

PW10 Patron Alliances

By Dan Hass



The breach of Dimgaard by the River Styx has produced an almost never-seen situation. Members of groups that historically do not pause from attacking each other now have the opportunity to find common goals and negotiate aligned strategies. But, these powerful alliances could present a danger by destabilizing the delicate defense framework. Can heroes manage these emerging coalitions in a way to protect the innocent? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 10th level characters. Episode 10 in the *Patron Wars*.

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Adventure Summary

PW10 Patron Alliances is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 10th 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 *PW10 Patron Alliances* 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. *PW10 Patron Alliances* 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. *PW10 Patron Alliances* 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. acolyte, ancient red dragon, archer (VGM), bargura, cultist, hell hounds, gray ooze, jackalwere, martial arts adept (VGM), noble, quasit, veteran, violet fungus, will-o'-wisp
- Feats. Alert
- Magic Items. *headband of intellect*, *ioun stone* (absorption), *moon-touched sword* (XGE), *ring of free action*, *stone of good luck*, *weapon of warning*
- PHB. Flexible Casting, Font of Magic, Tides of Chaos, Wild Magic Surge
- Spells. *blindness/deafness*, *clone*, *counterspell*, *detect thoughts*, *dispel magic*, *featherfall*, *fire bolt*, *fireball*, *glyph of warding: spell glyph*, *guidance*, *hold person*, *light*, *mage hand*, *magic missile*, *message*, *minor illusion*, *prestidigitation*, *Rary's telepathic bond*, *shield*, *thaumaturgy*

Dimgaard Philosophy

Dimgaard's primary principle is that D&D should be an entertaining experience. 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

PW10 Patron Alliances 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 *PW10 Patron Alliances* 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).

Azazel

Azazel is an archdevil. His influence has varied greatly over the eons – at times rivaling Mephistopheles and Baalzebul. He aspires to supplant Asmodeus as ruler of Baator (the Nine Hells).

He is not well-liked among other archdevils because Azazel is conceited and condescending. When his naked ambition inevitably leads to open hostility, he has few allies to aid him. To that end, Azazel relies on minions – warlocks and cult leaders – to build and maintain an infrastructure to support his campaigns. Azazel bestows powers in these loyal minions and many find service to him personally rewarding.

However, Azazel is zealous in policing potential rivals, and is diligent in preventing his minions from accumulating enough power to be a threat.

Adventure Background

The River Styx has altered course and insinuated itself into the Material Plane. Several miles upstream from the village of Farjvad, it has merged with the Peka River, forming a breach to the Abyss. Several miles downstream it diverges from the Peka River and enters into the Nine Hells, forming a breach to that realm.

The Abyssal breach was the first to form. When it began to manifest a few weeks ago, it immediately disrupted river traffic. The demon lord Yeenoghu attempted to establish an outpost (the topic of *PW2 A Patron's Outpost*) but was thwarted. Following that attempt was an expedition of the demon lord Zuggtmoy, Lady of Fungus. Her minions corrupted the environment around the Abyssal breach (the subject of *PW3 A Patron's Expedition*).

The Peka River has now fully merged with the Styx across the several miles of waterway between the northern and southern planar breaches.

Because of the River Styx's sudden, random change in course, the area surrounding the town of Farjvad has become overrun with demons from the breach to the north. In response, devils have entered the theater through the breach to Baator to the south.

Asmodeus is now an accepted intercessor within the One True Faith, and Farjvad's temple has been turned over to the Order of Asmodeus to coordinate the defense of the area. The Asmodean acolyte Dante

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Shadowsoul has become the high priest of the temple in Farjvad.

Over the past several weeks the followers of several different powerful entities joined the campaign. Their agendas are generally aligned toward immediately opposing the demon invasion, but their long-term goals vary greatly, and many are directly contrary. Dante Shadowsoul – with authority granted by the Major (Farjvad's ruler) – has established Farjvad as a bastion of Asmodeus, to the chagrin of many of Asmodeus' bitter adversaries.

The proximity has allowed rivals to explore common plans – undermining Asmodeus. Some have decided that the security of Farjvad is not worth the value it holds for Asmodeus. Plots are being formed that may compromise the safety of the region.

Among the factions are followers of the empyrean Sareash. Their focus is destroying tyranny and establishing individual freedom. Asmodeus is the epitome of tyrannical rule and the primacy of order over freedom. When the Sareashians first arrived – several weeks ago – they were convinced to forego any action hostile to the established order until the demonic threat was neutralized. But some members have grown impatient – as zealots are wont to do – and are now working to overthrow the Asmodeans (and the Major as a collaborator).

Recognizing the opportunity presented by the Sareashians, followers of Azazel – an off-again, on-again Duke of Baator with ambitions to supplant Asmodeus – are hoping to form an alliance. Azazel has sent a herald named Uricis to negotiate with the Sareashians as well as followers of the Demon Prince Eldanoth, patron of criminals.

But within the Sareashians, Anastas has learned of the rogue element's plan. She is close with many of them and believes she can change their minds, but she needs help reaching them.

Parties of a Different Level

While the adventure is optimized for a party of 10th 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 10. The encounter and hazard scaling should be based on the Party Strength rather than the actual number of party members.

Adventure Outline

The PCs are contacted by an aasimar concerned that her comrades are about to make a huge mistake by allying with the archdevil Azazel. She asks the PCs to help her convince them differently.

To reach the misguided celestials, the party must traverse the dangerous wilderness around Farjvad.

Near the celestials, the PCs are confronted by agents of Graz'zt who want to see the alliance take place.

Finally, the PCs have a chance to convince the celestials of the folly of their path before returning to Farjvad.

In Farjvad, the PCs are approached by Dante Shadowsoul who tells them that the celestials are just one target for the ambassador of Azazel. He asks the PCs to find the Azazel ambassador and ensure that Dante's inquisitor has a chance to determine if treason has occurred against Asmodeus.

Again, the PCs must face the dangers of the wilderness to find the area where the Azazel herald will negotiate. However, the area is secured by agents of the demon prince Eldanoth.

Finally, the PCs have a chance to subject the ambassador to Dante's inquisitor. Again, the PCs must return to Farjvad.

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, Uricis achieves the alliances he desires, making the situation much more unstable.