

# Vecna Reborn

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# INTRODUCTION

## FOR THE DUNGEON MASTER



**V**ecna Reborn is designed for a group of three to six characters of levels 5 to 7. However, because many of the foes in this adventure are unbeatable by normal means, this product can easily be adapted to accommodate characters of other levels. The goal of the heroes should not be to destroy Vecna (for such is practically impossible) but to stop the evil plans carried out by his mortal servants.

With that in mind, the group should include at least one cleric, for many of the foes that can be overcome are undead. The ability to cure disease through spell or special skill could also prove useful.

A slight familiarity of the GREYHAWK® setting is helpful when dealing the domains of Tovag and Cavitius, since each derives from ancient, nearly forgotten realms of Oerth. Even ancient Flan, the language spoken there, stems from those ancient lands and times. Still, *Vecna Reborn* should have everything you need to understand and run this adventure.

## Vecna and Kas

Vecna and Kas are as old as the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game itself. Virtually every player of the game has heard of the *Hand and Eye of Vecna*. Many also remember the *Sword of Kas*. Vecna and Kas themselves hail from the world of Oerth (the GREYHAWK campaign setting). Nevertheless, whispers of their dreadful power and presence have probably filtered to all worlds.

For those of you who do not know the tale, Vecna was an extraordinarily powerful wizard (some say the most powerful wizard of all time) who became a lich. He sought to conquer the world of Oerth and nearly succeeded. His lieutenant, warlord, and chief assassin was Kas the Bloody Handed. Kas eventually betrayed Vecna, resulting in both of their deaths—and inadvertently saving Oerth.

But because evil such as theirs can never completely fade, Vecna arose again, this time as a demigod. His servant and betrayer Kas returned as a powerful vampire. Again, the two struggled, Kas seeking to regain his powerful sword and Vecna laying plans for becoming supreme even among the gods. Both were eventually claimed by the Mists of Ravenloft and given their own bordering domains, where they struggle to this day.

You will find detailed descriptions of their realms (which form the Burning Peaks Cluster) in *Domains of Dread*. For more background on Vecna and Kas, seek the GREYHAWK adventure *Vecna Lives!*, which deals with their activities just before coming into Ravenloft, or look in the AD&D® sourcebook *Book of Artifacts* for the *Hand and Eye of Vecna* and the *Sword of Kas*.

## Adventure Summary

A chance encounter on the road marks the heroes as targets for an evil cult attempting to cause the rebirth of the lich god Vecna in the domain of his arch-foe, Kas. This act will free their master from his misty prison and allow him to gain vengeance upon his enemy at the same time.

To learn more of the cult's mysterious plans, the characters explore a cache of ancient lore in Tor Gorak, the major city in Tovag. Clues lead them right to the heart of Cavitius, Vecna's own domain. There, they must discover the secret way into the Shadowed Room, an ancient library that no longer exists in time or space yet can still be reached by using an arcane ritual. Learning this secret brings the heroes into conflict with Vecna's priesthood and their powerful servants.

Meanwhile, the cultists in Tor Gorak continue to set in motion the events required to free Vecna, including spreading a magical plague that devastates the entire domain. The heroes must then return to this disease-ridden realm once they escape Citadel Cavitius, Vecna's stronghold.

With the knowledge gained in the Shadowed Room, the characters can find the cultists and stop their plans. In the finale, the cult breaks into an asylum in Tor Gorak to kill one of the inmates as the final condition of their ritual. If the heroes do not prevent this from happening, Vecna is reborn outside of the domain borders that imprison him—free to wreak vengeance upon Kas, Tovag, and possibly the rest of the multiverse.





## RUNNING VECNA REBORN



It is said that a wise man picks his battles—fighting for only those causes too important to risk losing. This is true nowhere more than in the Burning Peaks. An insane tyrant and his death

squad of petty, sadistic enforcers rule the beleaguered, totalitarian state of Tovag. Can the player characters do anything to change the situation? Probably not. Likewise, the undead rule the living in Cavitius, and evil blatantly reigns supreme. Again, however, the player characters probably do not have the power to greatly change things. In this adventure, they must learn to operate within their boundaries to establish the only goal available to them—keeping things from getting even worse.

Despite the fact that Tovag and Cavitius appear to be ancient realms, they are not. The entire Burning Peaks region appeared only recently in the Demiplane of Dread. Thus, much of this adventure serves as an introduction to these places. The player characters are thrust into the events occurring there and must learn about the domains as they go along.

Proper timing is important in this adventure. The sequence of events is usually fairly straightforward; when it is not, the text offers suggestions for when certain events should occur. To further the story, the timing of these events relates to the actions of the heroes rather than an actual timetable.

To keep players from knowing that they are in Vecna's domain too early, do not tell them the name of the adventure or let them see the cover of this product. This will make the discovery all the more shocking.

### The Mood of Ravenloft

The RAVENLOFT® campaign setting exemplifies the gothic, macabre fear of the classic horror tales. It is suggestive rather than blatant, suspenseful rather than graphic. When one thinks of the Land of the Mists, a lonely, shadowed castle lit only by a full, yet cloud-obscured, moon should come to mind.

However, *Vecna Reborn* deviates from this traditional mood slightly. The horror of this adventure derives less from these classic themes and more from ancient and arcane sorcery. Primal evil and unknown (and unknowable) terrors lie at



the heart of *Vecna Reborn*. The difference is subtle but perhaps important to keep in mind.

To inspire the proper mood, stress the great age and ancient mystery of the places and things that the player characters see. This proves particularly true in the domain of Cavitius. Vecna epitomizes arcane mystery and ancient secrets, and his realm should too. Do not let the players in on the irony that, in fact, these domains are actually new. The dark powers have created the region to be retroactively ancient; even more importantly, the domains somehow drew upon the essence of the true ancient Oerthian lands that existed in the time of Vecna and Kas.



## INTRODUCTION

### VECNA IN RAVENLOFT



An entity known only as 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. It whispers to him tales of his ancestors, known only as the Ancient Brethren, and of how they discovered the Serpent so unimaginably long ago, when all worlds were young or even unborn.

The Serpent tells Vecna that nothing lies beyond his grasp. Vecna knows he is destined to be master of everything. Death had not stopped him; betrayal at the hands of his lieutenant had not stopped him; even confrontations with other gods had not stopped him.

Thus, when the forces of Ravenloft brought Vecna to the Demiplane of Dread, imprisoning him there, he simply laughed. Oh, he pretended to rage. He shook his chains and rattled his cage and cried out to be set free, but deep down he knew that this would not stop him. He knew that he and the Serpent would overcome this obstacle—perhaps even use it to his advantage and conquer this interesting little demiplane. The other domain lords trapped alongside him raged similarly in their own pitiful domains, yet the Whispered One learned quickly that they did not know what power held them prisoner. They did not see the strings behind the puppets. He was the newest among them, yet he was already their master. His knowledge had already made him greater, for the Serpent had told him the secrets of Ravenloft.

But then, he saw what the dark masters of Ravenloft had placed in front of him. Despite his knowledge, despite his plans for utter domination, mighty Vecna took the bait. In the realm bordering Vecna's, Kas the Betrayer ruled his own domain.

### Driven to Distraction

The lich-god knew that Kas was there to distract him and draw his rage. Vecna supposed that he and his former lieutenant were meant to war against each other for all eternity. It was a trap. Despite such knowledge, however, Vecna's need for vengeance was greater than any other desire. Still, he would not dance for the pleasure of his jailers. He would defeat his enemy swiftly and turn on his captors with redoubled vengeance, using Kas's own domain and power to break the chains of Ravenloft and bring it crashing down. And the Serpent would aid him.

### The Three Words

The whispered secrets of the Serpent were clear. Vecna could not simply walk into Tovag. The Burning Peaks were an impenetrable barrier, even to the lich's vast power. It was a challenge worthy of him. While simple-minded Kas gathered hordes of flesh with which to storm the gates of Cavitius, the Serpent would allow Vecna to seep into Tovag and tear out Kas's miserable throat before the fool knew what had occurred.

The secret to this victory lay in speaking the Three Words, which make up the *Creation Once Spoken*. If the Three Words are each preceded by a powerful ritual developed by the Ancient Brethren themselves, the lich-lord would be born again—this time within the domain of Tovag. Thus, Vecna would circumvent the barriers of his own domain.

Vecna's foul and aberrant nature corrupted the Three Words as soon as his twisted mind comprehended them. Now tainted, the words each carry with them a foul deed (as well as a ritual), which must be performed before the word can be uttered. Only one whose hands are stained with the blood of an outsider can say the first of the three words; the second can be spoken only after a plague ravages the countryside; and only one who has slain a king can speak the third.

### The Plan

A woman named Marit, the niece of Vecna's secret high priest in Tovag, has unknowingly been chosen to give birth to the Maimed Lord. Though the pregnant young woman had no knowledge of this decision, she unwittingly was prepared by Vecna's priests for the "honor" of freeing the Chained God from his misty prison.

First, the cult arranged for her husband to be killed in battle. When the news proved too much for her, Marit was sent to the Madhouse to live among the insane for several months. Finally, after bringing Marit into his home (supposedly to care for her in these last stages of pregnancy), her uncle has been feeding her strange herbs, causing continued dementia and disorientation.

Though her unborn baby currently remains mostly unaffected, Marit has been infused with the proper magic for the upcoming rituals. After the Third Word is spoken, her child will be absorbed by the essence of Vecna, and Marit will give birth to a demigod. . . .



## THE CITY OF TOR GORAK



Tor Gorak is the only large city in the domain of Tovag. Life in this dark city is harsh and oppressive, perhaps moreso than anywhere else in the Demiplane of Dread.

### Atmosphere

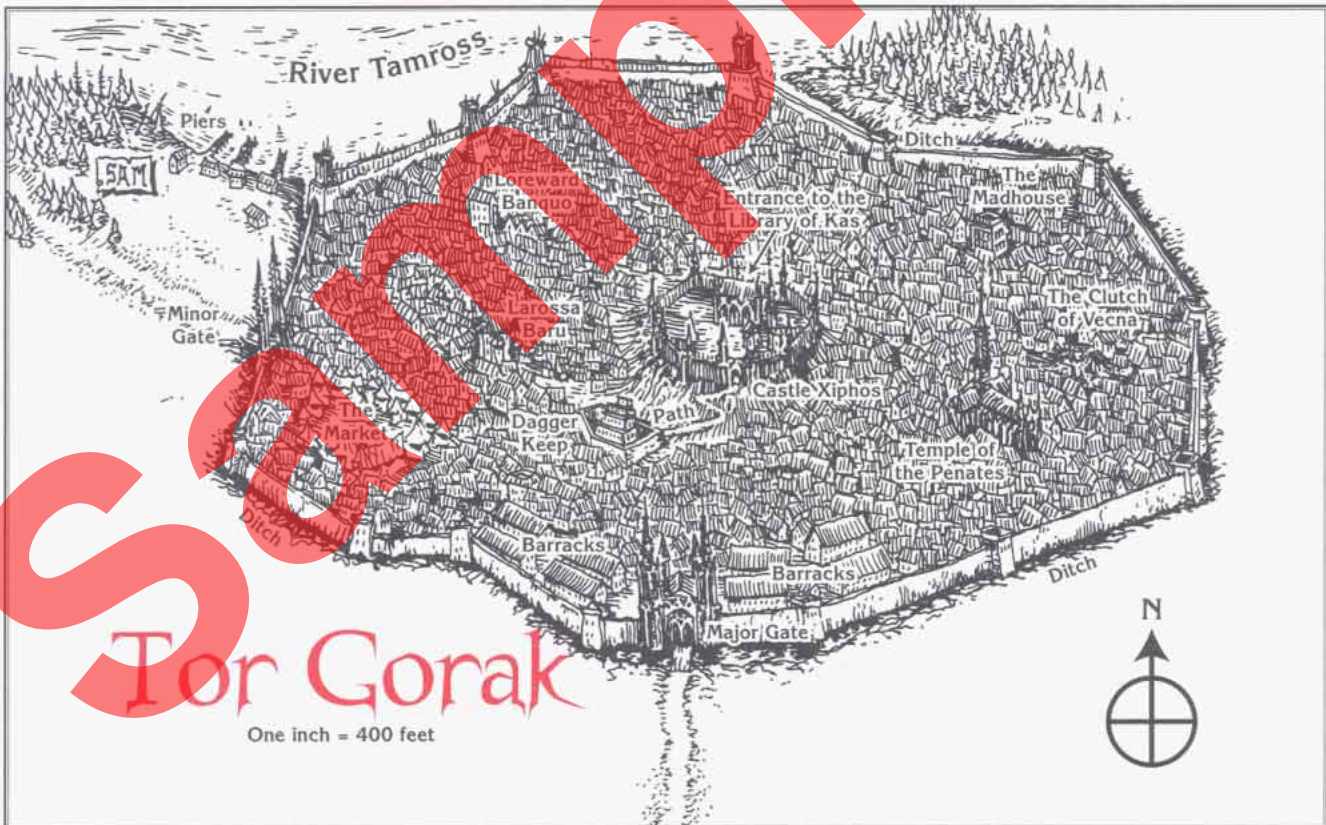
The streets of Tor Gorak are usually empty, due to the patrols that march through every neighborhood, apprehending and detaining anyone they see fit. Thus, the poor, downtrodden, and oppressed citizens hurry to their various destinations without lingering. A curfew denies anyone the right to travel inside the city after dark except for soldiers and Daggers (the local militia).

Citizens of Tor Gorak possess few rights and even fewer luxuries. Their food is rationed, and hoarding is illegal. While the state allows citizens to bear arms, they consider stockpiling weapons a serious offense. In general, if residents commonly carry the weapon on their person, they can keep it (since this makes raising a citizens' militia that

much easier). Laws in Tor Gorak also forbid the possession of books, knowledge of any sort of written language, or any other sort of formalized education. Residents of Tovag learn the arts of war and those trades that support the war—nothing else.

While in this city, travelers encounter mostly women (many of them pregnant), small children, and old people. Almost all are human. Kas forces all able-bodied men and some women to serve in the army to battle against the forces of Cavitius. To keep the army fed and supplied, certain soldiers are allowed to leave the army after a time to work as farmers, merchants, and craftsmen.

Strangest of all, the citizens of Tovag seem to age at a rate twice that of normal humans. Thus, residents can enter the army at eight or nine years old. The elderly are those reaching age thirty or forty, though those surviving to such an age are very rare. Still, newcomers to the city do not usually realize this strangeness until they are told. The nine-year-old soldiers look like full-grown men, and life in Tor Gorak has drummed any innocence right out of them. Furthermore, the residents do not think of their rapid aging as strange. Rather, they would find it strange that others age at such a slow rate!





## INTRODUCTION

The horrible truth behind this rapid maturation most likely has something to do with the domain's dark master and his ever-present need for troops. The downtrodden folk of Tovag are not even aware of this final, most hideous wrong perpetrated against them.

### Layout

The wall surrounding Tor Gorak varies in width from ten to almost twenty feet thick in strategically vulnerable areas. It ranges in height from twenty-five to forty feet, with the taller areas rising above the river. A trench eight to ten feet deep circles the wall all the way around, merging with the River Tamross. Most of the time, a foot of stagnant water fills this trench, and moss and wet slime cover the wall, making it difficult to scale.

The buildings within Tor Gorak are formed from a dark cold stone, with thatch and wood only on the roofs. These buildings are usually simple and dreary, albeit functional. Castle Xiphos and a few other important structures possess glass windows—usually tinted with dark colors. In addition, only these same castles and towers often boast gothic ornamentation and brooding statuary.

**Barracks:** Within the walls, long barracks house the defenders of the city, the young recruits of Kas's army, military trainers, and any surplus units not stationed near the battlefields. Over one thousand troops live in these barracks.

**Castle Xiphos:** The city of Tor Gorak envelops this castle, which serves as Lord Kas's home when he resides within the city. Sheer rocky cliffs rise above the hills here, and atop the peak stands the actual fortress of Castle Xiphos. Only one narrow path rises up from the city, leading to the fortress.

Boasting over three hundred rooms, one hundred fifty servants, and two hundred guards, this vast bastion presides over the city like its master over the populace. From anywhere in Tor Gorak, the subjects of Kas can gaze upon his citadel and know that his power is supreme.

**Clutch of Vecna:** Worshiping in utter secrecy, the cult of Vecna operates their hidden temple within a burned-out stable. Vocar the Obedient serves this cult as high priest and leader. A wicked, cruel man, Vocar favors the use of terrorism to weaken the spirits of Kas's people, thereby strengthening the efforts of his master.

**Dagger Keep (The Sheath):** Located near the base of Castle Xiphos, this fortress serves as the headquarters for the Daggers, the law enforcers within the city. These warriors are charged with watching over the city and maintaining order and

discipline so that everything moves along efficiently to support the war against Vecna. Their secondary duty is to investigate and help Lord Kas find the long-lost *Sword of Kas*.

In order to carry out their duty, the Daggers have the power to arrest, detain, judge, and punish whomever they wish, in whatever manner they see fit. Only Kas himself can overrule this frightening police force. In order to fulfill their duty, the Daggers make frequent searches of citizens' homes, stop and detain passersby for questioning, and enforce the strict curfew. They maintain a constant vigil against troublemakers and lawbreakers in general but also for spies of the Chained God. So far, the cult of Vecna has eluded their grasp.

Dagger Keep itself stands as a solid, clenched fist of stone and mortar whose mere presence deters most lawbreakers. The main tower has five levels and houses two hundred soldiers, administrators, and interrogators (though only half that number or less are present at any given time). The fifty or so servants that work here all live in their own homes nearby the Keep.

The interior of the keep comprises holding cells, interrogation rooms, administrative offices, record storage (which holds files on arrests, residence searches, confessions, and the like), as well as barracks for the Daggers and a residence for Tejen the Grim, the organization's leader. Underneath the tower lie a few secret "operation" rooms, where special Daggers prepare for covert missions—including the infiltration of Cavitius, undercover work (often entailing disguises) spreading misinformation, and even stranger duties.

While a large stone plaque in front of Dagger Keep enumerates the laws of Tovag (even though the citizens are not allowed to learn to read), one law covers all contingencies: The words of Kas are supreme, and the Daggers speak with his voice.

**Gates:** One major gate and one minor gate provide access into this defense-oriented city. Each has a metal-bound, hardwood drawbridge that provides access over the ditch that surrounds the city wall. Each set of gates closes at night and opens for no one without direct orders from Lord Kas himself.

**Larossa Baru:** This unique woman silently and subtly guides many events within the city. Many of the people of Tor Gorak look at Larossa as a leader—not a military leader or someone of power but as one who gives useful advice and provides aid to those who need it most. To accomplish this, Larossa has built extensive connections throughout the city. Everyone knows Larossa, and