

EG17 The Draconic See

By Dan Hass



The Dragon Cabal has overwhelmed the communities of southern Dimgaard in its effort to create a holy empire (a see) dedicated to the ancient gold wurm Rugarth. They have begun to solidify their positions by ruthlessly eliminating resistance and coopting resources. Can heroes help keep the only center of organized resistance independent? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 17th level characters. Episode seventeen in *Encounters with Gold*.

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Credits	
Editing	Jeremy Esch
Contributor	Brandon Twyford
Cover Art	Fernando Olmedo (his work)

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Adventure Summary

EG17 The Draconic See is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 17th 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 *EG17 The Draconic See* 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.

EG17 The Draconic See 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.

EG17 The Draconic See can be run with a lot of interaction between the PCs and NPCs depending on the inclinations of the players and DM. 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. archer (VGM), auroch (VGM), banshee, cult fanatic, gold dragon wyrmling, guard, guard drake (VGM), marilith, noble, veteran
- Feats. lucky, polearm master, spear master (UAF)
- Magic Items. moon-touched sword (XGE), ring of free action, stone of good luck, vicious weapon
- PHB. Commander's Strike battlemaster maneuver, Fighter (champion), Paladin
- Spells. absorb elements (XGE), aid, clone, demiplane, dispel magic, freedom of movement, goodberry, greater restoration, harm, hunter's mark, lesser restoration, longstrider, pass without trace, protection from evil and good, zone of truth
- XGE. Conquest Oath, Monster Slayer ranger.

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

EG17 The Draconic See is made up of a mixture of both planned and random 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 *EG17 The Draconic See* 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 encounters generally use 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 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 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*

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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, EG15 Draconic Escape, and EG16 A Draconic Ally*).

The Verdadis family has spent generations attempting to improve relations between dragonkin and the more numerous humans of Dimgaard. In that effort, the Verdadis have learned that while there may be instances where hostility towards the humans and the One True Faith have temporary success, eventually the full force of the much more numerous and resource-rich humans eliminates the upstarts.

The Verdadis barony is a vassal within the Duchy of Trussia, and Duke Valkin has negotiated a settlement with the Dragon Cabal that will allow the Duchy to remain intact with Valkin remaining in power (in exchange for fealty to the Dragon Cabal). The Verdadis have defied the Duke's surrender orders and withstood the Cabal so far – the final organized resistance in the region. Dragonkin that are opposed to 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.

The Dragon Cabal is aware that the Verdadis barony is home to many dragonkin and hoped that the Verdadis would see the reality that resisting the Cabal is fruitless. Additionally, the Cabal expected the Verdadis to realize that the Dragon Cabal has the strength and resources to change the nature of Dimgaard. But the Cabal can tolerate the Verdadis defiance no longer. With the Verdadis barony rejecting the Cabal's ultimatum, the stage is set for a battle to determine the survival of the barony.

Parties of a Different Level

While the adventure is optimized for a party of 17th 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 17. The encounter and hazard scaling should be based on the Party Strength rather than the actual number of party members.

Adventure Outline

The battle for the Verdadis barony has arrived.

The PCs have the opportunity to delay and reduce the Cabal's army as it approaches.

In the streets of Verdadis Keep, the PCs face the onslaught, and it becomes clear that the defenders are facing a force beyond the defenders' means to resist – including facing one of Rugarth's premier champions.

As a last resort, the heroes must protect the safety of the Verdadis noble family so that Tusge Verdadis can escape to carry on the cause after the barony's fall.

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 as the battle won't wait for them.

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