

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

Adventure

Die Vecna Die!

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Introduction

"[...] the Serpent speaks directly to Vecna. Others—daring to call themselves wizards, magicians, and sorcerers—manipulate the tiniest aspects of the Serpent and call it magic. But Vecna speaks to the Serpent, and the Serpent speaks back."

—Vecna Reborn

Once upon a time lost to history, there lived a mortal man called Vecna. Vecna plumbed the arts of magecraft, eventually becoming the most accomplished and powerful wizard of all times and spaces. When a betrayer's blade maimed and cut him down, Vecna rose again, infused with secrets of magic no mortal was ever meant to know. He was now a true demigod, while the relics of his former body gained fame in their own right. His power magnified many times over, Vecna schemed, laying audacious plans designed to transform himself into a true god, possibly even a supreme god. Just when all portents aligned with Vecna's will, the demigod was snatched from his former abode and forcibly caged in a misty realm. Vecna's imprisoning dimension, known as the Demiplane of Dread, offered diversions that successfully sidetracked the Maimed Lord, for a time.

Vecna is nothing if tenacious. His goal of true godhood is too grand to suffer from misty distractions, and he has just recently (in demigod terms) put those distractions behind him. Now, the demigod's full concentration is focused on ascension. If Vecna perseveres, the very gyres of the multiverse may come undone and be cast down in ashes by Vecna, transfigured!

Preparation

This AD&D® adventure is designed for four to six player characters (PCs or heroes) of 10th to 13th level. Even with the impressive abilities and powers that a party of this level can command, the adventure is challenging, and in some cases, deadly.

Die, Vecna, Die! is a stand-alone adventure, but Dungeon Masters (DMs) can easily insert it into their ongoing campaign. Dungeon Masters can alter names of temples, castles, lands, and even nonplayer characters (NPCs) described in this product if doing so would ease incorporation of this adventure into their campaigns. Those DMs familiar with the GREYHAWK®, RAVENLOFT®, and/or PLANESCAPE® settings can find familiar references to use as easy attachment points for personal campaigns, but such familiarity isn't required.

This adventure references sites and places touched upon in a few past AD&D products; however, none of those products are necessary to play *Die, Vecna, Die!* As a self-contained adventure, it also possesses special rules and unique references. As always, the DM should have a copy of the *Player's Handbook* (PHB) and the *DUNGEON*

MASTER® Guide (DMG). A copy of the *MONSTROUS MANUAL™* tome is also useful, but not mandatory.

Text that appears in unshaded boxes is player information, which the DM can read aloud or paraphrase when appropriate. Shaded boxes contain important information for the DM, including new monster descriptions, new magic items, and special rules. Generally, monster descriptions are provided with each encounter as appropriate. However, there are two types of stat blocks: full descriptions for those complicated beings that appear only once, and short descriptions for those beings who appear more than once. Dungeon Masters can turn to the Appendix for full descriptions of these latter creatures.

Finally, the Adventure Background and the Adventure Summary sections provide the DM with framework information necessary to run the adventure. In addition, DMs can use these sections to extrapolate scenarios should the heroes move off the adventure track.

Adventure Background

Despite Vecna's entrapment in the Demiplane of Dread, long-laid plans have come to fruition. In Vecna's quest to achieve full and permanent godhood, he instigated several alternative strategies in the millennia of his existence. Many of these designs have played out with little to recommend them, but elements of more sinister schemes continue to move unnoticed.

One such plan has promise at this point. Sometime during the span of years before his imprisonment, Vecna went to a lot of trouble secretly fabricating two tablets inscribed with a true dweomer in the Language Primeval. Then he buried them in a plausible archeological site. True dweomers represent 10th and higher level magic, and they can be understood and cast only by spellcasters of 20th level or higher. The Language Primeval, a surpassingly powerful magical grammar, was spoken by the Ancient Brethren, the Elders, and other semimythical races when all the worlds were young or yet unborn. As a confidant of the Serpent, Vecna has some knowledge of this purely magical tongue, and so he recorded a spell of uncommon power.

The tablets were a set-up, secretly aimed at a handful of demipowers who met Vecna's criteria. The very power of the magical language recorded upon them made the tablets and all consequences of their discovery proof against almost every form of scrying and divinatory magic. Even when gods wielded such magic, the tablets remained steeped in mystery, save for a tantalizing clue hinting at transcendental significance.

Though any of a handful of demipowers would have served Vecna's purpose, the corpse king Iuz took the bait. Having stolen the tablets from their original discoverers several years ago, Iuz has slowly brought his considerable resources to bear on the tablets. The more

Iuz learned, the more the ancient formula seemed, to him and all his divinatory means, an ancient dweomer of stupendous strength, whereby a demipower might bootstrap itself to full ascension!

The particulars of the dweomer, according to Iuz's study anyway, require a portion of flesh from the original body of any other demipower (called the "sacrificial" demipower). While in possession of the relic, the candidate demipower must cast the spell recorded on the tablets within a span of a few feet from the sacrificial demipower. Energized by the dweomer and using the relic as a conduit, the full power of the sacrificial demipower flows to the candidate demipower, and in so doing, elevates the candidate to full godhood. Or so the tablets promise. The tablets lie.

The actual magic resembles the formula in Iuz's possession as recorded on the tablets; however, the real formula requires the sacrificial demipower to willingly instigate the magic of transfer as a catalyst. Then, when the tablet dweomer concludes, the real candidate demipower speaks the capstone phrase in the Language Primeval, which initiates the transfer through the relic conduit. As it stands, only Vecna knows the phrase.

Adventure Summary

The heroes of the adventure accidentally discover that Iuz is up to no good, and if obscure clues contain any truth, has come dangerously close to winning actual godhead. True heroes who wish to prevent such an event can do what they feel is necessary to stop Iuz.

On Iuz's trail, the heroes journey to Tovag Baragu, a mysterious site sacred to vanished Vecna. Arriving at the circle of stones, the heroes discover that Iuz and his forces have preceded them, leaving the temple in turmoil. An investigation of the stone circle reveals that Vecna cultists have created a crossplanar structure of sorts, using the dimensional portals of Tovag Baragu. Heroes who negotiate the strange temple find additional relics of Vecna, Vecna cultists, and remnants of Iuz's forces. When they finally penetrate to Tovag Baragu's heart, they find a powerful gate, magnified by the series of lesser portals that connect the transdimensional structure. It lies open to Vecna's realm of imprisonment, still open after Iuz's use of it a few weeks past.

Heroes who make the leap find themselves in Vecna's transplanted realm, which is known in whispers as Citadel Cavitius. Again Iuz has preceded the heroes; however, with such a large structure to contend with, many challenges face the heroes before they finally catch up to Iuz and attempt to stop him from executing his terrible plan. The heroes are in for a surprise when they discover that it is Vecna who is actually the demipower most likely to achieve godhood.

If Vecna ascends, PCs with relics of Vecna's former body are immune to his direct power. Able to withstand

Vecna's might by the protection of their relics, heroes are nonetheless stunned through the very same relics, and they can only watch as Vecna flexes his divine muscle. The new god forces the Demiplane of Dread to funnel him directly into Sigil, City of Doors, in the Outer Planes. Sigil is the supreme planar crossroads, and its underlying structure serves as some sort of keystone for the entire planar hierarchy.

The heroes quickly learn that ascension is only the first part of Vecna's agenda. In fact, Vecna appears to be making a play for the role of supreme deity of the multiverse, even if it means bringing down the current Planar Order in wrack and ruin.

Again, true heroes follow the newly ascended power, too new to godhood to properly manifest more than a single avatar. The City of Doors is under duress, and the whole multiverse begins to quake and shake. A full god should never stand within the City of Doors, yet Vecna's anomalous presence can't be denied. While the Lady of Pain stands idly by for mysterious reasons, Vecna sets himself up in the Armory. The heroes are all that stand in the way of total planar dissolution, but even if Vecna is finally ousted, the cosmology of the planes will never be the same.

Involving the Player Characters

Among all the heroes, demipowers, and even gods of the multiverse who might step in to attempt to prevent the events presented above, why does it fall to the heroes of your game to take up the gauntlet? Moreover, with such titanic events playing out, why wouldn't aforementioned deities take notice and "do something?" There are two reasons. First, the quest has to fall to someone, and the powerful 10th- to 13th-level PCs of your game are pretty good candidates. Secondly, Vecna's no dummy. The two tablets in which he has invested so much effort are artifact-level items, and events bound up with the tablets are proof vs. divination and precognition. Even scrying is scrambled in tablets' vicinity. Thus, concerned gods have little chance to learn of the event beforehand. Once events are underway, heroes could possibly alert their own gods of the true danger when they realize what's actually happening. However, initial information is too sparse for alerted gods to do anything other than send their PC followers to learn more. Moreover, as the adventure unfolds, there is little opportunity for anyone other than the heroes to effect change because of the adventure structure. Once Vecna crashes Sigil, the multiverse's fate becomes particularly precarious. If any other deity entered the City of Doors' many gates, it would all come tumbling down that much sooner (and so Sigil's guardian, the Lady of Pain, keeps out all other godly interlopers, as she always has).



"The congregation has returned, gathering Vecna's bodily relics, of which the Hand and Eye are only the most famous. Brother, if you have your bequeathed relic, bring it to your fellows at the Stone Circles, Tovag Baragu, where wonderful things are set to unfold."

This message was obviously sent from one Vecna cultist to another, and it somehow found its way to the location where the heroes discovered it. If analyzed for age in some manner, the writing is about ten years old. True treasure seekers are sure to follow this clue up. See Book One: Tovag Baragu for the information that the PCs can learn through research.

Own a Relic

The PCs may own the *Hand* or *Eye of Vecna*, or they may have had dealings with it (or similar relics) in the past. In this case, they receive a message. The message may have been sent many years ago, but it has only recently reached its intended recipient. The message reads something like the following:

"Your contact with a relic of the Whispered One is known to us. If you bring it, or information regarding it, to us in our fastness of Tovag Baragu, a great reward shall be yours. This we swear before the Maimed Lord, Vecna."

So, it's chance or fate that propels the heroes into this scenario, while many other worthies never learn of it. Dungeon Masters can utilize one or more than one of the following hooks, or make up their own reasons to explain the heroes' presence at (or en route) to Tovag Baragu.

Vigilantes

The heroes discover that Iuz has vacated his traditional seat of power, along with a large force. No one knows where the demipower and his small army are bound. Though divinations are shrouded, a bungling servitor of Iuz (named Ignassi) requisitioned twenty casks of Greyhawk ale for Iuz's forces a month past. In the margin, Ignassi absentmindedly scribbled "re: celebration following Iuz's sack of Tovag Baragu and subsequent ascension." This clue can come to the heroes in a fashion engineered by the DM, or by an acquaintance in the brewing business who fulfilled the order a month ago, but just now forwarded the clue to one of the heroes. Should the heroes wish to research Tovag Baragu, see Book One: Tovag Baragu.

Treasure Seekers

If the DM has the opportunity ahead of time, he can plant a treasure map in an unrelated adventure still being played by the PCs. This map shows an isolated site called Tovag Baragu within a desert land known as the Dry Steppes. Scribbled on the map are these words:

The message is signed "The Disciples." Attempts at divination fail. Any sort of research brings the bulk of the heroes into contact with an NPC of the DM's choosing (or another PC), who is acting on information provided in any of the hooks. Additional information on Tovag Baragu follows in the next chapter. Dungeon Masters may need to adjust the text in the relevant sections if the PCs own one or more of the Vecnan artifacts!

Divine Warning

Maybe these events are so significant that despite how well the tablets and Vecna's plan are shielded, rumor of the plot has come to a deity whom one or more of the heroes worship or revere. As deities are wont to do, one or more of the heroes are chosen to act in the deity's stead, so that they can discover what's really happening in Tovag Baragu. The method of warning is best left to the DM, who knows his or her PCs and their godly affiliations.

Book One: Tovag Baragu

Tovag Baragu is an outwardly simple structure. Though it resembles a circle of stone obelisks and rude archways, many of the arches contain portals to other times and places. Almost a decade ago, the Stone Circles began to manifest even stranger properties, as presented under "Ins and Outs of Tovag Baragu."

Researching Tovag Baragu

Though the information below is presented in digestible bits perfect for rewarding hero research, the information is also a good introduction for DMs new to Tovag Baragu. Recent events in the vicinity are noted.

- Tovag Baragu ("Navel of the Oerth," translated from the Bakluni tongue), also known as the Stone Circles, is found on the salty shore of Lake Udrukankar, deep in the heart of the Dry Steppes. It is a mysterious structure of massive stone blocks.
- Tovag Baragu is ancient, although its precise origins are unknown. Most scholars believe it is the only surviving structure of an old human empire. An event known as the Invoked Devastation destroyed that empire.
- Steppe nomads who inhabit the locale hold the Stone Circles to be holy ground. They could take a dim view of strangers poking around the pillars.
- People attribute strange magical powers to Tovag Baragu. Explorers' journals describe how distant scenes were magnified when viewed through the stone arches, while some scenes may have been scryed magically. Tovag Baragu may also affect the local weather.
- Some believe that Tovag Baragu can scry distant times and planes, and that it might even provide a gate to these locations.
- Tovag Baragu is somehow important to a cult of Vecna worshipers. According to the lore of some recordkeepers, the cult enjoyed a resurgence almost twenty years ago, although it was stifled. About seven to ten years ago the faithful congregated once more, and those who answered the call supposedly convened at Tovag Baragu, where they remain.

Ins and Outs of Tovag Baragu

Claims that the Stone Circles can open portals to distant planes and, more importantly, distant times, are true. Up until recently, the portals opened in a random and uncontrollable manner. However, Vecna cultists who returned to Tovag Baragu ten years ago seemed to discover the secret of opening new portals, though the

location that each portal opened to remained random. In truth, the "secret" of manipulation of the portals ties more directly to a cosmological shift instead of the discovery of an arcane ritual. In fact, Tovag Baragu's original ability of allowing access to the future is partly to blame for the proliferation of parallels.

In the future, an event so catastrophic occurs that all the planes of existence are shaken (see Book Three: City of Doors). The repercussions of this event propagated into the past and altered Tovag Baragu in the present.

Now, Tovag Baragu accesses dozens of dimensionally separated, parallel versions of itself. These parallels are fractures in reality, though each location is set in its own half-world. These half-worlds are *not* small demiplanes that share metaphysical real estate with the Ethereal Plane. They are distinct planes, but they remain unfinished, or at least not completely realized. Though the event remains mysterious, lack of understanding hasn't slowed the Vecna cultists. Most of the half-worlds extend only a few dozen miles from the parallel version of Tovag Baragu they encompass. At their edges, these planes give way to an echoing void, which proves lethal for any hero that makes this final plunge.

The cultists have moved into the fractured Tovag Baragu, and over the past decade, they have created a transdimensional fortress. There, many "rooms" are accessed through archway portals, and each such passage burrows ever deeper into a nested series of half-worlds within half-worlds. Still, the portals do not waver, and it is easy to map an analog of the transdimensional structure claimed by the cultists (see Tovag





Baragu Transdimensional Map). Additional information concerning archway portals and how they work is presented below under the Area Descriptions section.

Despite fractured realities and uncertain connections between inner and outer planes within specific Tovag Baragu parallels, undead function normally, priests receive their spells without incident, and enchanted weapons do not waver in their power. Presumably, the portals' connections provide sufficient attachment with the Prime to cancel effects that might otherwise occur.

Investigating Tovag Baragu

Iuz moved himself and his strike force to Tovag Baragu through a series of teleport hops. High-level heroes may find this or similarly direct methods the easiest way to access the site. To a large extent, the DM's choice for Tovag Baragu's exact location will influence high-level players' travel arrangements, and as such, those details are left to the DM. (If the DM has access to past Vecna adventures, he or she can use the information within them to help. Otherwise, the DM can do as he or she chooses.)

If playing the adventure as a one-shot game, the DM can skip the preliminaries and begin the adventure on Tovag Baragu's doorstep. In this instance, parcel out the

points described under Researching Tovag Baragu to the PCs.

Random Encounters

The encounters in Tovag Baragu occur in two distinct zones (see the map). The zones are designated Baragu Network (B) and Adytum (A), and they represent the subjective level of reality possessed by the half-worlds of each zone. The Baragu Network includes the area around Tovag Baragu in a radius of about 1 mile. The Baragu Network also incorporates the areas in keyed entries 1–13. The Adytum includes the deepest areas, which are described in the keyed entries 14–63.

Wandering Monster Table, By Zone

B	A	Encounters (1d20)
1	–	Rogue ferox, (2d4), area 4
2	–	True ghouls, (1d4+2), Appendix
3	–	Centaur rangers, (1d2+1), area 4
4	1	Ogre warriors, (3d6+2), Appendix
5	2	Fingers of Vecna, (1d4+1), Appendix
6	3	Teeth of Vecna, (1d6+1), Appendix
	4	Stone guardians, (2d4), Appendix
	5	Trolls, (1d4), area 20
	6	Carrion Shamblers, (1d2), area 32