

EG16 A Draconic Ally

By Dan Hass



All southern Dimgaard is on the verge of falling under the dominion of the Dragon Cabal. The events have evolved so quickly that – although rumors are that the Metropolitan is attempting to coordinate a broad reactionary force – the Dragon Cabal has faced very little resistance. But a few forces are holding out – such as the Verdadis barony. Can heroes unify the disparate opposition to the Dragon Cabal into a force to turn the tide of the onslaught? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 16th level characters – the 16th episode in *Encounters with Gold*.

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Adventure Summary

EG16 A Draconic Ally is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 16th 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 *EG16 A Draconic Ally* 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. *EG16 A Draconic Ally* 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. *EG16 A Draconic Ally* 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, auroch (VGM), bandit giant, berserker, cult fanatic, scorpion, noble, owl
- Feats. Alert, Mage Slayer, Polearm Master, Ritual Caster, Spear Master (UA)
- Magic Items. cloak of elvenkind, ring of free action, stone of good luck, sword of wounding, vicious weapon,
- PHB. Fighter (Champion), Paladin, Ranger
- Spells. *absorb elements* (XGE), *counterspell*, *dispel magic*, *find familiar*, *fog cloud*, *glyph of warding*, *goodberry*, *hunter's mark*, *Leomund's tiny hut*, *lesser restoration*, *longstrider*, *pass without trace*, *phantom steed*, *protection from evil and good*, *sending*, *shatter*, *teleport*, *unseen servant*, *zone of truth*
- 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

EG16 A Draconic Ally is made up of 9+ 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 *EG16 A Draconic Ally* 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).

Ancient Black Dragon: Braindryt

During the Great Reduction, when archfey forced ruling dragons to vacate Dimgaard, Braindryt was a young dragon. Unlike other dragons, he did not leave. He had mastered the ability to change his appearance and remained in Dimgaard – moving, hiding and masking his appearance. For thousands of years, he maneuvered through the evolving cultures of Dimgaard with no hint of his true self or existence.

The lack of other true dragons suited him – as black dragons are known to fear and hate other dragons. Braindryt is now thousands of years old.

Several centuries ago, Braindryt began to build a covert organization to serve him. Many of these are dragonkin that are his progeny – where he had mated with females of other races while masked as one of their kind to infuse their bloodline with black dragon heritage. But others are outcasts who have rallied to his banner without his direct influence.

Braindryt's long term goals are unclear – if he has any besides his own survival and indulgences. However, as a black dragon, he definitely doesn't want to see a revival of true dragons in Dimgaard.

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

The frontier of southern Dimgaard has a history of draconic activity, but a few months

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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.

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 that is rife throughout Dimgaard; those with softer features live disguised in larger human communities, but for those whose features are too extreme to disguise as human they have established hidden enclaves. In addition to the known towns and villages, the Cabal has also taken over the hidden dragonkin enclaves.

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 defenders 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 *EG15 Draconic Escape* the heroes were tasked with helping a group of influential dragonkin escape Odill to the safety of the Verdadis barony in the wake of the collapse under pressure from the Cabal.

The Verdadis Family

It is lost to history where, when, or how the Verdadis family's bloodline became intermingled with that of a green dragon, but it did, and it is strong. Almost every family member manifests the draconic ancestry to some degree. For most of the family's history, they lived in fear of the One True Faith, or the reactions of the populace if their secret became known.

About fifty years ago, Osun Verdadis retired from a successful adventuring career to build a fief in some open territory to the east of Mooresgate. It became known as the Barony of Verdadis and quietly prospered.

As it grew, it drew the attention of the Duchy of Trussia (which has Mooresgate as its capital). The barony became a vassal state of the duchy and thrived.

The (true) rumors are that the Barony of Verdadis is a haven for dragonkin who are content to live quiet private lives with respect for the One True Faith (though not necessarily adherence) and a willingness to recognize the importance of peace.

The Barony of Verdadis has been the target of several campaigns over the years. Some by adventurers, some by Pholtans, and some by the Inquisition. However, the political influence of the Duchy of Trussia has prevented a full crusade.

Meanwhile, the organization supporting the ancient black dragon Braindryt has been affected by the Cabal offensive. In particular, the Cabal had no knowledge of Braindryt at all prior to the offensive. In response to the Cabal aggression, agents of Braindryt were tasked with monitoring the Cabal. Several were discovered and captured by the Cabal.

Braindryt's agent in charge is Akrok (a human with black dragon influence deep in his ancestry). The capture of agents that he manages will reflect badly on Akrok – perhaps fatally.

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