

# PW8 Celestial Patrons

By Dan Hass



The insinuation of the River Styx into Dimgaard has already drawn the attention of powerful entities from both the Abyss and Baator. Now other forces in the cosmos have arrived with interests in the activities of the fiends. Their influence could undermine the structure put in place to protect innocents from the violence of the conflict between devils and fiends. Can heroes find a way to integrate these forces into a productive defense? A Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition Adventure for 1-8 8th level characters. Episode 8 in the *Patron Wars*.

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## Adventure Summary

*PW8 Celestial Patrons* is a Dungeons and Dragons® 5th Edition adventure designed for 1-8 8<sup>th</sup> 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* ([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 *PW8 Celestial Patrons* 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](http://www.dimgaard.com).

## Preparing the Adventure

It is always a good idea for the DM to read through an adventure before running it. *PW8 Celestial Patrons* 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. *PW8 Celestial Patrons* 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](http://www.dmsguild.com)).

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

## Items for Review

- Creatures. *barlgura*, *cult fanatic*, *empyrean*, *giant elk*, *hell hound*, *jackalwere*, *solar*, *spy*, *violet fungus*, *will-o'-wisp*
- DMG. *poisons*: *burnt othur fumes*, *carrion crawler mucus*; *Short Term Madness*
- Feats. *Alert*, *Lucky*, *Mage Slayer*, *Spear Master* (UAF)
- Magic Items. *cloak of elvenkind*, *headband of intellect*, *ioun stone* (absorption), *stone of good luck*, *sword of wounding*, *vicious weapon*
- PHB. *Fighter*: *Champion*
- Spells. *armor of Agathys*, *command*, *fireball*, *hellish rebuke*, *heroes' feast*, *greater restoration*, *hold person*, *inflict wounds*, *lesser restoration*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*, *protection from evil and good*, *sacred flame*, *shield of faith*, *spiritual weapon*, *thaumaturgy*.

## 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.

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## Running the Adventure

*PW8 Celestial Patrons* 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 *PW8 Celestial Patrons* 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 <sup>1</sup>. 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 Solar: Usiel*

Usiel is a free acting solar (MM 18). He is ancient – possibly created with the multiverse. Usiel is known as the epitome of a champion. For most of his history, he sought out populations suffering under tyranny and fought to better their situation. Often this meant changing the nature of the rulers rather than overthrowing them. He was one of the first (perhaps the first) to establish enumerated rights of the commonfolk to protect them from the whims of nobles and others in power.

Usiel hasn't been seen for several thousand years. He distributes his power (and authority) to worthy disciples who are charged with carrying out his mission to the far corners of the cosmos.

The rumor is that Usiel has joined a conclave in Jovar (the sixth level of Mount Celestia) and is working (perhaps with other celestials) to compile a comprehensive source document regarding governance, justice, and the inherent rights of sentient creatures. Once completed (if completed?) Usiel will ascend to the isolation of the seventh level of Mount Celestial – Chronias.

### *The Empyrean: Sareash*

Sareash is an empyrean (MM 130) whose presence emerged only a few centuries ago. His recent emergence leads scholars to believe he is quite young (for an empyrean), but is contrasted by the fact that he exhibits powers beyond those of very old empyreans. Sareash is so strong that he is able to serve as a celestial warlock patron.

Sareash is dedicated to liberty. He works to abolish stifling authoritarian rulers – often through emissaries to avoid a face to face conflict with other powerful deities. A warlock with Sareash as a patron is rumored to have been a key member of the adventurers who brought down the Abyssal Drow Empire and imprisoned Lolth in a special mirror of imprisonment.

Sareash is viewed by many, many other powerful entities such as Pholtus, Asmodeus, and Usiel (see previous sidebar) as a destabilizing influence; a well-meaning but short-sighted and unrealistic ideologue. The short history of Sareash's campaigns includes populations left without a ruling structure necessary for organized defense against powerful evil. Consequently, Sareash has few allied powers in his efforts.

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

There are several lesser communities within a day's travel of Farjvad, and these have become the focus of different Abyssal or Diabolic powers. Resolving the issues in these communities was the topic of *PW5 The Corrupting Patron*, *PW6 The Criminal Patron*, and *PW7 The Quiet Patron* – as well as *DGD25 The Insurgent Patron*.

As news of the two breaches has spread, other forces have become interested in the area. In *PW8 Celestial Patrons*, forces in the service of the solar Usiel and the empyrean Sareash arrive to cleanse the region. With elements serving both the celestials and archdevils, conflicts among the defenders evolved quickly (addressed in *PW9 Patron Animosity*).

Warlocks of Sareash are rushing toward Farjvad intent on ending the influence of the

Order of Asmodeus, which they hold in the utmost contempt.

Followers of Usiel are also concerned about the authority held by the Asmodeans but may be reassured and aid in defense.

### *Parties of a Different Level*

While the adventure is optimized for a party of 8<sup>th</sup> 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 8. The encounter and hazard scaling should be based on the Party Strength rather than the actual number of party members.

### Adventure Outline

The PCs meet with Dante Shadowsoul who relates that disruptive radical anti-authoritarian followers of an empyrean are on their way and enlists the PCs' help.

The meeting is disrupted by an assassination attempt against Dante (and the PCs) by the anti-authoritarians.

The PCs must intercept the approaching anti-authoritarians before they reach Farjvad and wreak havoc. The PCs may reach a peaceful arrangement with the anti-authoritarians but then must return to Farjvad for a long rest.

The next day, Dante brings news that another celestial influence has taken interest – the solar Usiel. However, Usiel has the potential to contribute to the defense of Farjvad. The PCs are charged with secretly escorting a herald of Usiel named Zama into Farjvad to negotiate with The Major and Dante. The PCs must venture through the dangerous wilderness and safely escort Zama into town.

The rival of Asmodeus, Azazel, tries to disrupt the plan at the last moment.

### *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, the events of the days transpire without the PCs' influence with negative results.