

EG21 The Great Gold Wymr

By Dan Hass



All may not be as it seems with the godlike great gold wymr Rugarth. There may be a reason why the gold dragon turned from benevolence to warmongering. Can heroes learn the truth about the great gold wymr and realign his attitude? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 20th level characters. Episode 21 of *Encounters with Gold*.

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Adventure Summary

EG21 The Great Gold Wyrm is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 20th level characters who are very well prepared. 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 *EG21 The Great Gold Wyrm* 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. *EG21 The Great Gold Wyrm* 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. *EG21 The Great Gold Wyrm* 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.

A battlemat or dungeon tiles may be helpful, but not necessary.

Items for Review

- Creatures. ancient gold dragon, mage, stone golem
- DMG. Short Term Madness
- Feats. Alert, Lucky, War Caster
- Magic Items. *ioun stone* (greater absorption), *staff of charming*, *stone of good luck*, *vicious weapon*
- PHB. greater portent
- Spells. *cone of cold*, *counterspell*, *demiplane*, *detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *fire bolt*, *fireball*, *fly*, *forcecage*, *gate*, *glyph of warding: spell glyph*, *greater invisibility*, *guidance*, *hold person*, *ice storm*, *lesser restoration*, *light*, *mage armor*, *mage hand*, *magic missile*, *mass suggestion*, *maze*, *misty step*, *prestidigitation*, *reverse gravity*, *sequester*, *shield*, *suggestion*, *true polymorph*, *true resurrection*

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

EG21 The Great Gold Wyrms 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 *EG21 The Great Gold Wyrms* 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).

The Great Reduction

Many thousands of years ago, Dimgaard was home to several powerful dragons. Dragonkind were the predominant races in the region. Despite their natural rivalries, the chromatic and metallic dragons had complicated agreements to avoid disastrous internecine wars.

At some point fey, which had crossed from the Feywild, gave rise to elves in the deep sylvan areas. The Archfey had a fond and protective view of elves and realized that as long as the dragons ruled, the elves would be constrained. Through a campaign of intrigue that took several centuries, the Archfey engineered a war between the metallic and chromatic dragons.

The dragon war lasted several centuries but eventually the metallic dragons won a narrow victory. A handful of powerful chromatic dragons managed to flee the region, but most were killed in the war.

Only a few powerful metallic dragons were left alive, and their supporting resources were drained by the war. At that point the Archfey delivered an ultimatum. The remaining true dragons would either be allowed to flee or be killed.

The campaign of intrigue, the dragon war, and the ultimatum that resulted in eliminating true dragons from Dimgaard became collectively known as the **Great Reduction** among the dragonkind that were left behind.

Rugarth is an ancient gold dragon deprived of his territory by the Archfey in the aftermath of the dragon war.

Because of the relationship between the Archfey and elves and the Archfey's role in the Great Reduction, dragonkind see elves as bitter enemies.

Elves are aware of the history of the dragons but feel no responsibility for it. The Archfey's acted of their own volition. True that the outcome benefited the fledgling elf race, but no elf participated or even instigated the Archfey's.

Adventure Background

Dimgaard is on the brink of a wide-ranging war between the Dragon Cabal and the One True Faith. Even if contained, it will still devastate large swaths of Dimgaard. But both sides have intractable positions, and the choices of Rugarth's chief administrator in Dimgaard (Caliph Ranriss) are to either pursue a path he knows to be disastrous or

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openly defy his patron deity (Rugarth). In hopes a new perspective will convince the senior members of Rugarth's organization – perhaps even Rugarth himself – Caliph Ranriss has arranged for a delegation to travel to the capital of Rugarth's domain (Auricholm) and meet with Rugarth's Archon the chief noble in Rugarth's empire.

In *EG19 The Draconic Capital* the heroes had the chance to establish themselves in Auricholm and investigate the political complications of the city. It took several days before the heroes found a place on the Archon's daily agenda. During that time, elements within the capital with vested interests in war have been organizing to prevent the heroes from swaying the Archon. Some were surprising.

In *EG20 The Dragon Archon* the PCs met with Rugarth's primary administrator to petition him away from war.

The Archon has consulted with Rugarth and deigned to grant the heroes a personal audience within his personal sanctum.

Rugarth's Issue

Rugarth is a dragon who is many, many thousands of years old, and progressed beyond ancient as described in *MM* 86. This stage is often called a great wyrm.

One issue for a dragon with a life that long is they begin to despair as they focus on the biggest traumas suffered over their long life. For Rugarth, this was the exile from his native territory in Dimgaard by the Archfey.

Recently (about a century ago) Rugarth began to consider moving to a new phase. For most gold dragons – presuming they have lived a noble life – this would be ascending to Chronias, the topmost layer of Mount Celestia. However, as Rugarth began to consider exiting his mortal state, he contemplated death. It is the great mystery many deep thinkers ponder.

Between the despair of his great age and the draw of the great mystery of death, Rugarth has lapsed into a (nearly) suicidal state. A primary consideration for Rugarth is the nature of self-destruction – and the consequences it could have on his state after death. He has become convinced that to explore death, he needs to be killed in noble combat. This brings up the complication of his Discorporation – making it very hard to kill him.

But he has learned of a mechanism that may bypass his Discorporation.

Cipa's Influence

Rugarth has relied on his progeny for many thousands of years – finding them generally very loyal and reliable. These offspring were his heralds, agents, and secretaries for thousands of years, and constituted a powerful corps for reaching his goals.

Beginning about a century ago, one of Rugarth's great granddaughters – the gold dragon Cipa – became very influential. She recognized the shift in Rugarth's mood and focus on esoteric matters such as death and ascension. She steered his focus away from ruling his vast empire and gathered that power for herself. With Rugarth distracted, Cipa became the most influential member of Rugarth's organization.

With a firm grip on Rugarth's power, she directed Rugarth's empire toward becoming a vehicle of extreme justice and launched a series of wars to the exclusion of other considerations, such as enlightenment and compassion.

Cipa's grip on power is now dependent on the war culture she built.

Adventure Outline

The PCs are invited to join Rugarth in his sanctum in Mount Celestia. He informs them that he is willing to reward them handsomely if they can kill him in a fair battle. He tells them of a pool controlled by Wee Jas that will enable their weapons to kill even a great wyrm.

At the pool, there are magical protections and waiting mages.

Returning to Rugarth's sanctum (after several hours) the PCs find that Rugarth has been drawn away so that they can be attacked by stone golems.

Finally, the PCs have a chance to defeat Rugarth and claim their rewards.

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, Rugarth decides the PCs are not worthy of his attention and refuses them further access.

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