he no longer rules Odill; it is an open city. He has a corps of loyal veterans, and within pockets throughout the city he has valuable assets he is using to negotiate terms. He has

distributed these into secret locations so that if the Cabal simply kills the Prince, the guards he has in place will either take the assets (in the case of treasure) and flee, or kill the important hostages.

A group of optimistic dragonkin were hopeful that Odill could be salvaged and had approached the Prince offering advice on resistance. However, the prince saw these dragonkin as a valuable bargaining chip in his negotiations and has taken them, including Wulxan, prisoner while he awaits word from the cabal.

Parties of a Different Level

While the adventure is optimized for a party of 15th 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 15. The encounter and hazard scaling should be based on the Party Strength rather than the actual number of party members.

Adventure Outline

Odill is about to fall to the Dragon Cabal, and the PCs are enlisted to rescue dragonkin trapped in the city.

Arriving in the city, the PCs experience a convergence of extra-planar activity and warfare as an alchemist shop explodes creating a breach to the elemental plane of fire.

Searching for the captive dragonkin exposes them to dangers in the combat zone, but also provides an opportunity to make a new ally.

The Dragon Cabal has cordoned off the warehouse holding the dragonkin.

Finally, the party must deal with the Prince's guards holding the dragonkin and resolve issues with hesitant dragonkin.

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, Prince Grail Bloodgood turns over the dragonkin to the Cabal as part of his negotiations.