

Ravenloft®

Adventure

Eecna Reborn



by Monte Cook

Vecna Reborn

By Monte Cook

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INTRODUCTION

FOR THE DUNGEON MASTER



Vecna 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.

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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



or 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

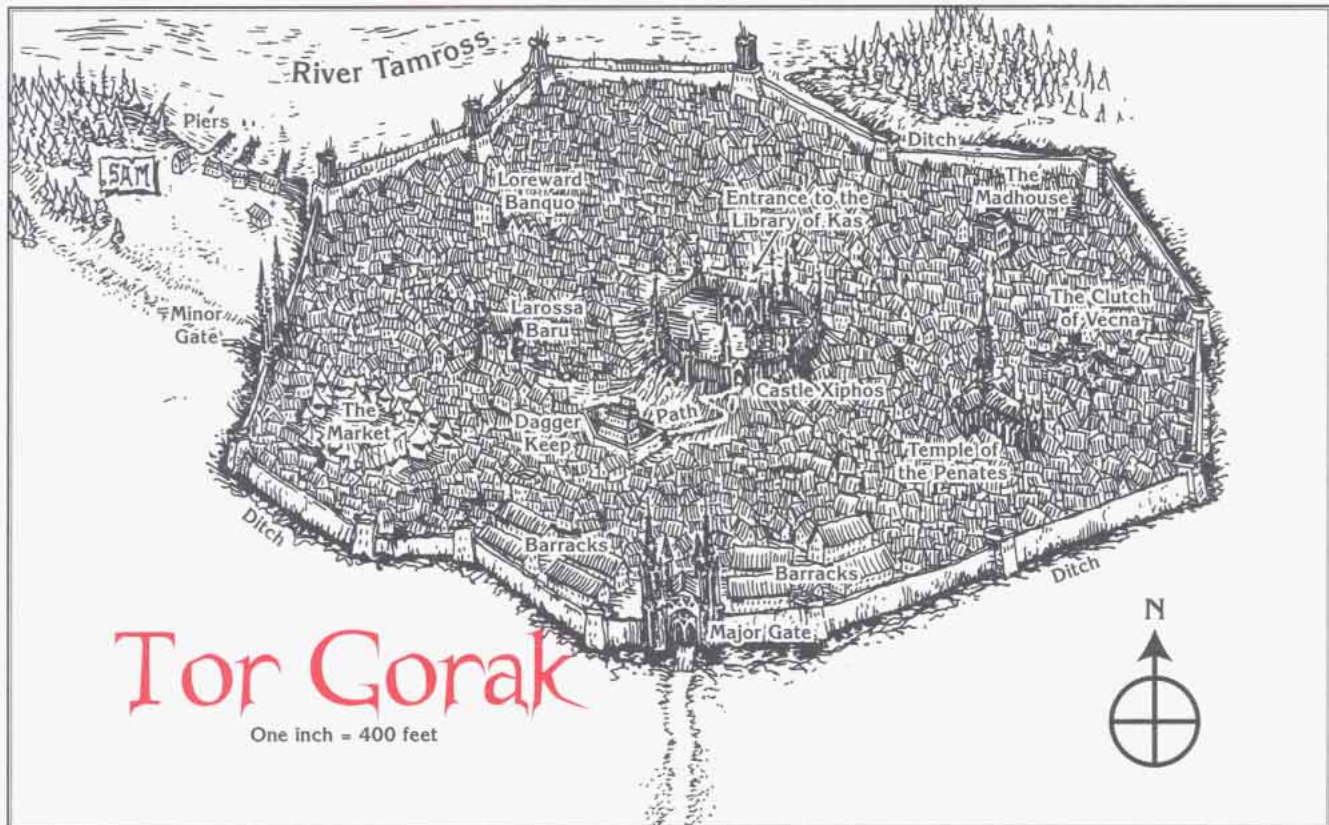
The streets of Tor Gorak are usually empty, due to the patrols that march through every neighborhood, apprehending and detaining anyone they see fit. Thus, the poor, downtrodden, and oppressed citizens hurry to their various destinations without lingering. A curfew denies anyone the right to travel inside 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!



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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 Dagers, 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 Dagers 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 Dagers 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 Dagers and a residence for Tejen the Grim, the organization's leader. Underneath the tower lie a few secret "operation" rooms, where special Dagers prepare for covert missions—including the infiltration of Cavitus, 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 Dagers 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

she knows everyone. Because she has dealt with outsiders to Tor Gorak before, she has even managed to learn bits and pieces of many different languages.

Her simple house has a number of hiding places, some stocked with hard-to-obtain or forbidden items like food stores, weapons, various types of “adventuring” gear, and even a small cache of money (about one hundred thirty gold pieces). The gold serves to bribe the Dagers—many of whom serve as contacts for her. Unfortunately, there are plenty of others in the police that would like to see her brought to “justice.”

Lefty's: Lefty's is the only inn anywhere in Tor Gorak. A nervous old man named Skreyn runs this small establishment. He, like most people in this domain, fears outsiders. Only if the heroes manage to speak to him in his native tongue will he even rent them a room. Even then, he will charge them double the normal price of five silver pieces per week for each person. However, if they cross the Dagers, he will insist that they leave.

Loreward Banquo: Banquo is a scholar of sorts, or at least as much of a scholar as one can become in a city like Tor Gorak. Though his home looks similar to those around it, it actually contains a hidden cache of books, scrolls, and notes—most copied by Banquo from sources possessed by some former Loreward, which were probably copied from older copied sources. Banquo does not know from where or when his information ultimately comes, but he does know that if he does not guard it safely, his people will forever lose what little knowledge they possess.

His cache lies in a secret compartment under the floorboards in his bedroom. The Dagers have yet to find this tiny hollow, but if they did, they would certainly confiscate it (with the idea that the books may contain clues to the whereabouts of their master's sword, which they do not) and ultimately destroy it.

The Madhouse: The horrors perpetrated upon the common people of Tovag are many, and the terrors that lurk and threaten from within and beyond the Burning Peaks never stray far from the subconscious. Some poor unfortunates cannot take the stress from their own fears and dread. The Dagers usually slay the insane rather than deal with them, but those found by more compassionate folk wind up in the Madhouse. A full description of this place appears on page 24.

The Market: Like those in many cities, the natives of Tor Gorak buy most of their food and other goods in an open market. There are few



permanent shops here. Instead, farmers and simple merchants sell their wares from carts and wagons—the same ones used to bring the goods into the city.

Local craftsmen, such as smiths, cobblers, leatherworkers, tallow-workers, and their like are found in their own shops throughout the city. Usually these shops consist of nothing more than the front rooms of their homes.

Temple of the Penates: Not dedicated to any one god or religion, the folk of Tovag worship thousands of powers and spirits dedicated to protection and watchfulness. A few clerics maintain this large cathedral, but most of the time faithful and fearful supplicants come here to worship the gods on their own. Most likely, worshipers do not even know the names of the gods prayed to by those around them.

If visitors think of this place as one of sanctuary or respite, they should quickly reconsider. All of the clerics work directly or indirectly for the Dagers. Thus, secrets revealed in confidence are relayed to the Dagers, and fugitives find themselves in the hands of the authorities very quickly.

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CITADEL CAVITIUS

The only city in Vecna's realm is the skull-shaped Citadel Cavitius, which serves as a home for ten thousand people and approximately five thousand undead beings. Dim, skull-shaped lamps light the streets of this city. Although these lights seem to burn eternally, they do not offer nearly enough illumination to suit the tastes of the living. The lamps leave many areas of shadows and darkness for the undead spirits to hide, watch, and occasionally lash out upon the unwary. Even the ceiling high above serves as a roost for darting shadows and creeping specters.

The Living and the Dead

The corporeal undead in Citadel Cavitius, dressed in elegant robes with large hoods, stride confidently down the city's streets. Noncorporeal undead stick to the plentiful shadows and dark areas of the city, silently making their way through the streets on their own unknowable errands. The ragged living folk fear them both, knowing that to get in their way spells certain doom. Life seems to have no value here—but unlife is another matter.

The Living

Though the living inhabitants fear the undead, they do not necessarily serve them as slaves or serfs. While the undead are definitely Vecna's favored, they simply ignore the city's living population for the most part. In fact, as long as they avoid any sort of entanglement with the undead, the people of Citadel Cavitius enjoy a better life than their counterparts in Tovag—at least in some ways.

Though the people of Cavitius have no access to luxuries, the Fingers of Vecna are less invasive than the Daggers of Kas. If one can keep out of the way of the undead, one can manage to eke out a tolerable existence in Cavitius. Of course, living amid such horrors and such fear drives many of the people in Citadel Cavitius to depression or even madness. Many take on characteristics and even appearances of Vecna's Favored. Thus, they grow sallow and gaunt, and they value strength of force over most other virtues. In short, outsiders find them an unwelcoming and distasteful people.

The Dead

A major confrontation or battle with undead creatures within Citadel Cavitius can be disastrous for visitors. The city's streets occasionally are patrolled by creatures called Reavers (not to be confused with the aquatic humanoids of the same name). These powerful, armored skeletal warriors ride skeletal steeds and carry large scythes.

If a Reaver comes upon a fight between the living and the dead, it slays those living fools who would dare strike Vecna's Favored. Curiously, if a Reaver so much as comes upon the site of such a battle that occurred within the last six hours, it stops and examines the area. After just a few minutes, it can track the living creatures wherever they have gone and punish them with death. Battles between living creatures do not interest them, although they do seek to stop battles between undead beings in order to maintain a semblance of order. Thus, the intelligent undead of the city usually keep their battles secret whenever possible.

Reaver: AC 2; MV 9; HD 7+3; hp 39; THACO 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 (scythe); SD spell and weapon immunities, cannot be turned or controlled; SZ M (6' tall); ML fearless (20); Int high (13-14); AL LE; XP 1,400.

Notes: Reavers are immune to cold and *charm*, *sleep*, and *hold* spells. They can be hit only by +1 or better magical weapons.

Skeletal Steed: AC 7; MV 18; HD 3+1; hp 16; THACO 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6/1d4 (hoof/hoof/bite); SA breath weapon; SD spell and weapon immunities; SW turned as wraiths; SZ L (8' tall); ML fearless (19-20); Int non (0); AL N; XP 270.

Notes: On the second round of battle, and each round thereafter, a skeletal steed can breathe a noxious gas. All within 5' must save vs. breath weapon or be immobilized for 2d4 rounds.

Skeletal steeds are immune to *charm*, *sleep*, and *hold* spells. They also suffer no damage from piercing weapons, cold, and fire. Edged weapons inflict only half damage.

Magic in the Citadel

Magic, beyond that used by the Maimed Lord's own priesthood, is strictly forbidden in Citadel Cavitius, posing quite a problem for many travelers. Despite Vecna's confidence that none of his undead lords can ever truly challenge him, he knows that if there exists a way to undo his current position and power, it would be through magic.

Citadel Cavitiuis



Vecna is jealous of all those who would seek the affections of the Serpent.

Because of this prohibition, spells do not function anywhere in Citadel Cavitiuis except the Temple of Vecna. Further, prolonged attempts to get around this restriction alert a Reaver (described above), who attempts to track down the magical interlopers and punish them with death. Priestly spellcasting attempts made by priests of deities other than the Chained God result in extended torture, giving the priests time to recant their faith before being executed. Not surprisingly, no wizards or priests of gods other than Vecna are found among the city's population.

Luckily, magical items function normally within the Citadel. Still, flashy displays bring the wrath of the Reavers, the Fingers of Vecna, the priesthood, or all three.

Hierarchy of the Citadel

Although Vecna rules supreme in Cavitiuis (both in and out of the Citadel), he has always employed a number of lieutenants. Chief among these beings are two intelligent golems, the Eye and the Hand. The Eye is a vaguely humanoid creature composed entirely of the eyes of murderers, liars, and traitors, torn from their still-living sockets. The Hand likewise has a humanoid form, but it is made of hands cut from the arms of thieves, assassins, and charlatans.

Vecna's Church

Below these golem servants, the priests and champions of the church of the Maimed Lord wield a great deal of power. Most of these individuals are (perhaps surprisingly) alive, including the brutal enforcers known as the Fingers of Vecna. These warriors enforce the laws of the Dying King among the living residents of Citadel Cavitiuis as well as carrying out missions of subterfuge, espionage, and terror in other lands. However, they have no authority over the Favored of Vecna, the lich lord's undead servants.

The priests and priestesses of Vecna are sometimes still called his Thoughts and Memories, but more often than not "priest of Vecna" alone proves imposing enough. These spiritual leaders rule over Cavitiuis's population with the help of the Fingers of Vecna in an oppressive theocracy. Vecna's high priest and priestess are known as the Voice and Heart of Vecna, respectively. These positions once held a great deal of power, but they now function more as figureheads than authority figures. The priests of Vecna carry holy symbols (a skeletal, outstretched hand with an eye in the palm), which signify their authority over any of Vecna's undead, including the Reavers.

Other Lords

Outside of the church hierarchy, several other lords also claim power. Potent undead beings, vampires,

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ghoul lords, ghostly nobles, and other spirits vie for control in the citadel. Vecna fully recognizes their ambitions, but it serves his purpose to allow their power to grow for now. So great has his might become that no undead entity can resist his will. Therefore, he has no fear of their usurping him.

Each of these undead lords controls a portion of the Citadel's undead population to some degree. Certainly, Vecna controls them all ultimately, but he usually chooses to send his orders through these would-be nobles. Occasionally, conflicts erupt between the forces of one lord and another, but these are kept small and secretive. Although the lords number over twenty, the most powerful among them are Haroln (a vampire-priest of Vecna), Jacairn (a spectral hag), and Qoolarn (a ghoulish lord).

Jacairn (Spectral Hag, Annis): AC 0; MV 15, Sw 12; HD 8; hp 43; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+6 (Strength); SA 18/00 Strength (+3/+6), energy drain (touch drains 2 levels), *change self* (at will), *fog cloud* (3/day); SD weapon and spell immunities; SW holy water (2d4), *raise dead*; MR 20%; SZ L (8' tall); ML champion (16); AL CE; XP 8,000.

Notes: Jacairn is immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, *poison*, *paralyzation*, *disease*, and *cold*, and she can be hit only by +1 or better magical weapons. A *raise dead* spell forces her to save vs. spell or be instantly destroyed. Daylight makes her powerless.

Magical Items: eyes of charming, broom of flying.

Haroln, M3/P10 (Vampire): AC 1; MV 12, FI 18 (C); HD 8+3; hp 55; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+4 (Strength); SA spells, energy drain (touch drains 2 levels), gaze (*charm person*), *shapechange* (bat or wolf), *spider climb* (at will); SD regenerate (3 hp/round), *gaseous form* (at will); SW sunlight, wooden stakes, running water, holy water (1d6+1); SZ M (6' tall); ML champion (16); Int exceptional (16); AL CE; XP 9,000.

Notes: Haroln can be hit only by +1 or better magical weapons. He is also immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, *poison*, and *paralyzation*. Cold and electricity inflict only half damage.

S 18/76, D 10, C 12, I 13, W 16, Ch 6.

Magical Items: wand of lightning (16 charges).

Priest Spells (6/6/4/4/2): 1st—*cause fear*, *command*, *curse*, *detect magic*, *invisibility to undead*, *protection from good*; 2nd—*hold person* (x2), *flame blade*, *heat metal*, *silence 15' radius*, *withdraw*; 3rd—*animate dead*, *cause blindness or deafness*, *dispel magic*, *flame walk*; 4th—*cloak of fear*, *free action*, *protection from good 10' radius*, *tongues*; 5th—*insect plague*, *slay living*.

Wizard Spells (2/1): 1st—*magic missile*, *shield*; 2nd—*web*.

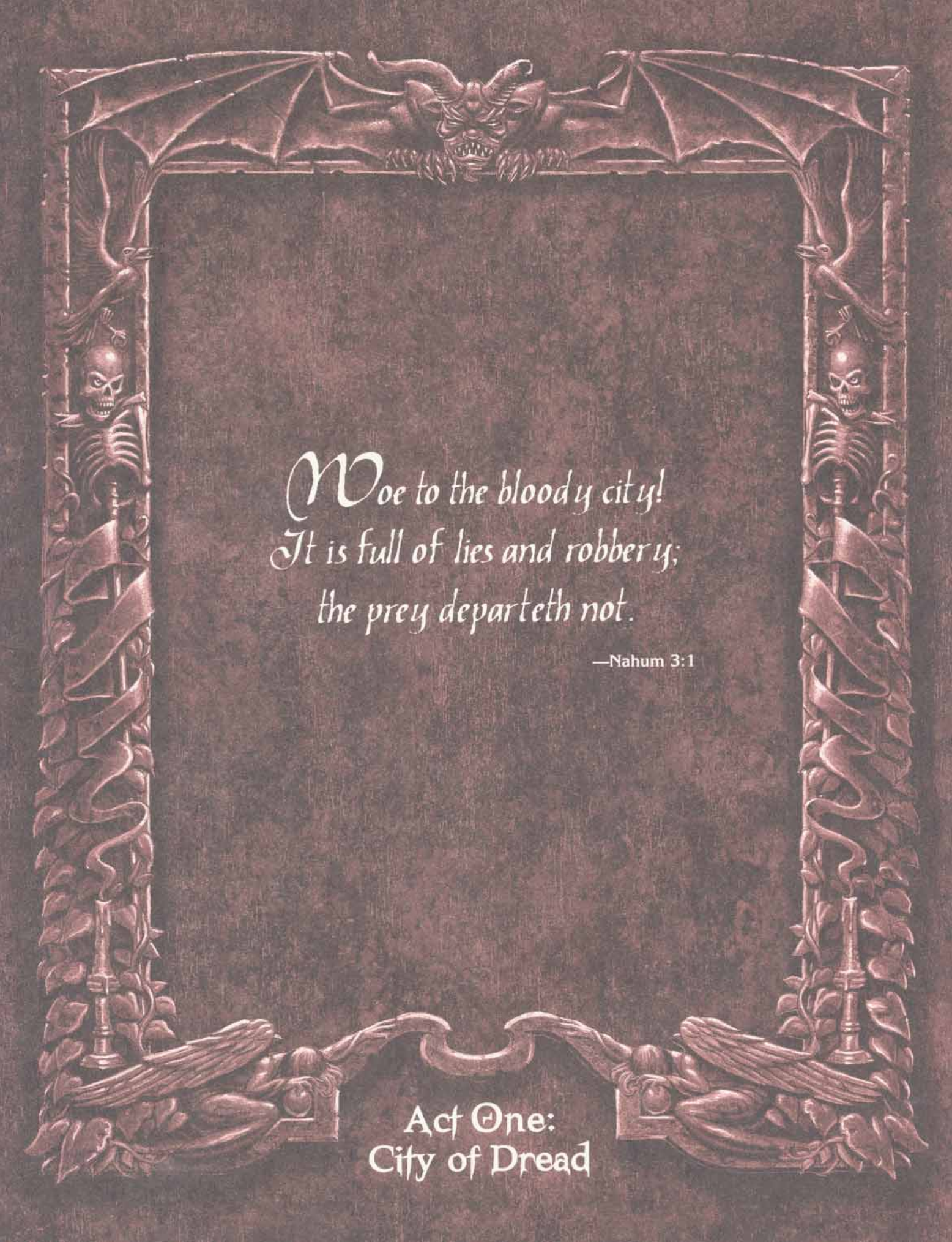
Qoolarn (Ghoul Lord): AC 2 (*cloak of protection* +2); MV 15; HD 6; hp 41; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6/1d10 (claw/claw/bite); SA paralysis, *disease*; SD weapon and spell immunities, aura of evil; SZ M (6' tall); ML elite (14); Int high (14); AL CE; XP 3,000.

Notes: Victims hit by Qoolarn's claws must save vs. paralyzation or become unable to move for 1d6+6 rounds. Victims of his bite must save vs. poison or contract a disease. This disease causes the loss of 1 point of Constitution and Charisma each day. If either score reaches 0, the victim dies and rises again as a ghast. This disease is cured only by a *heal* spell.

Qoolarn is harmed only by iron weapons or those of +1 or better magical enchantment. He is immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, holy water, and death magic.

All good-aligned characters within 30' suffer a -4 penalty on attack rolls. Opponents also suffer a -2 penalty to fear checks.

Magical Items: cloak of protection +2, helm of teleportation.



*Woe to the bloody city!
It is full of lies and robbery;
the prey departeth not.*

—Nahum 3:1

Act One:
City of Dread

ACT ONE: CITY OF DREAD

SCENE ONE: IT BEGINS

This adventure begins as the Mists of Ravenloft transport the characters to the Burning Peaks during one of their many journeys. It would be best if the characters were already traveling through mountains (making the shift less jarring), but the Mists can surround them on any deserted path. When the Mists come for the heroes, read or paraphrase the following text:

The dread fingers of night drag away the day faster than you would have suspected. With the advent of evening come cold misty tendrils that worm their way between trees and rocks until you can scarcely see each other, let alone the path. Nonetheless, before you tire of your journey, the mountain path gives way to a still lake, its smooth surface gleaming in the rumors of moonlight that whisper their way through the fog. Strangely, you know of no lake near the area in which you were traveling.

The Mists have brought the heroes into the Burning Peaks Cluster (about thirty-five miles from the city of Tor Gorak). The mountains in which they find themselves are the Burning Peaks themselves. These jagged, volcanic mountains divide the realms of Tovag and Cavitius.

At this point, however, the heroes have little change of guessing their new location. Luckily, the lakeside seems to offer an opportune place to rest and eat after the long journey.

Marit

When the players finally leave the lake, they can go in either direction on the road. To continue on in the adventure, they should head toward the city of Tor Gorak. Still, if they head toward Cavitius, the Mists can simply turn them around. As the player characters travel, the path they follow joins with a larger, much more established flagstone road.

At this point, they encounter a young, pregnant woman named Marit. The heroes are likely to be suspicious of a lone pregnant woman wandering these wilds. That is fine; let them suspect her of some foul evils. This will make the final confrontation that much harder. To begin this encounter, read or paraphrase the following text:

The damp, muddy road you travel on is rutted and rough. Old wagon tracks and boot prints fill with murky water as it makes its way through the mountainous terrain. Eventually, however, your path joins with a major roadway, paved with flagstones.

Soon after, a break in the trees reveals that you are not alone on the road, as you had believed. Ahead, you see the lone figure of a small blonde woman traveling in the same direction, leaning heavily on a wooden staff with each of her weary steps.

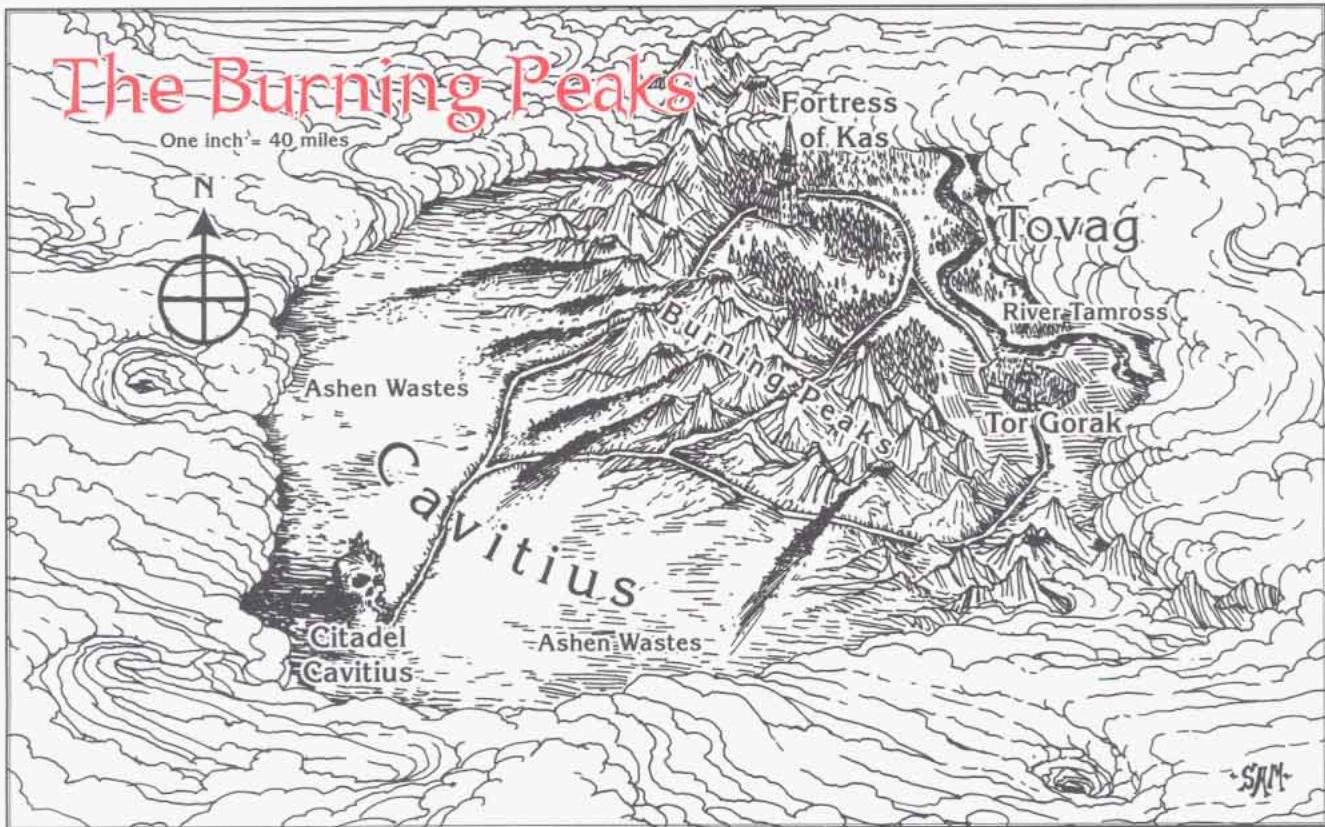
Since Marit moves so slowly, the characters should have no problem catching up with her. As soon as they are close enough to see her clearly, they can immediately tell that she is heavy with child. Her youth and attractiveness are concealed somewhat with her shabby dress and grimy appearance. She has a small ring of beaten copper on the third finger of her left hand, the only decoration she wears. If the heroes approach, Marit acts confused and afraid.

Any hero that examines her closely can attempt an herbalism proficiency check with a -4 penalty. On a successful check, the hero realizes that Marit suffers the effects of an hallucinogenic drug.

Her Story

Only a successful ancient language proficiency check or some magical means of translation allows the heroes to understand the language Marit speaks (ancient Flan). If they can communicate, she claims that she is looking for her husband Victor, a brave soldier who was sent into battle against the forces of the Whispered Lord weeks ago. She says that he did not return with the rest of his troop, so she decided to come looking for him herself. As she tells her story, she constantly glances around with a worried expression and fiddles with her ring.

Though Marit knows that new soldiers are valued highly in Tovag, leaving pregnant women safe from most interference, she still welcomes an "escort" if the heroes offer it. With enthusiasm, Marit tries to teach the heroes the regional tongue. With her careful tutelage, the heroes should pick up bits and pieces of the language pretty quickly. Each day that the heroes spend with Marit, they gain a cumulative 5% chance to understand basic phrases in ancient Flan. On the other hand, traveling with



Marit slows the heroes by quite a bit. She can travel only about ten to twelve miles per day.

Due to severe disorientation, Marit can reveal little information about Tovag or Cavitius.

The Truth

Marit actually *is* looking for her husband. What she does not seem to remember is that he died in battle about three months ago. The tragic event proved too much for her, causing a mental breakdown, so her relatives took her to the Madhouse in Tor Gorak. Currently, she suffers from severe amnesia, blocking out all events relating to his death.

When her uncle (the high priest of the Clutch of Vecna) took her from the Madhouse and brought her to live in his home, she became even more confused—thanks to her uncle’s herbal “remedies.” When she was not being watched, she wandered off to look for her missing husband.

Though Marit has no idea that her uncle serves Vecna, he has actually chosen her to give birth to the Chained God himself. Still, because none of the Three Words have yet been spoken, the child within her remains normal.

The Road to Tor Gorak

As the heroes travel toward Tor Gorak, they have three seemingly random encounters, two of which serve to give the flavor of this dark, besieged realm and the last to foreshadow the events to come. Have the heroes encounter these even if they have chosen to simply wander through the wilds.

Mortal Remains

Before traveling very far, the heroes discover a dead soldier on the road. To begin this encounter, read or paraphrase the following text:



Winding through the jagged mountains, you travel through a harsh land. Though birds call out from the branches above you, it always seems to be the cry of raptors swooping upon their prey or the anguished screech of their victims. You don't travel far before you spot a dark, unmoving shape along the side of the rough road. It appears to be the dead body of a recently fallen soldier.



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If Marit travels with the heroes, she ignores the dead soldier altogether. If forced to acknowledge its existence, she merely looks uncomfortable and mumbles something about "horrible death machines." (Information on Azalin's war machine appears on page 37.)

The soldier's body reveals several large wounds. Anyone who examines him closely, however, discovers that these wounds are not normal by any means. They are filled with greenish ooze and surrounded by small blisters.

Feeding Frenzy

Further on, the heroes encounter a pack of wolves. Rather than posing an obvious threat, however, these wolves have already claimed their prey. To begin this encounter, read or paraphrase the following text:

The deep, resonant sound of growling breaks the otherwise silent journey down the road. Into the darkened woods, you see shadows moving about. A closer, lingering look reveals that the

sleek forms of gray wolves move about some recently fallen prey. They circle it hungrily as the pack's master, a particularly large beast, claims his right of first feeding.

The wolves have killed a large bull elk and soon begin tearing it apart with their savage teeth. Tovag is a dangerous place, where the strong rule, preying upon the weak.

Of course, if the player characters linger too long watching the wolves, or interfere with them in any way, the animals savagely attack. If the characters kill more than two of the wolves, the entire pack flees into the shadowy trees. If you desire, however, the predators might return for another attempt at the traveling characters.

Wolf (12): AC 7; MV 18; HD 3; hp 14 each; THACO 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (bite); SD +1 to saves against charm spells; SZ S (3'-4' long); ML avg (10); Int low (5-7); AL N; XP 120.



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Casualties of War

At some point in their travel, the heroes encounter a group of dying soldiers. These soldiers recently encountered the same war machine that killed the soldier whose body the heroes found on the road. To begin this encounter, read or paraphrase the following text:

As you travel through this area, you notice the heavy sound of silence. The world holds its breath here, for no beast or bird calls out to its own. Because of nature's stillness, there is no mistaking the sound of mankind that violates it. From ahead, you hear cries of pain and anguish.

Any hero that moves in to investigate discovers a small group of soldiers resting beside the road. These men wear the crest of Tovag (a black sword on a red field—a symbol most likely unfamiliar to the heroes) on battered breastplates and shields. Ten of the men are battered, bloody, and a little mad; the other two are dead. For the last twenty hours these soldiers battled against the forces of Vecna, which are attempting yet again to drive their way into this neighboring domain.

One of the soldiers sees the characters and calls out to them in a language that they probably cannot understand: "Help us, good sirs, for the grip of death tightens 'round our weary necks!" As the characters approach, it becomes obvious that these soldiers are in their death throes.

If Marit travels with the heroes, she immediately rushes forward to speak with the living soldiers (though she again refuses to acknowledge the presence of the dead soldiers in any way). She asks them about her husband, but none of them know anything about him.

If the player characters come up with some means of communicating with the men effectively, they quickly learn that the soldiers have been in a terrible battle. The soldiers' leader, Brek, answers any questions that the heroes have as best as he can, but he does not know much beyond the basic lay of the land, the evil of Vecna (whom he will never name), and a few details of life in Tovag. As for the battle, he can give the following information:

Q: Who attacked you?

A: "The forces of the Whispered One. He strives to invade our land, Tovag," he says, pointing in a

direction that might be east.

Q: What caused these horrible wounds?

A: "Terrible war machines made from the flesh of the dead." The man points to his wounds and to his comrades. "As awful as it was, it was not as bad as things would be if the Whispered Lord won his way into Tovag."

Q: Who rules this land?

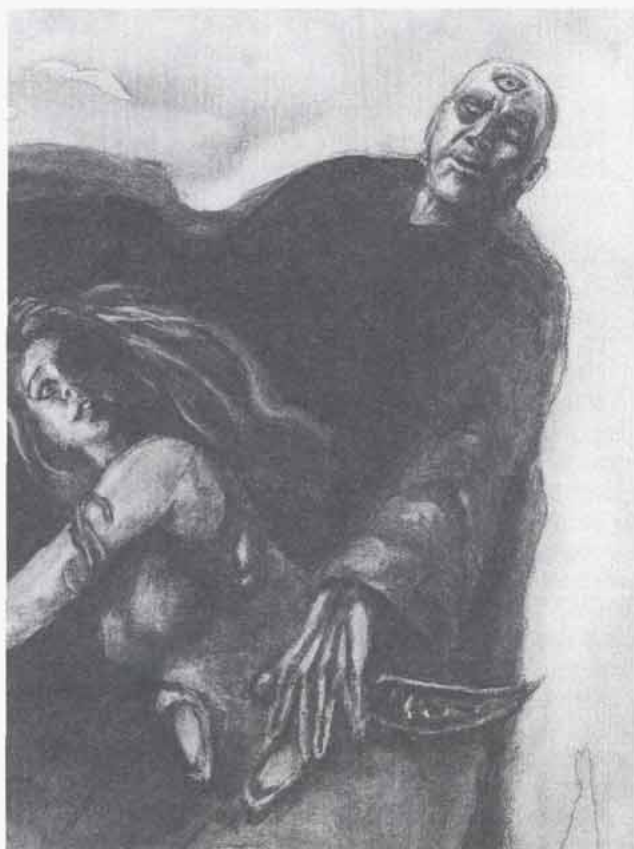
A: "Our own master is the great Lord Kas. He has no love for us, but he's much better than the flayer of souls that we struggle against."

If the heroes try to help these men, they discover that the wounds are grievous and strange. Those making their way forward note a horrible defilement of the wounds, manifesting in bloated blistering and a yellowish bile that accompanies the flow of blood. These men were all infected with an unnatural disease by one of Vecna's terrible war machines (described on page 37), resulting in an extremely painful, prolonged death. Priests attempting to use curative spells find their efforts fruitless. The taint upon these poor soldiers keeps the wounds from healing. Only a *cure disease* has any effect.

Before he dies, Brek conveys to the characters the following clue about Vecna's identity: "Only through the efforts of brave protectors will the evil of the Chained God be contained." Still, only those players who know a good deal of lore regarding Vecna and Kas (or knowledge on the recent discovery of this large Cluster) should have any idea what they are dealing with at this point. In fact, many will be confused at the multiple references to a "Whispered One," a "Maimed Lord" and a "Chained God." That is not a bad thing; this lack of knowledge should serve to heighten the suspense without hampering play.

If the soldiers cannot verbally communicate with the heroes, they attempt to use gestures to indicate that there has been a battle, and the direction from which they have come. If the characters effectively communicate something with gestures, the soldiers respond if possible, but they are fading fast. Despite the lack of a common tongue, it should be no mystery from the insane ranting and cries of pain that these soldiers have been through a harrowing battle and now they are dying (much like the soldier the heroes found earlier). It should be obvious that some terrible force awaits nearby, able to inflict horrible and unfathomably vile wounds.

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Any soldier healed by the heroes immediately wants the heroes to aid his companions. If they cannot, he goes to speak to the other soldiers privately. Knowing the fate that awaits them, the dying men will ask him to put them out of their misery. If not stopped by the heroes, he will say a short prayer over each one and stab him in the heart, ending his pain forever.

Nearing the City

The night before the heroes reach the city of Tor Gorak, they encounter several cultists of Vecna. These fanatics have been sent by Vocar to locate Marit and bring her back. When they discover that she travels with a group of strangers, they try to quietly abduct her and return to the city. Thus, they wait until she separates herself from the party momentarily and then grab her. If she is never left alone, they eventually become frustrated and try to grab her anyway. Either way, she becomes startled and makes enough noise to attract the attention of the heroes.

This encounter should clue the heroes in that Marit is somehow more important than she appears to be. The scenario can play out in several different ways, so feel free to adapt it to fit the actions of the heroes. Read or paraphrase the following text to describe the cultists themselves:



The figures around Marit move with the speed of serpents. Their leering faces are painted to look like one-eyed skulls, and they carry large knives with rune-covered black blades in their gloved hands.



During the confusion, one of the cultists accidentally cuts Marit with his weapon. At that point, the others immediately cry out in anger. The nearest one turns and kills the offender with a single blade stroke. Then, they all turn and attempt to flee, leaving the body of their fallen comrade.

Cultist, hm or hf, F4 (1 per hero): AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 29 each; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SD 58% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'-6' tall); ML fanatic (18); Int avg (8-10); AL CE; XP 175 each.

If any of the cultists are captured, they refuse to talk. If some sort of mental telepathy or magical compulsion is used, they reveal only that they were sent to get Marit and return her to Tor Gorak. Most importantly, they were not to harm her, because she has been chosen for a very important task.

Marit is, of course, visibly shaken by the ordeal. She has no idea that these fanatics are linked in any way to her uncle. She does murmur the name the "Whispered Lord" several times though.

Moving On

At this point the heroes probably proceed on to Tor Gorak. When they reach the city, continue the adventure with "Scene Two: Strangers In a Strange Land."

If for some reason they choose not to go to Tor Gorak, Marit can suddenly become very irrational. She insists that she must return to her uncle's home immediately. Most heroes should then agree to escort her to town.

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As our life is very short, so it is very miserable, and therefore it is well it is short.

—Bishop Jeremy Taylor

SCENE TWO: STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND



When the heroes arrive at the city, no special reception awaits them. In fact, if the characters do not make spectacles of or draw attention to themselves, they should be able to enter the city without much fuss.

The gates stand open during the day, although a number of guards watch over those that pass through. Farmers and merchants from the surrounding hills come into the city with various wares (mostly foodstuffs), so visitors within the city walls are not uncommon.

Marit

When they arrive in town, Marit wants to immediately return to her uncle's home to rest after her long journey. Vocar appears extremely excited upon seeing her. Still, he does not invite the heroes into his home.

When it becomes apparent that the heroes do not speak the local language, Vocar immediately casts a *tongues* spell and thanks them profusely for returning his "dear" niece. If asked, he reveals that Marit's husband died several months ago, and that she sometimes "forgets" these details. He pretends to be quite sad at his niece's plight, though in truth he cares about her only because of her role in his master's rebirth.

Vocar is extremely interested in the heroes themselves, asking lots of questions about their origins. Of course, the arrival of newcomers could prove extremely helpful in the upcoming rituals. Vocar also directs the heroes to the local inn, Lefty's (mostly so he can keep tabs on them).

The hero with the highest Wisdom can attempt a Wisdom check with a -6 penalty to notice a thin black smudge along the edge of Vocar's face. (Perhaps it is the remains of black facial paint?) If asked, he claims that he must have gotten ink on his fingers earlier while writing a letter and smudged it on his face. Though the heroes do not know it at

this point, even his excuse is a clue that he is either lying or he is an outsider: Residents of this domain cannot read or write! If the heroes attack Vocar or otherwise cause any trouble, he calls the Daggers, and a patrol shows up in only three rounds.

Vocar's statistics appear on the inside cover.

The Daggers

Although those that are smart will try to avoid it, newcomers and long-time residents both eventually encounter the city's cruel authorities, known as the Daggers.

If the characters do draw attention to themselves or (even worse) announce that they are outsiders to the domain of Tovag, the guards detain them and alert the Daggers. If the heroes brought one of the soldiers with them, he immediately reports their presence to the guards. The soldier does not do so out of malice, only out of a drummed-in sense of duty.

Guard, hm (sometimes hf), F2: AC 6 (studded leather and shield); MV 12; hp 16; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword), 1d4 (crossbow), or 1d10 (halberd); SD 54% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'-6' tall); ML avg (10); Int avg (8-10); AL LN, N, or LE; XP 65.

Although the Daggers can apprehend anyone, anytime they see fit (and sometimes abuse this power wantonly), they are charged with maintaining order and looking for the *Sword of Kas*. Thus, they normally arrest criminals, question potential troublemakers, and watch for looming threats against the city.

Nothing makes the Daggers more suspicious than outsiders, both for their potential to cause harm and their possible knowledge regarding the *Sword of Kas*. (Like their raving master, they believe that the *Sword of Kas* is the most powerful, most important magical artifact in the multiverse and that everyone has heard of it.) Outsiders are those from beyond the borders of Tovag, and until proven otherwise they are assumed to be from the domain of Cavitius (since it is usually the most

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accessible)—which means they are spies or agents of Vecna and deserve nothing but death.

Flamboyant clothing, nonhuman features, and obvious avoidance of military service quickly mark one as an outsider. Wise newcomers lay low, disguising those traits that easily separate them from all others on the city streets. Wiser still are those who avoid lingering in the open streets at all.

Unless the heroes take these precautions, the Dagers fall upon them within hours of their entrance to the city. Read the following text:

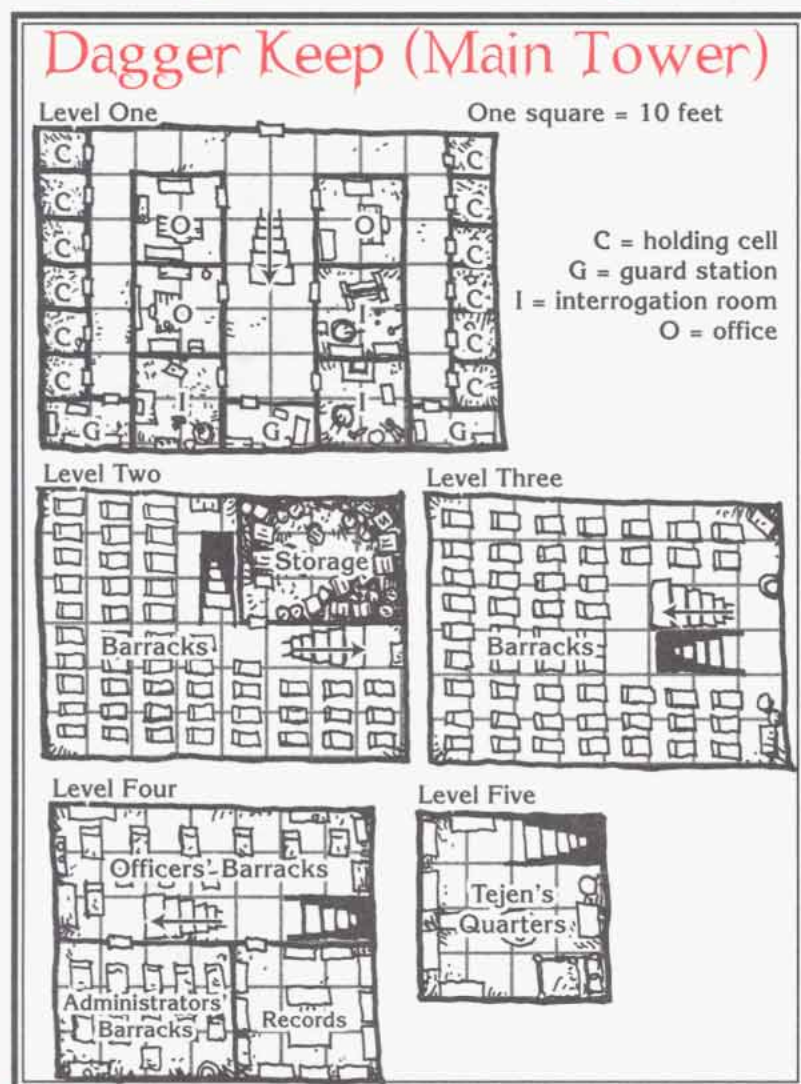
Though you had not noticed him before, a man with charcoal-colored clothing over dark metal armor approaches you. Sounds of weapons quietly drawn from sheaths reach your ears from all around you as the shadows of the street produce more darkly garbed soldiers. Each has a dark dagger-shaped emblem on his left breast and a similar such mark burned onto his right cheek. One of the soldiers speaks in a cold, rational tone, but his words carry no meaning for you.

Again the language barrier forms a problem, though by this time, the adventurers are ready for it. If they are able to communicate with the Dagers, they quickly learn that the soldiers are the highest authority in the city, representing Lord Kas himself. The Dagers want to take the characters to Dagger Keep for questioning, and if the player characters refuse, they are placed under arrest as suspected spies.

The Dagers outnumber the heroes by two to one, so fighting is probably not a wise move. If they do attempt to battle their way out of the situation, a force of ten more Dagers arrives on the scene in eight rounds. If the characters choose to flee, the soldiers give chase.

Dagger, hm (sometimes hf), F4 (2 per hero):
AC 4 (chain mail and shield); MV 12; hp 31 each; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword) or 1d4 (crossbow); SD 58% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'–6' tall); Int avg (8–10); ML elite (13–14); AL LE; XP 175 each.

Dagger Captain, hm, F6: AC 4 (chain mail and shield); MV 12; hp 45; THACO 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword) or 1d4 (crossbow); SD 62% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (6' tall); Int very (11–12); ML champion (15); AL LE; XP 420.



Interrogation

If the outsiders choose to acquiesce and go with the Dagers, they are relieved of their weapons and taken to the Sheath. The map of Dagger Keep shows three questioning rooms. The soldiers take the characters to one such room, where a team of three interrogators grills them with questions. At this point, read or paraphrase the following text:

You enter a small, dimly lit chamber. The warriors escort you to a few crude chairs situated in the center of the room. From there, you can make out three distinct shapes in the shadows of the room—human figures in dark, loose-fitting clothing.

Typical questions the Dagers ask include:

- What are you doing in Tor Gorak?
- Where are you from?
- How did you get here?

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- What do you know of Cavitius?
- What do you know of Tovag?
- Do you mean harm to Lord Kas?
- What do you know of the *Sword of Kas*?

As the questions are answered, the interrogators listen to the answers and watch those answering very carefully to determine if the speaker is lying or trying to hide anything. Most Daggers assume that *everyone* is hiding something, so suspicions rise easily.

If the heroes cannot understand or speak to the interrogators, then these Daggers become extremely angry. They believe that the heroes are faking ignorance of the language, either to make a mockery of them or to keep the information they have a secret. The interrogators then begin shouting and ranting at the heroes, maybe even striking them with their hands.

Interrogator, hm, 0-level (3): AC 10; MV 12; hp 5 each; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger) or 1d4+2 (hot iron); SD 50% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (6' tall); Int very (11-12); ML avg (8); AL NE; XP 35 each.

Torture

If the interrogators are given the impression that their prisoners are lying, they order the guards to take all but one or two to the holding cells located nearby. The remaining prisoners are bound to their chairs by strips of metal wire while a servant wheels in a cart covered in glistening surgical-like tools—knives, scalpels, cleavers, awls, hooks, forceps, and other sharp instruments that the victims have never seen (though their uses are obvious). A small brazier of white-hot coals is lifted from the lower shelf of the cart and set before the torture victims so that they can watch as an iron is placed within it, getting hotter and hotter.

The torture of the victims proves surprisingly short and more psychological than physical. The Daggers believe that torture is the ultimate truthsayer, and a prisoner that does not reveal anything of value under torture truly knows nothing. While a little shortsighted, this belief stems from the fact that the Daggers interrogate and torture so many victims that one seems as useful as the next; none deserve special attention.

Obstructing Justice

At some point during this procedure, the heroes are bound to become angry and either refuse to cooper-

ate or strike out at their jailers. When this happens, it begins to look like a standard melee situation. However, this is not the case. Let the heroes go through one round of combat with their captors (the three interrogators and one guard per hero).

At the beginning of the next round, however, the Dagger captain steps into the room and shouts for his men to halt. The Daggers all stop fighting, though they watch the heroes warily and block any attacks made by them.

If the heroes turn to look at the captain, read or paraphrase the following text:



Beside the captain who led you to this keep stands the wrinkled, emaciated frame of the oldest man you have seen so far in this forsaken city. Despite his stooped back, this man seems to stand a head taller than all those around him. His unwavering eyes gaze sweeps across the room quickly, taking in the scene before him calmly. The captain seems extremely uncomfortable, however.



This man is Virianis, and he came to the Sheath to demand the release of the heroes. Virianis is an extremely wealthy man, and he runs the local Madhouse. Though the Daggers would dearly love to shut down the asylum and terminate those inhabitants that have nothing to contribute to the war effort, Virianis has thus far been able to stop them.

Virianis heard how the heroes found Marit and escorted her home, so he has come to return the favor. As head of the Madhouse, he takes a personal interest in all of his residents, and he developed a fatherly affection for that particular young woman. Thus, in exchange for their kindness to her, he decided to help the heroes by arranging for their freedom.

Virianis has convinced the Dagger captain that the heroes work for him as caretakers and that he has already checked their backgrounds thoroughly. Unless the heroes have somehow convinced their captors that they are important or hold vital secrets (both extremely foolish actions), the captain releases the prisoners into Virianis' custody so that they do not have to worry about them any longer.

The captain immediately orders his men to withdraw and follows them out of the room. The old man (who is forty-three, so he looks to be in his mid-eighties) then motions for the heroes to follow him, stopping to let them retrieve their belongings before leading them out of the keep.

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Once out of the Sheath, Virianis uses his *headband of mental speech* and quickly expresses his regret for any pain or trouble that the heroes have endured. Read or paraphrase the following text:

You hear a voice in your head that speaks in a language you can understand. Somehow, you know that the voice comes from the gray-haired man into whose custody you have obviously been released.

"I apologize," his mental voice says, "for any pain or inconvenience that you might have endured there. Such, I am afraid, is the way of Tor Gorak."

Virianis goes on to explain that he cares for some of the less fortunate souls of the city, in a place given the unfortunate name of the Madhouse. The Daggers have released the heroes into his care, thinking that they work for him.

If the heroes inquire, Virianis can give them basic information about Marit or the Daggers. However, he knows very little about Vecna (whose name he will not speak) or Marit's uncle. Virianis's stats appear on the inside cover.

Release

If the heroes ultimately reveal nothing of interest to the interrogators and do not become violent or belligerent, they are released, albeit weaponless, with a warning to stay out of trouble. If the prisoners do seem to be valuable sources of information, the Daggers hold them in their cells for as long as they see fit (perhaps requiring an escape attempt).

Unfortunately, they do not meet Virianis if this happens. Thus, they will have to encounter him later in the adventure.

Shelter

Most people in Tor Gorak live in fear of the local law enforcers. Thus, if the heroes try to get a room at Lefty's (the local inn) after their run in with the Daggers, the innkeeper claims to have no space. If they have already rented a room there, they are politely asked to leave.

However, if they met up with Virianis, he directs them to the home of Larossa Baru. If they escaped from the Sheath or were released by the Daggers (and thus never met Virianis), however, the player characters must encounter Larossa on their own.

Larossa Baru

Most of the residents of Tor Gorak have been questioned or tortured by the Daggers at some point in their lives. This breeds fear among most but rebellion among others. One woman dedicated to helping others, particularly those wronged by Kas's bullies or the other injustices of the city, is Larossa Baru.

If the player characters find themselves weaponless, tortured, and alone after a stay in Dagger Keep, Larossa and her son Dellis find them and invite them to their home. This plain, middle-aged woman has recently encountered a few visitors from the Core, so she has learned a tiny bit of Balok and Darkonese. (If necessary, you can substitute more appropriate languages.)

Dellis is simpleminded but goodhearted. He does not speak, but he and his mother seem able to communicate well enough through hand signals. He has lived with his mother since being wounded in battle, leaving him a severe limp in his left leg.

Larossa has taken it upon herself to help those in need when she can, whether they are her fellow citizens of Tor Gorak or obvious newcomers. After the meal, she offers her guests a place to sleep (and they are even welcome to spend a day or two afterward) and a meager selection of weapons to replace any taken by the Daggers.

The stats for Dellis and Larossa appear on the inside cover.

What Larossa Knows

Larossa can answer any questions the heroes have regarding the city, the Daggers, Lord Kas, or whatever else, assuming that she would possess such knowledge. She knows little more than the common inhabitants of the city do, but even this knowledge can help an ignorant newcomer. Like most others, she does not utter the name of Vecna, nor does she tolerate others that do so, for fear of his wrath—or the wrath of Lord Kas, who despises him so.

Larossa reveals the nature of life in Tor Gorak, and although she seems to assume that it was not always so grim, it has been this way for a long, long time. She knows the laws of the city well. Larossa can provide her guests with information regarding the Daggers (the location of their keep, their leader's name, their ruthlessness and corruption), the ever-present war with the forces of the Whispered Lord, and even Cavitiis ("a barren realm of death and undeath, ruled by the sorcerous power of its dread master"). Of Kas, she states only that he is a mad lord that rules haphazardly, more focused on his war and finding his treasured sword.

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*For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within.*

—Alfred, Lord Tennyson
In Memoriam

SCENE THREE: THE FINGER



efore the First Word can be spoken, Vecna's cult must spill the blood of an outsider. The most obvious victims for such a ritual are none other than the player characters.

In order to accomplish the tasks before him, including snaring the player characters, Vocar summons a quasit and an invisible stalker (known as Zarenival and Cochort, respectively). These servants are to serve as his eyes and ears as well as his assassins, if need be. The creatures' stats appear on the inside cover.

Their first mission consists of marking the intended ritual victims. The otherworldly creatures accomplish this by hanging a desiccated finger on the door latch wherever the heroes are staying (which is probably Larossa's house).

The Marker

After the heroes' first night in town, they awake to find a desiccated human finger marking the door to the building in which they slept. If they stayed the night in Larossa's home, her son Dellis actually discovers the finger first. When this happens, read or paraphrase the following text:

After a night of troubled sleep filled with dreams of isolation and persecution, you prepare yourselves for the coming day. Your activities are interrupted by Larossa's son Dellis. Seemingly unable to speak, the simple Dellis reveals his agitation with his contorted face. He holds forth something small and black. After a moment's study, you realize that Dellis holds a desiccated human finger. With his free hand, he points toward the door to the outside.

Larossa can communicate with her son very well despite his inability to speak. It takes her little time to learn that the finger was hung on her door. Since

this strange and disturbing event occurs on the night that the characters stayed at her house, she assumes that it relates to them rather than to her, though she has no idea what it means.

If the player characters show an interest in learning more (which they almost assuredly will), she recommends a visit to Loreward Banquo's house. She explains that he is a keeper of old lore and knows much about signs and portents.

Larossa provides directions and some clothing to disguise her guests. She also advises them to stick to the back streets and avoid any sort of contact with the Daggers. When they get to Banquo's house, they are to knock once, then twice, and finally to say in the local tongue, "Car'at Banquo, vis gardent doas, va'yor escamshay," in order to be let in and allowed access to his vast knowledge. (Translated, this means, "Master Banquo, we know you are a ward that is faithful to your masters.")

Larossa accompanies the heroes *only* if they need her to translate. If they have any means of communication (ancient languages, *comprehend languages*, etc.), they are on their own.

If the heroes were staying somewhere other than Larossa's home, another resident will have to direct them to Banquo. However, no one else will accompany them to translate.

The Loreward

If the heroes go to Banquo's house and give the proper signal and pass-phrase, he cautiously lets them in. Banquo stands with a stooped back, and his advanced age (of twenty-three years old) is obvious from his bald head and long, gray beard. He continually squints, his poor vision suffering from years of forbidden reading without the luxury of spectacles. Banquo's stats appear on the inside cover.

Banquo dislikes small talk, so he immediately demands to know what his visitors want. Unlike Larossa, he possesses little compassion. Although he realizes that his status as loreward requires him to share the knowledge he possesses, he dislikes dealing with people. He provides no common knowledge that visitors could obtain elsewhere (such as information about the city, the authorities, or Kas).

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Nevertheless, Banquo finds great interest in the mysterious finger. Having lived in this harsh domain all his life, he handles the grisly artifact without much distaste. As the characters wait, he consults his hidden cache of books and scrolls for almost an hour before he comes upon the reference that he seeks.

From an old scroll, he reads aloud to the heroes (translated by Larossa if necessary):

"And there shall be a sign, placed before the victim, before the blood is drawn and the Word is spoken. The sign shall be the finger of a murderer, lost from his left hand, soaked in the blood of a goat for fivescore and three nights."

Banquo claims that the book contains more information on the preparation of the sign, but it holds little relevance now, since it has already been created.

Upon hearing this, many will want to know more about the blood being drawn and the Word to be

spoken. Though he finds no more references in the scroll, Banquo agrees to search through his other materials. This search, however, takes him a long time, so eventually he sends his visitors away, telling them to come back the next day. The books and scrolls are almost certainly written in languages that the characters cannot read, so they cannot help him—not that Banquo would allow anyone else to touch his books anyway.

Waiting for Banquo

While the heroes are waiting for Banquo to research the marker, the heroes have several options to fill their time.

Whichever direction they head, the heroes have a chance of discovering that they are being followed. Heroes who make successful Wisdom checks feel as though something is watching them. Indeed, they are right. Zarenival and Cohort trail behind them, watching what they do and where they go. (The creatures' stats appear on the inside cover.)

As they travel further, one player should make another Wisdom check (either a hero who actively

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looks around or the hero with the highest Wisdom). If the check succeeds, that character sees something—a bit of trash on the street, a window shutter, a small bank of mist—move as if disturbed by the passing of something unseen. However, if this does happen, the invisible creatures flee before they can be detected further.

Returning to Larossa

If the heroes merely return to Larossa's house to wait, Virianis comes looking for them there. He needs their help finding a missing Madhouse resident. Proceed to "A Quick Trip to the Madhouse" on the next page.

Checking on Marit

If the heroes go to Vocar's house to check on Marit, she answers the door cautiously. When she sees the heroes, she happily invites them in. Her uncle is not home at the moment, so they can speak with her freely. In general, she seems relatively normal, though a little haggard. Her baby is due in a week or two, and she is extremely tired.

She speaks with the heroes for a short time before she must excuse herself and lie down for a nap. She thanks the heroes for coming, and asks them to come back to visit again. During conversation, she can reveal the following information:

- If the heroes ask about her husband, Marit shakes her head sadly. She claims to have still heard nothing about his whereabouts. If anyone claims that her husband is dead or tries to convince her that he is not coming back, she gets angry and asks them all to leave.
- If the heroes ask about her uncle, Marit claims to know very little about him. In fact, he had little to do with her until recently. Just over three months ago, he began taking an interest in her. He was very excited about her pregnancy and offered to help them out however he could. She speculates that he just grew lonely living by himself. He was also kind enough to pay for her to live in a boarding house (which is what she calls the Madhouse, refusing to acknowledge its true nature) after her husband disappeared. Now that she is so close to her delivery date, though, he brought her to live with him.
- If the heroes ask about the Madhouse, she does not seem to recognize the name. If they ask about Virianis, however, she smiles fondly.

According to Marit, he runs a local boarding house. She went to stay there for a time after her husband disappeared. He was extremely kind to her, becoming almost like a father to her. Marit has not seen him for a while, so she asks many questions about the old man's health and well being.

If the heroes manage to explore the house somehow, they find very little of interest. Virianis keeps no evidence of his association with Vecna. If they search his room carefully, however, they may find a red and black robe that he wears during ceremonies. Still, it bears no markings and proves nothing about his allegiance.

Soon after they leave Marit's house, Virianis finds them. Proceed with "A Quick Trip to the Madhouse" on the next page.

Going to the Madhouse

If the heroes go looking for Virianis, they are directed to the Madhouse. Proceed directly to "A Quick Trip to the Madhouse" on the next page.

Wandering Aimlessly

If the heroes just aimlessly wander the streets while waiting for Banquo, they will eventually meet up with several Daggers. This encounter should not incapacitate the heroes or hinder them from continuing the adventure in any way. It should merely reinforce the danger in carelessness.

These Daggers are not the same ones who apprehended the heroes last time, so they do not recognize the player characters. However, they do try to stop these outsiders and bring them in for questioning. Most likely, the heroes are not willing to be arrested again. If they do allow themselves to be captured, they are again interrogated. This time, the Daggers do not release them though. The heroes are kept in jail until the interrogators decide they are no longer a threat.

Dagger, hm (sometimes hf), F4 (4): AC 4 (chain mail and shield); MV 12; hp 31; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword) or 1d4 (crossbow); SD 58% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'-6' tall); Int avg (8-10); ML elite (13-14); AL LE; XP 175.

After the heroes have either incapacitated or fled the Daggers, they run into Virianis. Proceed with "A Quick Trip to the Madhouse" on the next page.

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A Quick Trip to the Madhouse

At some point while the heroes are waiting for answers from Banquo, they are approached by Virianis. If they did not meet him during their first encounter with the Daggers, he introduces himself as a friend of Marit's. He heard how they helped her, and he now needs their assistance as well.

Virianis built the Madhouse over twenty years ago, to house and care for those who could not deal with the pressures and fears that are a part of everyday life in Tovag. The inmates (or residents, as he likes to call them) receive good care though no one in the Madhouse ever thinks of attempting to "cure" them. On the contrary, their madness is viewed as an understandable condition—unfortunate but not inappropriate.

The Daggers officially have no opinion of the Madhouse. They believe that the insane should be terminated rather than becoming a burden upon society, since all resources are needed in the war effort. However, since the money used to support the residents comes from Virianis, they can do nothing about it. On the other hand, if it were to somehow become a problem, they would be free to act. . . .

The Current Problem

A few days ago, a resident named Dast (known as "King of the Madmen") escaped from the Madhouse. The last word that he left with anyone was when he told a caretaker that he was going to "speak with his fellow king."

Virianis reminds the heroes that the city is an extremely dangerous place: "You know for yourselves how dangerous Tor Gorak can be," he states. "Can you imagine how deadly it can be here for one who does not always think clearly?" Even more importantly, if the Daggers find Dast wandering the streets, they may use his escape as an excuse to shut the Madhouse down. All of the remaining residents would then be forced to either contribute to society or be executed.

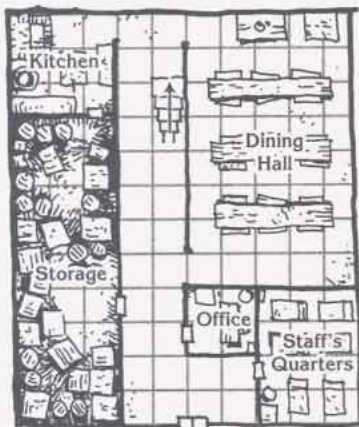
Virianis has a number of his employees looking for the missing resident, but unfortunately he has so few of them to spare. The Madhouse normally runs on somewhat of a "skeleton" staff. Thus, Virianis asks the heroes to look for Dast. (Note that Virianis does *not* refer to Dast as the King of the Madmen.)

The heroes will probably want to go to the

The Madhouse

One square = 5 feet
C = confinement cell
R = residents' quarters

Level One



Level Two



Level Three



Madhouse to look around first. In this case, Virianis brings them to the Madhouse and shows them around.

The Layout of the Madhouse

The Madhouse of Tor Gorak is a three-story stone keep. It provides a home for forty-one residents and has a caretaker staff of six. The caretakers cook, clean, and watch over the residents. Although there are no “guards,” as such, these caretakers try to keep the mad from wandering off. The Madhouse provides protection for these people, keeping them locked safely within for their own good.

Common Room: Except at night, when they are asleep (bedtime is at dusk), the residents spend most of their time here. This large, open room has numerous chairs and divans as well as a few tables. This is the only room in the building with a rug on the floor as well, since many of the residents like to sit or lie on the floor. A few simple board games sit on the tables.

Confinement Cells: Unfortunately, some of the residents frequently become violent—threatening themselves or others. In such a case, the staff places them in one of these three cells, which are almost always in use. Frequent howling or gibbering emanates from within these cells.

Dining Hall: Another open room, this has three long wooden tables flanked by benches. Occasionally, a few of the residents congregate here.

Entry: The large, oaken double doors open into a relatively empty room. Usually, one staff member remains positioned here both to keep a vigil against residents attempting to leave and to receive visitors.

The staff keeps the doors locked, requiring visitors to use the huge metal doorknocker to announce their presence if they want to gain entry.

The King’s Residence: Unlike the other residents, Dast has a room to himself. Other than the purple drapes that the inmates have placed over the door (in honor of their benevolent ruler), his room looks much like any other from the outside. Inside, Dast has attempted to make the room look like a throne room. He has carved a large chair with crude embellishments to serve as his throne, and painted sheets hang on the walls like tapestries. His bed is hidden behind the throne. Although he does not know how to write, he has scribbled illegible “proclamations” and posted them around the room. Only he knows what they mean.

Kitchen: This open room is empty except when

in use before and during mealtime. It is crude but sufficient.

Records Office: This cramped, stuffy little room holds a desk, a few chairs, and some bookcases. Virianis keeps the records and ledgers of the Madhouse here, being one of the privileged few Tovagians who can read. Virianis always keeps this room locked, and only he has a key.

Resident Quarters: Each resident shares a room with at least one other. The rooms are usually simple and stark, unless a particular resident has decided to decorate it him or herself. (A few of the rooms have oddly splattered paint, strange insane carvings, or madly scrawled writing on the walls.)

Staff Quarters: The caretakers maintain a permanent residence here. This simple, barracks-like room holds few luxuries. Virianis does not live here and only comes by about once a week.

Storage: Foodstuffs and general supplies are kept here in crates and barrels. The door is generally locked, and each staff member has a key.

Searching for Dast

Should the heroes accept, Virianis thanks them ahead of time and suggests that they start immediately. He knows that the heroes cannot speak much of the local language, but he says that they do not need to speak, only find Dast and bring him back home. If they ask (but not otherwise), he can also send a caretaker with them on the search, or even accompany them himself.

If the heroes go on their own (which is preferable), Virianis gives them an excellent verbal description of Dast, enabling them to recognize him when they find him. (See page 26 for a description.) If they seem unsure of what to do when they find Dast, Virianis gives them a crude, wooden headpiece that looks vaguely like a crown. It is dyed yellow and has several colored stones adhered along the top. He says only that this is one of Dast’s favorite possessions, and that it may help them convince him to come home. Though he does not reveal this to the heroes, Virianis actually took the crown away from Dast earlier that week. Dast insisted on wearing the headpiece while at the dinner table, so Virianis took it from him and simply forgot to give it back.

As the heroes wander around the streets, refer to the layout of the city described in the **Introduction**. Smart characters will avoid any further entanglements with the Dagers at all costs. (If not, they may end up right back in the Sheath, with the Dagers more suspicious of them than before and no chance of rescue by Virianis.)

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As Dast said, he has left the Madhouse as a ruler going to talk to a fellow ruler; he plans to speak with Kas about some sort of "noble matter." Still, the player characters could run into him anywhere since Dast has no idea how to find Kas. When he asks people on the street about the location of Kas, they either flee in terror at the mention of their dread lord's name or at least refuse to talk about him.

After anywhere from one to three hours of searching, the heroes find Dast wandering the lonely streets. Read or paraphrase the following text when this occurs:

You see a young man with tousled brown hair and unkempt, mismatched clothes, muttering to himself as he walks down the street in front of you. You immediately see that he fits the description Virianis gave you!

Before you can approach, however, three warriors, dressed in a manner all too familiar, fade out of the shadows and move toward him. The Dagers seem to have found Dast mere moments before you could get to him!

Attacking: If the heroes attack immediately, they must strike fast. If an encounter with only three Dagger warriors proves too easy for the heroes, two to three more can be waiting in the shadows to strike. Though this battle should not prove particularly challenging, it should be difficult to end *quickly*. A fight longer than three rounds gives the Dagers the opportunity to call for help, which brings two more warriors for each hero in another five rounds. Such a call of alarm also alerts all the Dagers in the area to watch for the player characters. This turn of events makes getting back to the Madhouse without further conflict very difficult.

Dagger, hm (sometimes hf), F4 (4): AC 4 (chain mail and shield); MV 12; hp 31; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword) or 1d4 (crossbow); SD 58% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'-6' tall); Int avg (8-10); ML elite (13-14); AL LE; XP 175.

To make matters worse, Dast provides more hindrance than help in battle. In the confusion, he is as likely to attack the heroes as the Dagers, for he has no idea who any of them are. Besides, he

believes that the Dagers will take him to see Kas.

Dast's stats appear on the inside cover.

Negotiating: If the heroes approach and attempt to get Dast away from the Dagers through nonviolent means, they first have to overcome the language barrier. Second, they have to come up with a very good story. Dast has already told these authorities that he is looking for his fellow ruler Kas and that he has important things to discuss with him. Such a statement almost certainly rises the hackles of the paranoid authorities, akin to suicide in Tor Gorak.

Waiting: If the heroes watch and wait, they see the young Madhouse resident talk to the soldiers for just a few short moments before they grab him roughly and begin to drag him in the direction of Dagger Keep. Dast goes peacefully, for he believes that he is being taken to Kas. If the heroes do not intervene quickly and rescue Dast before they reach the Sheath, they have to break him out of the jail, a difficult task at any time.

Taking Dast Home: Though the heroes have just rescued him from an unpleasant fate, Dast does not want to return to the Madhouse. He still demands to see Kas, and his shouts and questions attract a lot of attention, making it impossible to sneak through the streets unseen.

If the heroes can speak with him, they can easily discover that Dast thinks himself a king. Perhaps the smartest thing to do would be to tell Dast that Kas is not currently in the city, or even that Lord Kas really is not the equal of a king such as himself and does not deserve to speak with him. Such statements most likely get Dast to accompany the heroes quietly back to the Madhouse.

If the heroes give Dast his crown, he forgets about his desire to see Kas and willingly returns to the Madhouse. In his excitement over the returned crown, however, he babbles about it nonstop the entire way back.

Returning to the Madhouse

Virianis thanks the heroes profusely if they return with the missing Dast. If the heroes have not already discovered that Dast is known as the King of the Madmen, they should learn this fact now. If nothing else, several of the residents could bow to him as he walks past them in the halls.

The Loreward Again

When the player characters return to Banquo's house again (and give the proper signal and phrase), he lets them in quickly. He excitedly

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announces that his research bore fruit, at least to some degree.

One of his books mentions the “Three Words,” which must be spoken as part of three separate rituals. His manuscript refers to a *Book of Inverted Darkness*, in which all three rituals are supposed to be described. Unfortunately, he does not know exactly where this ancient tome can be found. He has narrowed the search down to two places, however: the Library of Kas and the Shadowed Room.

Banquo cannot hide his excitement at the prospect of someone going in and finding what lies inside these forgotten troves of lore. At the same time, however, he has no intention of going himself. He dislikes danger, and this is a very perilous undertaking.

At this point in the conversation, Banquo also thinks to point out that the player characters’ lives are in great danger. According to his research, the ritual involved with this mysterious Word apparently has something to do with “the blood of an outsider.” This almost certainly applies to the characters. Banquo also believes that while the adventurers might be the targets of the rite, the ritual itself spells a far-reaching doom for Tovag and the surrounding lands. If this ritual has something to do with Vecna, its dark goals may know no bounds at all.

The Places They Seek

Banquo knows little about the Library of Kas, but he does know its location. The library, according to the book he now holds, is located behind an antiquated iron door in the base of the towering foundation of Castle Xiphos. No one of Banquo’s acquaintance has ever investigated the door or known anyone else who has. In fact, the vast majority of Tor Gorak’s citizenry has probably never noticed it. As for the Shadowed Room, Banquo knows even less. His books reveal only that it is located somewhere in Citadel Cavitius.

Banquo explains that the *Book of Inverted Darkness* most likely exists in scroll form, and the legends say that the tube is stoppered with a red jewel as big as a man’s fist. Although there may be many scrolls and books in the library, all of them invaluable, this is the specific tome that they need.

Vecna

At this point, if the player characters have not learned much about Vecna, Banquo will grudgingly

fill them in on the commonly known facts: Vecna is an ancient lich (and perhaps even a minor god); he rules the land of Cavitius and seeks the destruction of Tovag and its ruler Kas (who was once his lieutenant); and he has threatened the entire world in the past with his evil schemes, so there is no reason to believe that he might not do so again. More details Banquo does not have or will not share. Further, he holds no proof that Vecna or his servants are involved at all. He suspects Vecna only because he knows of no other wizards in the area powerful enough to control this type of magic.

If the player characters learn the secrets behind this ritual, they might not only be saving their own lives but the lives of everyone in Tovag. Banquo himself gladly offers to return the favor (assuming he gains access to any information gained) in any way he can.

Moving On

When the heroes are ready to leave, Banquo gives them some advice about their expedition. If they are going to the Library of Kas, he suggests that they go at night, when few can see them approach and force open the door. Of course, this violates the curfew regulations, but the adventurers should avoid the Daggers at any cost anyway. In this case, continue the adventure with “Scene Four: Library of Kas.”

If the heroes have decided to go to Cavitius, he warns them about that terrible domain: “Once within the realm, keep to the roads, for those that wander into the desert, known as the Ashen Wastes, eventually wither and die. Lastly, getting into Citadel Cavitius is not a hard task. No guards keep out visitors or travelers. However, there exist dark forces and evil entities that keep people in. Plan ahead of time regarding your escape.” In this case, continue the adventure with **Act Two: The Clutches of Vecna**.

Further, if the heroes travel to Cavitius rather than the Library of Kas, they miss the second encounter with Vecna’s cultists. Because they need the blood of an outsider, the cultists attack the heroes after they leave the city instead of outside the Library. Their tactics and stats appear on pages 31–32.

Like Banquo, Larossa does not accompany the player characters, but she helps them in other ways, providing food and other supplies.

Whenever the expedition sets out, Zarenival and Cochort follow as before.

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There are some secrets which do not permit themselves to be told.

—Edgar Allen Poe
The Man in the Crowd

SCENE FOUR: THE LIBRARY OF KAS

In this scene, the heroes delve into the mysterious Library of Kas. If you wish, the Daggers might make a sudden appearance, leading to either a fight or a great deal of hiding and tension. A typical nighttime Dagger patrol consists of eight soldiers and a leader, but at least two of the Daggers skulk in the shadows out of sight in order to sneak up and catch foes unaware when necessary. Stats for Daggers appear on page 18.

In the western side of the rocky outcropping that holds Castle Xiphos, an ancient iron door keeps the people of Tor Gorak from the secrets on the other side. Behind this innocuous, apparently unguarded door lies the Library of Kas. However, it is guarded by an ancient horror sequestered away by Lord Kas himself.

When the heroes near the door, read or paraphrase the following text:

The streets keep their silence. The city fears to even breathe in the darkness. Just as you were told, below the rock foundations of the castle, an old, iron door lies recessed in the stony cliff. Strangely, the ancient portal seems to predate even the stone around it.

A short (fifteen to twenty foot) climb up the rocky cliff face brings the characters up to the door. Since the door is set into the rock about four feet, it has a small ledge that will hold anyone who wishes to stand in front of it.

Opening the door requires the heroes to overcome three obstacles. The first two are separate iron locks built into the door itself. Lockpicking attempts suffer a -10% penalty due to both the locks' construction and age. A magical seal, akin to a *wizard lock* spell, also bars the door. If characters wish to attempt to destroy the door rather than open it, they must either make a

successful open barred doors roll or inflict 150 points of damage upon the door.

Into the Library

When the heroes finally open the door and step into the passage beyond, read or paraphrase the following text:

Beyond the door, a narrow passage stretches into the darkness. The smooth stone walls glisten with moisture and slime, and water collects on the floor in small puddles. Except for a distant dripping sound, nothing disturbs the absolute silence in this place.

The passage beyond the door goes straight into the rock. After about forty feet, explorers come upon a twenty-five-foot-wide shaft descending down into the earth and then upward toward the castle above. When the heroes reach this point, read or paraphrase the following text:

Your light reveals that the passage is bisected by a large shaft, which rises deep into the earth and up toward the castle. The darkness in both directions quickly swallows your light so any real measure of distance remains impossible. The sides of the shaft are even more slick with moisture and yellowish slime than the passage itself.

A very narrow ledge runs around the sides of the shaft, and at the other side, a tunnel similar to the one in which you stand extends further into the rock.

As you stand and look, a quiet sound rises from below—some sort of wet, sloshing, slurping noise.

This shaft once connected these chambers with the lower reaches of the castle, but it is currently sealed with bricks and mortar about forty feet above the level on which the adventurers now stand. It also extends about ninety feet below the tunnel.

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At the point where the passage meets the shaft, three metal levers protrude from the wall. They are rusty and corroded, but a strong character can move them with no trouble. These levers serve as the key to the door found in the passage beyond the shaft. Each lever can be pulled all the way up, all the way down, or left in the middle. Currently, the first and third levers are pulled all the way down, and the second rests in the middle position. In order to open the door, the first lever must remain down, the second should be placed all the way up, and the third must be in the middle position.

The Library Guardian

In ancient days, when Kas served Vecna as his lieutenant, the decadent Kas kept a harem of concubines and sired many children. Despicable to his very core, when his children reached an age of maturity that prompted Kas to see them as rivals, he slew or imprisoned them forever. One such offspring was a son named Narek.

At a very early age, Narek learned sorcerous skills. So great was his aptitude that even Vecna noticed and commented on his potential, granting him a few treasures and tomes in hopes of making Narek a powerful and useful servant. Jealous of this obviously preferential treatment, Kas went into a hideous rage and imprisoned his son in a tomblike vault along with these gifts. Narek thus disappeared, Vecna paid the event little heed, and Kas's son was forgotten.

Inside his prison, Narek attempted to use the spells and rituals found in the tomes, hoping to free himself. Unfortunately for him, the spells were more powerful than he could yet control, despite his promise and potential. In a catastrophic magical mishap, the young would-be mage transformed himself into some horrible ever-muting beast.

Narek has become insanely evil during his imprisonment (and considering his parentage and environment, he probably started out fairly twisted and corrupt). He gleefully destroys anything or anyone that he can get a hold of. This presents anyone wishing to get at his treasure trove, incorrectly known as the "Library of Kas," with a real challenge.

First Encounter: When the heroes reach the shaft, the thing that is Narek detects their presence and begins dragging itself up toward them. Because it has to travel ninety feet, the Thing takes quite some time to reach the heroes, or even come within range of their light.

Due to Narek's wet, slimy skin, torches and similar light sources dropped down the shaft grant



only a momentary glimpse of his tendrils and eyes before being snuffed out. Still, even this glimpse could require a fear check. If a magical or otherwise inextinguishable light source illuminates the Thing, the sight of it could force players to make horror checks. To maximize the horror of the situation, the upward movement rate for the Thing can vary. The players should realize that it is coming and try to hurry around the ledge to get past before it arrives.

Falling: Obviously, the one-foot-wide, slippery ledge makes it difficult to hurry, particularly under pressure, requiring a Dexterity check. Those that fail the check slip and begin to fall. Any heroes nearby are allowed a Dexterity check to grab and save their companion, and the falling character can attempt one more check to try to grab hold of the ledge.

At this point, you may want characters to *almost* fall, only to be saved at the last moment. This sort of occurrence serves to heighten the horror both now and in the encounters to come.

Falling characters drop into the mass of the Thing. Because of Narek's wet, elastic nature, the character takes only 1d6 points of damage, no matter what the height. Unfortunately, the victim

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then falls prey to 1d6 of Narek's attacks, each with a +4 bonus. Those heroes that remain above hear only screams and slurping noises, as the Thing most likely destroys their companion.

Beyond the Shaft

On the other side of the shaft, the passage continues for sixty feet, turns to the left, continues for another twenty feet, and ends in a door. This heavy, iron door stands impervious to normal and magical damage. Spells such as *knock* cannot even open it. It opens only when someone correctly maneuvers the levers found on the far side of the shaft.

Anyone carefully examining the door and the area around it finds a crude diagram on the stone wall showing the proper positioning of the levers. Unless by sheer luck the player character placed the levers in the right position, however, someone must go back and set the mechanism in order to open the door. That means crossing the shaft again.

Crossing the Shaft Again: This is where timing becomes crucial. Once whoever goes back (and it might be all the characters depending on how they want to handle things) reaches the levers, the Thing reaches the top and attacks. When this happens, read or paraphrase the following text:

Somehow, fate has ripped an image from your worst forgotten nightmare and thrust it into reality. A loathsome Thing rises—oozes—up from the shaft below. Its greenish flesh, covered in oozing sores which drip with the yellow slime that coats the walls, sprouts long, snaky tendrils that reach for you, grasping closer and closer. As it silently stares with innumerable inhuman eyes scattered across its obscene form, you can feel its hunger and its ineffable evil.

Obviously, Narek has effectively trapped any heroes on the eastern side of the shaft. The tendrils of the Thing can reach up to forty feet down the passages, so characters can find limited safety beyond this reach. Still, that does not offer much comfort. Those on the western side have the opportunity to run, but if they want to get completely out of harm's reach, they have to exit the area entirely.

At this point, if the adventurers stay and fight the Thing, they might possibly get a break. Narek, not having encountered real wounds or pain for untold

centuries, retreats back down the shaft if it suffers more than thirty points of damage. It simply drops quickly to the bottom of the shaft, without sustaining damage. At this point, the heroes can either flee or manipulate the levers to open the door on the far side.

If the heroes all cross back to the east side of the shaft, the Thing comes up again, trapping them. They must either slay it or somehow drive it away, but it is not deterred by mere pain this time.

Narek (The Thing In the Shaft): AC 6; MV 6; HD 14; hp 94; THAC0 7; #AT 2d6; Dmg 1d6 each; SA constriction; SD special immunities; SZ G (25' across); Int high (14); ML elite (13); AL NE; XP 9,000.

Notes: Foes hit with 4 or more tendrils in the same round are immobilized, suffering 2d6 points of additional constriction damage each round. Such victims are pulled toward Narek at a rate of 10' per round. To break free, the constricting tendrils must be severed (by inflicting at least 4 points of damage to each one), or the victim must make a successful Strength check for each constricting appendage. The Thing is immune to fire, *charm*, and form-altering spells.

If the heroes use ranged attacks from a position that the Thing cannot reach, it retreats down the pit, but only just below the edge, waiting to spring on anyone that comes close. Since its mass now requires that it dwell mostly within the shaft, even the fact that the door to the outside is opened or destroyed does not mean that it is free. In fact, even if the heroes do not slay Narek, it remains trapped here forever.

The Room Beyond

The room beyond the door contains the materials given to Narek by Vecna himself. When the heroes open the door, read or paraphrase the following:

Once the heavy iron door opens, your light reveals a small chamber beyond it that looks like a study. Somehow, it has stayed considerably drier than the shaft and passage that you just came through. Manuscripts cover an ancient-looking wooden table in the center of the room, and more books and scrolls lie scattered about on the floor and chair. The walls and floor are covered in crudely scratched symbols and words in a language with which you are unfamiliar.

In this chaotic jumble of ancient papers and books, a single golden scroll tube juts out of a pile on

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the floor, the gleam of a dust-covered red gem at its end catching your eye.

The Book of Inverted Darkness: Once they see the object of their quest, the player characters are most likely going to leap toward the scroll tube. Handle this scene carefully, because it ends in disappointment. When they open the tube, read or paraphrase the following text:

The scroll tube in your hands is ornately worked gold. Ancient, dust-filled patterns delicately coat its surface. The gem stopper is as large as the legends foretold. Though flawed, its size alone must make it worth a fortune.

Prying out this stopper takes some time and quite a bit of strength. Once it has been worked out of its position, you peer into the long-sealed tube and see . . . nothing. The scroll tube is empty.

Long ago, after the “library” was sealed, Vecna conjured forth the scroll using a spell, for he wanted it back. No one knew this, not even the most careful historian, so rightfully no one can be angry with poor Banquo for giving out incorrect information.

Still, the heroes gain an extremely valuable gem from this scenario. The enormous ruby is easily worth over four thousand gold pieces. Unfortunately, the heroes are very unlikely to find anyone to buy it from them. There are probably fewer than ten people in the entire Core of Ravenholt wealthy enough to purchase such a treasure, and most of them are darklords!

Other Tomes: Aside from the scroll tube, over four hundred books and scrolls, along with various miscellaneous papers, lie in this room. Though the heroes have found a treasure house of ancient lore and magical knowledge, getting it safely out of the room presents a real challenge—one made much more complicated by the presence of the Thing and the cultists who wait for the heroes outside.

If the characters have the time, and they use it to peruse the papers and books they have found (and have some sort of magical means of translation or make numerous successful ancient language proficiency checks), they find some information about the Shadowed Room in Cavitius. This single page appears to have been torn out of another manuscript (which they cannot find) and tucked

carefully between two other books. At this point, give the players the handout provided.

The heroes can also decipher a few of Narek’s notes, which are written in the margins here and there throughout the manuscripts. The following snippets should help the heroes learn the origin of the beast they encountered in the shaft:

- ❖ “I doubt that Vecna will tolerate my unjust treatment. Not even his own lieutenant may take so bold an action against Vecna’s favored without suffering his wrath.”
- ❖ “It seems that I am to be left here indefinitely. I have been forgotten, and my father’s crime has gone unpunished. Such vengeance must be mine then.”
- ❖ “I believe I have uncovered the ritual I need. Vecna’s gifts have been extremely helpful, where his favor has not. If only I can harness the magic it holds, I will free myself from this damnable prison and repay my father’s betrayal. . . .”

The other books and papers are interesting and valuable, particularly to a wizard, but most player characters will find them very difficult to utilize, since they are not only written in an ancient, challenging language, but they discuss a completely different sort of magic than traditional wizards use, involving complicated rituals and rites totally unfamiliar to the heroes. Player characters might want to keep some as curiosities, but the best home for these tomes is with Loreward Banquo.

The Cultists

Having learned of the heroes’ location from Vocar’s magical servants, the Vecna cult decides to make their move now, while their victims are unaware and preoccupied. The cultists seek to kill their targets and take their blood. They arrive on the scene after the player characters have opened the sealed door and entered the Library.

Time the attack so that the player characters have had an opportunity to discover that the scroll tube is empty, and perhaps long enough to look through the books and papers a bit—if they are so inclined.

The cult has no intention of challenging the Thing, so if it still lives, they wait outside for their targets to come to them. If that is the case, they ready an ambush at the bottom of the cliff.

In most cases, however, the cult goes right into the Library to attack the player characters, out of sight of the Daggers or anyone else. In any event, their strike is quick, and their plan is straightforward: They want to kill the player characters. If this proves

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impossible, they at least seek to draw blood from their victims. A single strike from a bladed weapon that inflicts at least four points of damage is enough.

To begin this encounter, read or paraphrase the following text:

Without warning, many dark figures leap from the shadows, darting at you with the speed of serpents. You immediately recognize the leering faces painted to look like one-eyed skulls, and the slashing, stabbing knives with black, rune-covered blades. Even worse is the low whisper each of them repeats over and over in your own tongue: "blood . . . blood . . . blood . . ."

To aid in the ritual, each of the cultists has been taught the word for "blood" in a language common to all the victims (which Vocar learned by talking to Marit). The cultists do not fight to the death, but they do sacrifice themselves to get the needed blood.

Cultist, hm or hf, F4 (2 per hero): AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 29 each; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SD 58% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'-6' tall); ML fanatic (18); Int avg (8-10); AL CE; XP 175 each.

As soon as one of the cultists strikes a blow to one of the heroes that inflicts at least four points of damage, he raises his weapon in the air and shouts loudly in ancient Flan. The other cultists then stop chanting and repeat the shout. At that point, they retreat if hard-pressed or allow their victims to flee if pursuit endangers their mission. Otherwise, they continue to fight, hoping to eliminate the heroes now that they are no longer needed.

The Shaft: Fighting on the ledge around the shaft requires the combatants to make successful Dexterity checks each round in order to avoid falling, as before. The cultists actively attempt to keep their victims from falling if they do not yet have ample blood to present to Vocar. Once they do have enough blood, they change their tactics and *try* to send their victims plummeting into the dark pit.

If Narek lies dead at the bottom of the shaft, its mass fills the final ten feet of the fall, cushioning anyone that falls. Thus, anyone that falls down the shaft suffers only 1d6 points of damage. Of course, the poor fallen combatant must struggle to keep afloat in the mass of fleshy gore that was the Thing.

Players with characters in such a predicament should probably make horror checks. To remain alive, the character must make a successful swimming proficiency check each round. (Due to the consistency of the Thing's liquefied remains, even encumbered and armored characters can attempt to stay afloat.) Failed checks indicate that the character begins sinking. Three failed checks in a row means that the character succumbs to the gore. Sinking characters last only as long as they can hold their breath (half of the character's Constitution score in rounds). The only way the victim can ultimately survive is by climbing the slippery walls or being rescued by someone else (with a long rope or the ability to climb or fly).

Vocar: Vocar does not lead the attack, so the player characters probably have no idea that he is behind this. The cult attack does, however, prove that the cultists are deadly serious in their endeavors and that Banquo was right to believe that their lives were in danger. Ultimately, the characters should feel that the cult is dangerous and should be stopped.

Moving On

If the player characters return to Loreward Banquo, he is anxious and eager to learn what they found. If they brought him some of the papers and texts that they discovered, his elation might surprise them, for until then they probably saw him only as a staid, emotionless scholar.

If the heroes could not read the information given in the handout, they might have brought the parchment with any other materials they carried out of the Library. Banquo can then read the page and translate it for them, giving them the information they need to continue looking for the *Book of Inverted Darkness*.

If the player characters left any of the books or papers behind (which is likely, since the Library held probably three-to-four hundred pounds of materials), the cultists take them. No matter what—even if the player characters kill all of their attackers—the remaining books are gone when the heroes return.

The next step in the adventurer's quest should be to go to Vecna's realm, Cavitius, to seek the Shadowed Room. If they do not seem to realize this, Banquo again points them in the right direction. If he has not already filled them in on Vecna's domain, Banquo takes the time to do so now. He gives them the same information presented at the end of the last scene (on page 27).

At this point, the adventure continues with **Act Two: The Clutches of Vecna**.



*All spirits are enslaved
which serve things evil.*

—Percy Bysshe Shelley
Prometheus Unbound

Act Two:
The Clutches of Vecna

ACT TWO: THE CLUTCHES OF VECNA

SCENE FIVE: THE BURNING PEAKS



The journey to the land of Cavitius begins at the city of Tor Gorak. Once the heroes have provisioned themselves at Larossa's as best they can, they find leaving the city fairly easy. Those leaving Tor Gorak are not watched as closely as those entering.

Vocar's invisible servants keep a close watch on the player characters as they leave, following them at a distance. The journey through the countryside of Tovag is quiet and uneventful, although it has begun to rain frequently, both day and night, coming in spurts.

The transition between Tovag and Cavitius is neither obvious nor instantaneous. As travelers progress from one domain to the other, it gets hotter and more arid. The transition from the temperate climate of Tovag and the deserts of Cavitius is blurred further by the volcanic heat and blowing ash of the Burning Peaks themselves.

Being Shadowed

The first night after the heroes leave Tor Gorak, Vocar's servants grow impatient. To amuse themselves, Zarenival and Cochort decide to harass the player characters. Stats for these creatures appear on the inside cover.

To begin this encounter, read or paraphrase the following text:

Finally, after a full day's travel, you stop and rest. Unfortunately, it begins to rain again. Once you have settled in and made your somewhat soggy camp, you begin hearing odd noises deeper into the trees. Slowly, a long, dark form moves from behind a clump of briars in the distance. You can't be sure, but it appears to be a wolf?

It is indeed a wolf—after a fashion. In actuality, the quasit Zarenival has taken the form of a wolf to provide a distraction. As Zarenival's foes take notice of him, Cochort uses its power to create an intense vortex to fell a nearby tree, pushing it toward the distracted victims.

Each hero currently in the campsite must make a Dexterity check with a -3 penalty. Failure indicates that the hero is struck by the falling tree. Anyone hit by the tree sustains 3d6 points of damage from the impact, though a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon halves the damage.

Looking For Culprits: Of course, true to their nature, both Zarenival and Cochort immediately flee at this point, adding an eerie quality to the sudden violence. An investigation by the characters can turn up some strange disturbances in the soft, wet earth near where the tree was felled. Anyone that makes a successful Intelligence check can easily determine that the tree was not cut with any sort of axe or blade. Further, a character that makes a successful tracking proficiency check where the wolf was spotted discovers that the creature's prints end abruptly, leaving no sign of the creature. (This is where Zarenival changed back into a quasit and then flew off invisibly.)

Although the sudden attack is frightening, the utter lack of knowledge is probably worse for the characters. By this point, they can be sure that someone or something is following them (and perhaps has been for some time), but they do not know what. Play Zarenival and Cochort to the fullest of their intelligence; if at any time a character casts a *detect invisibility* spell or uses something similar, the creatures get away as fast as possible. They always stay out in the open for this reason, never actually following the characters into a building or small area.

Moving On: Eventually, the player characters resume their journey. Soon enough, they see the Burning Peaks looming in the distance (although they are visible as a ridge on the horizon even from Tor Gorak). Smoke and ash billow into the sky from numerous points, making it clear that the Burning Peaks are a volcanic range.

The Three Passes

There are three mountain passes through which a traveler can navigate across the Burning Peaks. Due to their steep, rough, jagged nature as well as constant tremors, avalanches, and lava flocs, it is virtually impossible to cross the mountains anywhere else. Make it clear to the players that it is unfeasible to make it across anywhere other than the three passes. However, if this sort of heavy-handed approach is undesirable, and the heroes

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attempt to blaze their own trail over the mountains, use the following guidelines.

Mountaineering Checks: Require mountaineering proficiency checks for even attempting to cross elsewhere.

Delays: Most likely, the journey would take only a day or two. Each day that they spend off the trail, however, the group must make a mountaineering check. A failed check indicates that they made very little progress, requiring an additional day of travel. (The trip should still not take more than six days though.)

Hazards: Each day, the travelers encounter 2d6 hazards. Do not roll randomly for these occurrences, but choose each one carefully. Traversing these horrible mountains can be as terrifying as any encounter with a monster. Possible encounters could include the following:

- Sudden avalanches inflict 3d6 points of damage to each hero. A successful saving throw vs. breath weapon halves the damage.
- Geysers of steam inflict 2d8 points of damage to each hero. A successful saving throw vs. breath weapon halves the damage.

- Dead-end ravines require the heroes to back-track. The trip takes an additional day (even going beyond the six-day maximum).
- Sudden lava flows trap the heroes, requiring an additional day (even going beyond the six-day maximum).
- A brittle cliff collapses, causing climbers to fall 1d6×10 feet, which inflicts 1d6 points of damage per ten feet.
- Rugged course requires additional mountaineering checks. Failed checks indicate minor falls and mishaps (inflicting 1d6 points of damage). The trip takes an additional day (even going beyond the six day maximum).
- Dangerous creatures attack. (You can choose any appropriate creatures, such as undead monsters, wolves, and serpents.)

Most characters will quickly decide that crossing the Burning Peaks on their own is too dangerous and make their way back to one of the mountain passes. Those taking this easier way can use any of the three passes to which the roads lead. Basically, they are all the same. All serve as battlegrounds, and all are equally dangerous.

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The Fortresses

At the mouth of each pass, Kas's forces have erected a crude fort to watch over and protect Tovag from invasion. A captain in the Tovagian army commands the fortress. Under him, ten sergeants and three hundred soldiers man the fortress and patrol the area.

Since these fortresses often fall to enemy attack, the Tovagian soldiers construct them quickly and crudely out of wooden logs. They see no sense in building something difficult and complex if the enemies are only going to raze it soon anyway.

Sneaking by the fortress does not prove incredibly difficult; careful, cautious, and sneaky travelers can probably slip into Vecna's realm without disturbing a single soldier. The Tovagian soldiers worry far more about an invasion than a few individuals skulking about.

If they give the fortress itself a wide berth, travelers only have occasional patrols to worry about. These patrols are composed of ten soldiers led by a sergeant. Patrols that encounter travelers maintain a healthy suspicion but do not automatically attack or even assume the worst. Smart travelers have a good cover story ready; perhaps the truth might even work if spoken persuasively and eloquently.

Soldier, hm (sometimes hf), F2: AC 4 (chain mail and shield); MV 12; hp 16 each; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword), 1d4 (crossbow), or 1d10 (halberd); SD 54% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'–6' tall); ML avg (10); AL varies (mostly N); XP 65.

Sergeant, hm, F5: AC 4 (chain mail and shield); MV 12; hp 39; THACO 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword) or 1d4 (crossbow); SD 60% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (6' tall); ML champion (15); AL LE; XP 270.

Captain, hm, F6: AC 4 (chain mail and shield); MV 12; hp 47; THACO 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (long sword) or 1d4 (crossbow); SD 62% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (6' tall); ML champion (15); AL LE; XP 420.

If the heroes do not have a good explanation as to why they are there or what they plan to do in Cavitius, the soldiers have no choice but to consider them spies. Spies are apprehended,

detained, and usually killed. At best, the soldiers take suspected spies back to Tor Gorak to let the Daggers deal with them as they see fit.

Travelers approaching the fortress are questioned and treated similarly to those that might encounter a patrol.

Cult of Vecna: Somehow, the cult of Vecna has infiltrated each garrison with a few of its own members. If the heroes are ever detained at the fortress, one of the infiltrators approaches them secretly. If convinced that the prisoners are spies for Vecna, the cultist does whatever he or she can to free the prisoners and get them into Cavitius. (Because communication is difficult and slow among cult members spaced so far apart, there exists almost no way for the agents of Vecna in the fort to know that the heroes are actually enemies of the cult.)

Zarenival and Cohort: To make matters more difficult for the heroes, Vocar's invisible servants are likely to use this opportunity to cause more havoc. For example, they may make noise to alert patrols or fortress guards, put objects in the way of sneaking characters, and the like. They will not go so far as attempting to communicate with anyone—even cultist infiltrators. Above all, they do not do anything that might jeopardize their ability to follow the heroes.

The Haunted Baffleground

The pass through the Burning Peaks is narrow and dark, since the high cliff walls and towering peaks block out most of the sunlight. It gets even darker as travelers near Cavitius, for Vecna's realm has no real sunlight, just a dull, dusky light that never ends or changes.

As the heroes travel through the area, read or paraphrase the following text:



The hot, dry air smells of ash and decay, and the remnants of thousands of slain warriors cry out in a silent, haunting scream. Shadows twitch and move all around you. It is difficult to not pick up the pace to get through this vile locale a little quicker, but the ash-covered ground makes it difficult to move with any speed without slipping.



The volcanoes in the area are constantly spewing ash and smoke into the sky. The roadway is covered in fresh volcanic ash as well as older ejecta that has been ground under the feet of

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countless soldiers—both humans from Tovag and undead from Cavitius.

Except for the occasional distant cry of carrion birds, the pass is silent. Nevertheless, anyone passing through the area must make a Wisdom check (though this should be somewhat secretive on your part). Those failing the check hear whispering all around them. Occasionally, these whispers are distant cries of pain or anguish, and sometimes the sounds of battle echo from far off.

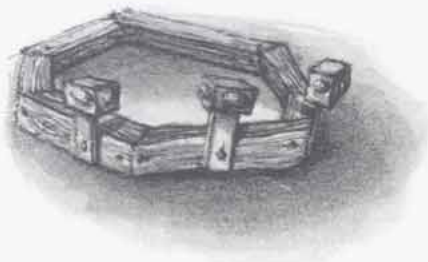
Just as the heroes determine that the shadows they see seething around them are just a trick of the mind, they are proven wrong. They are attacked by the spirits of slain warriors, condemned to spend all eternity in this battleground, in the form of the shadows.

At first, only two of the undead spirits attack the characters. Only after these are slain or turned, and the characters relax a little do the other shadows move in all at once. Three shadows per hero launch an all-out attack. The shadows fight until only one-third of them remain, at which point they retreat into the natural shadows of the pass. Once they have seeped into the dark nooks and crannies, finding them is virtually impossible.

Shadow (3 per hero): AC 7; MV 12; HD 3+3; hp 17 each; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1; SA Strength drain; SD weapon and spell immunities; SZ M (6' tall); ML fearless (20); AL CE; XP 420 each.

Note: The shadow's touch drains 1 point of Strength. Lost Strength points return 2d4 turns later. Victims reduced to 0 become shadows. Shadows are immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, and *cold*. Only +1 or better magical weapons can harm them.

As they continue through the pass, the heroes should get the feeling that the shadows continue to follow them. In fact, this is true. The remaining shadows attack again a few hours after their initial strike, this time fighting until all are turned or destroyed.



The Hideous Engine

Somewhere along the pass, the heroes encounter one of Vecna's hideous war machines, composed of undead bodies and spirits thrust and mangled together in unholy ways. These engines have row upon row of skulls that scream chants of evil rituals. The magic released in this ritual tears and mutilates the bodies of their foes as well as the terrain around them. These engines carry virtually uncontrolled, utterly destructive magic. The soldiers that the heroes met in "Scene One: It Begins" were affected by one of these engines.

Unfortunately for the heroes, they come upon one of these engines of doom themselves—although thankfully it is long since wrecked in battle. To begin this encounter, read or paraphrase the following text:



As you make your way through the narrow mountain pass, you see signs of battle everywhere. Very old corpses, drying and desiccating in the hot sun, lie amidst scraps of armor, broken weapons, and fallen standards. A few carrion birds circle overhead, and you can feel the eyes of tiny scavengers from behind every rock, waiting for you to pass so that they can resume feeding upon the remains you see before you.



A close examination of the bodies reveals that many of these fallen soldiers were slain, not by sword or arrow, but by some hideous sorcery. Many look as though they have literally exploded, been seared with tremendous heat, or have had portions of their bodies torn from them or disintegrated.

Just ahead of the heroes, the pile of debris blocks the road itself. When the heroes approach the mound, read or paraphrase the following:



Although at first the mound of bone and flesh before you appeared to be some terrible pyre of partially burned corpses, you see now that it is something more—something worse.

The bones and flesh of innumerable people and creatures were somehow fused together in a disgusting amalgam of horror. This monstrosity, you can now ascertain, was once some sort of

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mobile apparatus. Fortunately, it is now destroyed and partially burned from some past conflict.

Players should make horror checks as they face this unholy monstrosity. If they possess the foolhardiness to explore the war engine further, they must first make successful saving throws vs. poison to avoid contracting a disease from the festering organic matter and the multitudinous parasites and organisms breeding within. Anyone who fails the saving throw succumbs to the disease in 1d4 days. Each day thereafter, that character must make a successful Constitution check or lose 1d4 hit points and 1 point of both Strength and Constitution. (The Constitution check gains a bonus of +1 if the character does nothing but rest, and a further +1 if the healing proficiency is successfully applied.) If still alive after 6d10 days, the character finally overcomes the malady. Lost Strength and Constitution points return at a rate of one point every 1d4 days. Of course, a *cure disease* spell rids the character of the disease almost instantly; lost points are then regained at a rate of 1d2 per day.

If the heroes circle around the engine, giving it a wide berth, they have no problem. However, disturbing the engine causes various hands and limbs—some attached to the whole of the engine, some now free—to grasp and attack at the nearby characters. Further, one of the many skulls that ring the top of the engine begins to scream out its ritualistic chant. All of this could prompt a fear check, but the chant of the single skull has no magical effect; the magic is invoked only when hundreds of skulls chant in unison.

Hand or Arm (1d3 per hero): AC 7; MV 9 (or 0); HD 1/2; hp 2 to 4 each; THAC0: 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 vs. armored foes or 1d6 vs. unarmored foes; SD special immunities; SW *resurrection*, cold spells; SZ T; ML fearless (20); AL N; XP 35.

Notes: These appendages are immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, holy water, and death magic. They cannot be turned or controlled.

Resurrection renders them immobile for 10 rounds per caster level. Cold spells make them brittle; all subsequent damage against them increases by 1 point per die.

Moving On

After traveling through the Burning Peaks, the heroes finally reach the domain of Vecna. At this point, the adventure continues with "Scene Six: Into Cavitius."

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Who is like unto the beast?

Who is able to make war with him?

—Revelation 13:4

SCENE SIX: INTO CAVITIUS



Once through the pass, travelers see that the other side of the Burning Peaks is a harsh, dry desert composed mostly of ash. The winds flowing over the volcanic mountain range carry the cinders and ejecta only into Cavitius, so the surface of this land is covered in ancient ash. Unlike the Tovagian side of the mountains, there are no fortresses or waiting armies here. (If the armies of Tovag invade, undead defenders mysteriously appear of the ash to repel them. Otherwise they remain hidden.)

The poor condition of the roadway continues as it stretches westward. As long as the characters stay on the road, they are relatively safe. However, should they decide to venture into the Ashen Wastes, the desert begins leeching away their very life force. Heroes that stop off the road immediately feel dizzy, nauseous, and weak. Each full hour spent in the Ashen Waste, they lose one level or Hit Die. This loss continues until the victim dies, becoming a desert zombie under the control of Vecna (described in the *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM® Appendix III*).

Further, no healing of any kind occurs in the Ashen Wastes, natural or magical. It is a place of death. No plants or animals (for all the obvious reasons) live in the Ashen Wastes, and the only encounter possible is with some of the lost souls now hideously transformed into zombies.

Roadway of the Brethren

Further into the Ashen Wastes, the road on which the heroes travel eventually joins with two others (also from Tovag). The one grand avenue is generally called the Roadway of the Brethren. This white, flagstone road is in much better shape than the paths they have seen thus far, and it seems to get better and better as they progress. When the heroes reach this point of the journey, read or paraphrase the following text:



To either side of the long, dust-covered flagstone road ahead of you, titanic sandstone heads watch like silent

guardians. These statues face the road, placed every hundred feet or so, such that no head directly faces another. Each unique head is almost twice as tall as a human. These strange sculptures flank the road as far as the eye can see, so there may be thousands of them.



Vecna created these heads, and he sustains them with his personal magic, meaning that they will last as long as he does. If the characters attempt to damage one, they find that they have no means to do so.

Citadel Cavitius

When the heroes reach the Citadel Cavitius, they should not immediately realize that it resembles a skull. As they get closer, and the sun settles behind it, the truth will eventually sink in. When they first catch sight of the city, read or paraphrase the following text:



Still flanked by the stone heads as you progress down the flagstone road, a strange white mound looms over the horizon. As you get closer, you see that it is a fortress or city, but its white, domed outer wall seems very unusual. Stranger still are the two swirling, black holes in the upper half of the front wall. You suddenly get the impression that someone is watching you, that your approach is somehow being observed.



Undead Giant Vulture (13): AC 7; MV 3, FI 24 (D); HD 7; hp 42 each; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (beak or claw); SD immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, and *cold*; SZ L (10' long, 40' wingspan); ML fearless (20); Int low (5–7); AL NE; XP 975.

This incredibly huge and foreboding place could only be the home of the arch-lich Vecna. Giant, undead carrion birds circle over the city continually,

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their eerie, haunting cries the only sound as travelers approach. These monsters serve as watchmen, but only heed a significant force approaching Citadel Cavitius. A small group is beneath their notice.

Billions of bones make up this gigantic skull (as well as most of the buildings within it), magically fused together and strengthened to near indestructibility. Their joining is so seamless that only a close examination reveals the individual bones and skulls within the walls.

Once the heroes have discerned the skull shape of the citadel and moved close enough for the walls to loom above them, read the following text:

The road seems to lead directly into the mouth of this monstrous head. Positioned throughout the bone-white structure are partially-hidden battlements that jut out of the skull at regular intervals. These defensive positions are visible only when viewed close up; from far away, the outer walls appear smooth and unblemished. Who knows what sort of fiend or wraith peers down from those battlements?

The gates to the city are usually closed. Surprisingly enough, if someone outside knocks or calls out, the two front teeth swing outward, forming fifty-foot-tall gates. If you so desire, you can require successful fear checks for the characters to willingly enter such a frightening place.

A skeletal giant serves as the gatekeeper to Citadel Cavitius, but it neither addresses nor challenges those seeking entrance. When the heroes pass through the gates, read or paraphrase the following text:

A gigantic figure, easily four times as tall as most of you, stands directly within the smooth, white gates. A thick, black robe covers its unmoving form, and a surprising amount of jewels hang around its neck and waist.

Within the monstrous outer shell waits a silent, dimly lit city. The interior of the skull is probably a half-mile wide, filled with strange, white towers and queerly domed buildings. Although ornate, everything seems to possess a smooth, rounded quality, as though it were alive—or rather, once was.

As soon as the heroes are completely within the walls, read or paraphrase the following text:

As soon as you all step into the dome, the silent form quietly reaches behind you and shuts the portal with a loud bang. Completely oblivious to you, it resumes its previous position and stands silently near the huge gates. No matter how hard you try, you can still make out no features in the shadowed recesses of the dark hood.

From where they stand, the heroes can see nothing of the skeleton itself. It is completely covered by its robes. Those who make successful Intelligence checks, however, realize that the hand that reached for the gate was completely white, but they did not see it long enough to know whether or not it was wearing gloves. The figure does not speak or acknowledge the heroes in any way. Thus, only if they are willing to confront the figure, should the heroes discover its true nature.

Gigantic Skeleton: AC 4; MV 12; HD 8+4; hp 49; THAC0 11; #AT 1; Dmg 2d12; SA *fireball* (8d6, 1/hour); SD spell and weapon immunities, cannot be turned; SZ H (24' tall); ML fearless (20); Int low (7); AL NE; XP 8,000.

Notes: This creature is immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, and *fire*. Cold and edged/piercing weapons inflict half damage. Arrows, quarrels, and other missiles inflict only 1 hp.

Details on Citadel Cavitius appear in the **Introduction**. The most important element to keep in mind when the heroes enter the city is that spells do not function while within the skull-shaped walls, except in Vecna's temple.

Heroes in the Citadel

To the eyes of virtually every undead being in the city, new visitors are no different than long-term residents. Essentially, all living beings look alike to them. This means that the heroes have almost free reign to go where they please, as long as they do not draw too much attention to themselves and avoid confrontations with undead.

Once within the city, heroes will probably begin looking for clues leading to the Shadowed Room. If they simply ask around among the living population, none know of the Shadowed Room. Like in Tovag, the language barrier presents a

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problem as well. Few residents here can speak a language that outsiders can understand.

Length of Visit: The adventurers' stay in Citadel Cavitus can be handled in two ways, depending on their actions and how you want the adventure to go. The stay might be brief, the characters meeting up with Valuriss (described below) quickly and proceeding directly to Vecna's temple to find the Shadowed Room.

If their stay is to be longer, however, the heroes could have more trouble finding a lead on the Shadowed Room. They may even decide themselves to stay and explore the Citadel or strike a few blows against Vecna and his undead servitors. In this case, the heroes might launch attacks against one or more of the undead lords, perhaps playing one against another. In such a case, you should prepare side adventures and encounters tailored toward such activities, keeping two things in mind: First, if any of the undead lords are destroyed, Vecna himself most likely will investigate the matter. Second, no matter what good deeds adventuring heroes might achieve in Citadel Cavitus, they probably do not outweigh the ill that will be wrought should Vocar's rituals succeed.

Encounters: Most of the encounters in Citadel Cavitus entail very little combat. As it is, the threat of danger remains over the heads of the heroes at all times while in this evil city. If the heroes are attacked, it probably means that they have done something wrong. Even worse, violence breeds more violence in Cavitus. Smart player characters learn to limit their battles or avoid them altogether.

Zarenival and Cochort: Vocar's invisible servants remain with the characters constantly while in Citadel Cavitus, watching yet keeping their distance. Only one event spurs them into action—the discovery of the secret to get to the Shadowed Room. At all other times, the quasit and invisible stalker dog the heels of the heroes, always keeping them on edge. Wherever they go, the player characters feel as though they are not alone and that they are being watched. Objects around them move of their own volition. At appropriate times, call for Wisdom checks to detect the presence of these spies.

If you wish, Zarenival and Cochort can occasionally use their powers or their invisibility to cause the characters harm or delay—toppling heavy objects, barring doors, etc. Still, they never risk discovery. Effectively, they are haunting the heroes.

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Undead In the City

While the somber, dour inhabitants walk side-by-side with skeletons and zombies, be careful not to portray the presence of the undead as blasé or commonplace. Despite the fact that thousands of undead reside in this city, the heroes should not immediately be aware of this. Read the following text:

As you walk through the streets of this terrible city, a troop of soldiers sweeps by. Unlike the ragged inhabitants you have seen, these warriors wear fine cloaks, gleaming jewels, and beautiful armor. Strangely, they also wear dark hoods that completely hide their faces.

After the heroes have seen this several times, let them see the face of a single soldier:

As the soldiers again march by you, forging ahead as the streets clear before them, one of the figures turns to look at you. Briefly, you catch a glimpse of a pale, white face peering at you through the shadows with empty, black eye sockets.

Though the inhabitants of Citadel Cavitius are used to the undead, they still fear their powers. To emphasize this to the heroes, read the following text:

Two men, raggedly dressed, make their way down the street, their eyes sunken and their spirits obviously broken. Still, they apparently have the presence of mind to dart to the side of the street as another troop of soldiers, terrible in their finery, marches past them, weapons held high. As horrible as this sight is, however, the two men seem even more leery of the dark shadows into which they have been forced. And rightfully so—the darkness itself seethes and shudders as the two men stand on the edge of the shadows.

Valuriss

Sometime after the heroes enter the citadel (depending on how long you want their stay to last), a

young woman approaches them. Valuriss seeks to escape from Citadel Cavitius. Though she cannot get past the city's guardians by herself, she is sure that the heroes can help her. If treated kindly, she might even provide some useful information.

Valuriss did not grow up in Citadel Cavitius. Rather, a few years ago, she and her father fled from their homeland where she was persecuted and feared for her precognitive abilities. The Mists brought them here. Valuriss' father died in Citadel Cavitius, and she just wants to escape. Because she is from the Core, she can speak a language that at least one hero understands. (Choose the least common Core language that any of the heroes speak.)

To begin this encounter, read the following text:

A young woman dressed in tattered clothing approaches you warily. Unlike the other inhabitants within these terrible walls, she carries her head high, though she moves slowly and cautiously. At about a ten-pace distance, she stops and speaks:

"You come to this realm of evil bringing more evil with you. There are presences of which you are unaware. Watch yourselves."

Her cryptic statement refers to Zarenival and Cohort, Vocar's invisible servants. More about them she cannot tell and does not know. She explains that she simply feels a "presence of evil" accompanying the characters. It is this special precognitive ability that also told her that the heroes would help her escape Citadel Cavitius.

The Shadowed Room: If the heroes ask her about the Shadowed Room, she knows nothing useful. Luckily, she does know of a warrior named Bratorn, who might prove friendly if approached by the player characters. Bratorn knows many of the secrets of Cavitius, for he serves as a bodyguard for Hragris, a priest of Vecna. She recommends that they go to the temple and speak with him.

Escape: Of the defenses of the Citadel Cavitius, she knows only that the Guardians watch those that leave, but not those that enter—much like what Banquo told them. However, she does believe that escape is possible through the drainage ditch.

Moving On

Once the heroes are ready to look for Bratorn or search the temple, continue the adventure with "Scene Seven: The Temple of Vecna."

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Mirrors should reflect a little before throwing back images.

—Jean Cocteau
Des Beaux-Arts

SCENE SEVEN: THE TEMPLE OF VECNA



In many ways, all of Citadel Cavitius is a temple to Vecna. Nevertheless, a single structure dedicated to the worship of Vecna is located on the inner wall of the skull, between the eyes. A large platform extends outward from this area, holding the temple, which is also built into the skull itself.

The eyes, contrary to what one might have thought by looking at them from the outside of the skull, are not empty sockets. Rather, each is a swirling mass of black negative energy. These pools of anti-life serve as the focus of Vecna's power within the Citadel, and thus the temple was built between them. The gigantic energy masses are opaque and offer no escape for someone seeking a way out of Citadel Cavitius. Their presence is not readily discernible until one actually stands within the temple, however, so a newcomer might assume that they are indeed possible exits.

Though the heroes may not realize it, they can again cast spells within the temple (including the Shadowed Room and priest quarters, as described later in this scene).

The Platform

To get to Vecna's temple, one must climb a long set of narrow, winding stairs, which extend all the way around the interior of the skull, leading up to the platform. The trip up this colossal stair will definitely be long and tiring, and it may even be dangerous.

Bone Guardians: At three points along this staircase, a skeleton guard forms from some of the bones within the wall, holding a sharpened bone sword. Barring all passage further up the stairs, it commands, "Sing the praises of the Whispered One." Only some sort of verbal supplication toward the greatness of Vecna (such as "Vecna is mighty" or "The Whispered One's power is supreme") causes the guard to fall back into the wall and stair where it came from. Otherwise, it silently blocks the way.

Skeleton (3): AC 7; MV 12; HD 1; hp 4 each; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (bone sword); SD weapon and spell immunities, cannot be turned or controlled; SW holy water (2d4); SZ M (6' tall); ML fearless (20); Int non (0); AL N; XP 65.

Notes: Skeletons are immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, and *cold*. Edge and piercing weapons inflict only half damage.

Overcoming the guardians might not pose much of a challenge (even though the characters must ascend the narrow stairway in single file), but the combat might draw the attention of the temple's main guardian, described below.

Temple Guardian: Standing an ever-vigilant watch over the entrance to Vecna's Temple is a shadow fiend named Threndilla. This fiend has long served the Whispered Lord, guarding Citadel Cavitius even when it was located on the Plane of Ash, near the border with the Negative Energy Plane.

When the heroes approach the top of the stairs, read or paraphrase the following text:



Finally, before exhaustion completely overcomes even the hardest among you, the top of the staircase enters your sight. At the summit, the stairs emerge onto a large platform, upon which stands a large, bone-white building. Banners of red and black hang from various places on the building among leering faces and fiendish forms carved into the walls and parapets. The banners each display a symbol that suggests a bony, splayed hand with a leering eye in the center of the palm.

In the shadows near the building, you catch a glimpse of something moving, flitting in the shadows.



Threndilla watches the heroes from the shadows, interfering only if they attempt to loot or vandalize the temple in any way. If the heroes try to communicate with her, she seeps out of the darkness and speaks with them.

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Threndilla (Shadow Fiend): AC 9 (bright light), 5 (dim light), or 1 (darkness); MV 12; HD 7+3; hp 50; THAC0 13; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6/1d8 (claw/claw/bite); SA spells, if it gains surprise it leaps up to 30' and makes 4 claw attacks (no bite); SD 90% undetectable in shadows; SW bright light, *light* spell, turned as special; SZ M (6' tall); ML fearless (20); Int very (12); AL CE; XP 2,000.

Notes: In bright light, the shadow fiend suffers double damage from all attacks. In darkness, it suffers only half damage from all attacks. It gains +1 bonus to attack rolls in dim light and a +2 bonus in darkness.

Once per day, she may cast *darkness 15' radius* or subject opponents within a 30' radius to a *fear* spell. Once per week, she can cast *magic jar* at a single target. If victim saves, Threndilla is stunned for 1d3 rounds.

Threndilla is immune to fire, cold, and electricity. A *light* spell inflicts 1d6 points per level of caster.

Recently, Threndilla has thrown in with the vampire Haroln (one of Vecna's many pawns). The undead lord has promised the fiend great power should he ever gain control of the domain. Haroln plans to use Threndilla and other agents within the temple in his plan to channel the power from the

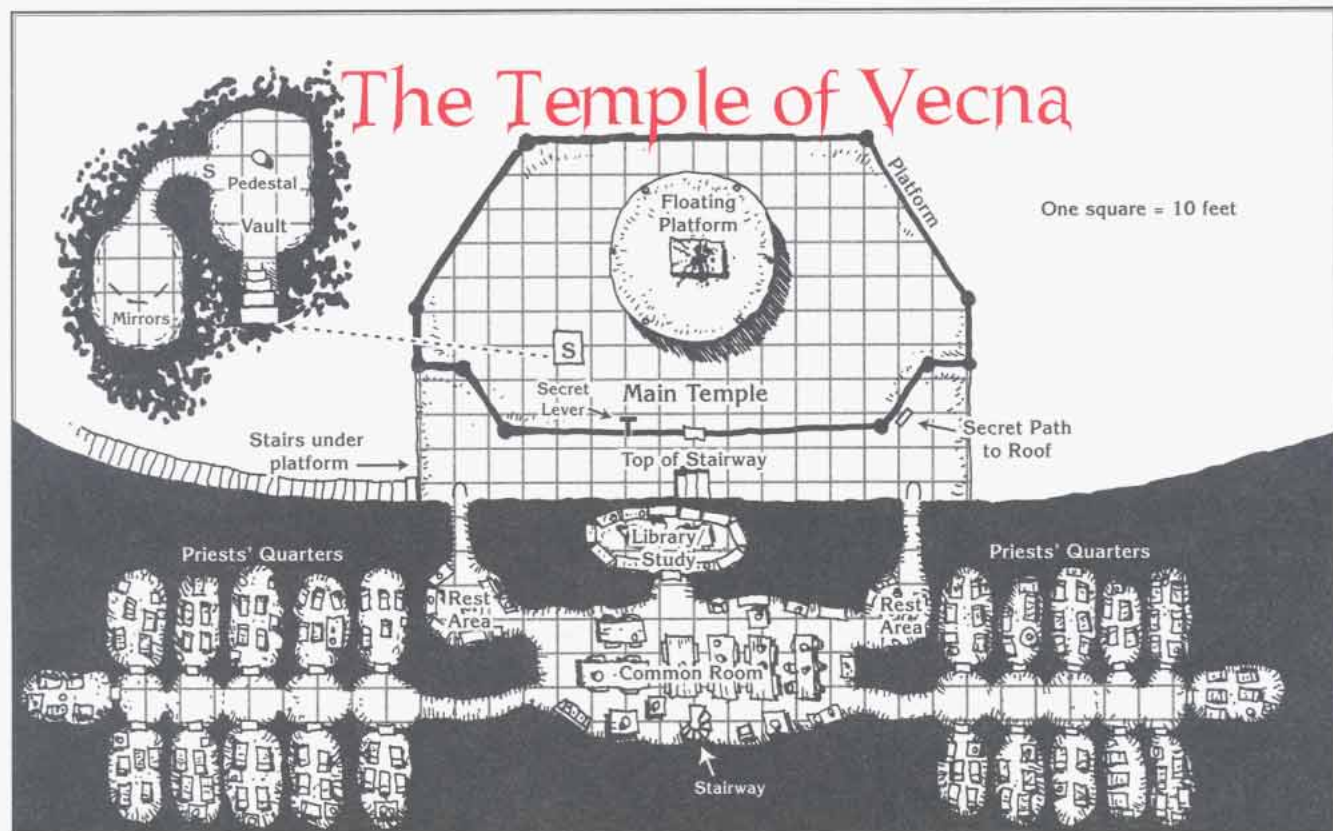
Negative Energy Pools into himself so that he can challenge Vecna. Of course, the Dying King knows of this scheme and finds it amusing.

Intruders taking the time to speak with Threndilla might indeed be able to realize the fiend's alliances and use them for their own means. Claiming to be sent by Haroln, or lying about the machinations of one of the vampire's rivals, may be enough to either convince Threndilla to actually help the heroes. Depending on how persuasive they are, she can tell them how to find either Bratorn or the Shadowed Room itself.

Secret Ladder: Anyone that chooses to search through the ornate and despicable carvings on the outside of the temple might discover a hidden ladder among the embellishments. This allows priests to climb up the side of the temple and enter it from the secret door in the ceiling, gaining access to the suspended platform.

Upper Pathways

On either side of the platform that holds the temple, a narrow path runs along the inner surface of the skull, up to the eye sockets, where the negative en-



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ergy pools swirl and pulse. Most of the priests make a short “pilgrimage” up to these pools every third day or so to meditate on the power within them.

Anyone so foolish to touch the spheres automatically loses one life energy level each round.

Main Temple

Through the main doors, the temple stretches up as well as across, making one very large chamber reaching a height of fifty feet. When they first enter the building, read or paraphrase the following text:



This unholy sepulcher must serve as the main temple of the Whispered One, Vecna. The trappings within are as horrid and elaborate as those found on the outside, but the entire inner chamber is black rather than bone white. Red and black banners bare the hand and eye symbol, adding to the aura of dread that fills this cavernous room. Other than that, making anything out is almost impossible in this dimly lit, predominantly black chamber.



The Altar Platform

After the heroes adjust to the darkness, they can make out a few further details about the room. It appears that a black stone platform, suspended from the upper portions of the wall by black chains, hangs near the ceiling. The platform is circular and must be at least forty feet across. The underside of this platform is painted red and bears the same hand and eye symbol they saw outside the temple.

The platform holds a large reddish altar, the stone stained with over hundreds of years of blood sacrifice. Once each day, in full ceremonial garb (which amounts to black and red robes with white skull masks), two priests conduct a sacrifice here. The priests enter the area through a secret door in the ceiling (accessible by the ladder outside the temple, as described below), climbing down to the platform via a secret rope ladder.

Worshippers

Worshippers coming to the temple remain on the floor and pay homage to the symbol on the underside of the platform. While not all citizens of Citadel Cavitius must come to come worship each day, the priests do expect everyone to come at least once per month. Worshippers each get a

specially marked bead, which the Fingers of Vecna can demand to see at any time. If a citizen does not have a bead that is less than a month old (discernible from the markings), the Fingers are likely to turn them into future sacrifices.

Thus, those inhabitants of Citadel Cavitius clinging to their morals and ethics still usually feel compelled to attend these grisly, ghastly, and thoroughly evil ceremonies. Though a faithful paladin or cleric certainly could not, other people find it possible to attend the sacrifices while inwardly disdaining the practices and thus keeping their own outlooks and sensibilities. A lifetime of this, however, tests even the most stalwart adherent of true goodness.

Unless the ceremonies are being conducted, the temple holds only a handful of worshipers—the truly faithful of Vecna. Priests come to the main temple only when it is their turn to perform the ceremonies or when their presence is otherwise needed.

Secret Door

There is a secret trap door on the floor, accessible only by activating a hidden lever in the carved image of a fiend’s claw. Note that to open the door, one must pull the third *claw* on the left (from the main entrance), not the claw of the third *fiend* on the left.

Pulling the wrong lever causes a different trap door to open, this one directly under the lever. The person who triggered this trap must make a successful saving throw vs. breath weapon or fall into a pit filled with spikes, which inflicts 2d6 points of damage.

Pulling the correct lever opens a door in the wall. The stairs beyond lead down into the area described under “The Mirror Dance” (later in this scene).

Priest Quarters

Two archways, one on either side of the Main Temple, lead into the skull itself, where passages and chambers have been hewn out of the bones. This area provides the priests and their servants with a place to eat, meet, study, and sleep.

Each priest of Vecna has at least one personal bodyguard. These guards do not fall into the hierarchy of the church in any way. Rather, they are more like paid mercenaries, watching their charge’s back. It seems that the priesthood is a dangerous occupation, for the main method of advancement lies in the death of one’s superiors. (In fact, one might wonder why Vecna was at all offended at Kas’s historic betrayal, considering the environment he chooses to foster among his servants.) Thus, the bodyguards

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obey and protect only the priest that pays them. Since each priest is always accompanied by his own guard(s), there are no temple guards, as such.

Through either archway, the heroes find a short passage leading to a chamber filled with chairs, tables, and even a few divans. The priests use this area to rest and relax. The only other exit from this chamber leads to a large common room where the priests eat, train, and hold meetings. Two or three long tables, surrounded by chairs, fill this room. Passages extending off from this room lead to individual quarters (usually sparse, with room enough for the priest and his guard(s) to sleep and little more) or a library/study, with reading desks, chairs, and bookcases filled with texts on various scholarly or religious topics.

A stairway in the common room connects the various levels, all identical to this one. There are three levels above and three levels below, providing quarters for the temple's almost one hundred fifty priests and their attendant bodyguards. The more powerful the priest, the higher up his quarters lie.

Below the lowest level (not mapped), is a level comprised of storage rooms (filled with food and other mundane items), a large kitchen, and crude quarters for twenty-two servants who do nothing but clean the priests' quarters and cook.

Priest of Vecna, hm or hf, M2/P5: AC 10; MV 12; hp 30; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (*dagger +1*); SA spells, command undead; SZ M (5'-6' tall); ML unsteady to avg (7-9); Int high (13-14); AL NE or CE; XP 975.

Magical Items: dagger+1.

Priest Spells (3/3/1): 1st—*cause fear, command, protection from good*; 2nd—*aid, hold person, flame blade*; 3rd—*prayer*.

Wizard Spells (2): 1st—*comprehend languages, shield*.

Bodyguard, hm (sometimes hf), F5: AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 36; THAC0: 16; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8 (battle axe) or 1d4 (thrown dagger); SZ M (5'-6' tall); ML avg (10); Int avg (8-10); AL N or NE; XP 270.

Looking for Bratorn

Within their quarters and the nearby common rooms and studies, the priests of Vecna wear simple black and red tunics and their holy symbols rather than the ceremonial garb described earlier. Since the bodyguards of the priests wear no special

uniforms, visitors wandering through this area often go unchallenged, everyone mistaking the intruders as someone else's bodyguards.

Obviously, if the player characters enter the priests' quarters and begin causing trouble or threatening priests, they soon face a multitude of angry priests and guards. As long as they do not draw attention to themselves or attempt to enter anyone's private quarters though, they can make their way through the area with little problem.

Bratorn usually remains near his employer, Hragris. Discreet inquiries lead the heroes to him fairly quickly. Dark-haired, unshaven, and rough in appearance, the muscular warrior is fairly used to outsiders coming to him for information. Luckily for the heroes, he speaks the same language as Valuriss. If approached by the heroes, he asks them to meet him in a nearby, secluded study in twenty minutes. In the meantime, the character have to lay low and avoid confrontation with the other residents of the temple.

Speaking to Bratorn

At the appointed time, Bratorn arrives, announcing that he does not have much time, but he will try to help if possible. Bratorn himself serves the cause of Good by providing information about the temple to his contacts in Citadel Cavitius.

At this point, Zarenival and Cochort decide that it is time to make their move. Their orders were to prevent anything that might jeopardize Vocar's plans, and they realize that letting the heroes get the *Book of Inverted Darkness* might do just that. Thus, Zarenival hurries off to find Hragris and warn him that his bodyguard is conspiring against him.

If asked about the Shadowed Room or the location of the *Book of Inverted Darkness*, Bratorn can give them the information they seek. Read or paraphrase the following:



Bratorn cocks his head in thought. He finally speaks in a manner belying his rough appearance. "You ask very dangerous questions. I don't want to know why. I'm sure there is not time for you to explain, so I will tell you what you must do.

"Below the main temple is a set of secret chambers accessible through a hidden trap door. By pulling down on the third fiend's claw on the left as you enter the temple, you will open the door. Pass through it and down into the vault.

"In the vault you will find three stone runes. Pass through the vault, find the mirrors within, and complete the symbols. This is called the Mirror Dance.

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Once this is accomplished, you may then pass into that place which no longer exists, the Shadowed Room. Remember, you can leave with no more or less than what you brought with you on your impossible journey, so learn what you need to while you are there. You must—"

Bratorn's confusing and hurried speech stops short upon the arrival of his evil master, Hragris. Moments after he steps into the room, Zarenival and Cochort manifest in the room as well, perhaps requiring fear checks.

Battle In the Temple

At this point, the heroes must deal with the priest of Vecna and Vocar's invisible servants. The invisible stalker and the quasit, no longer concerned about keeping their presence a secret, fight to the death, no matter what happens to the priest. Stats for Zarenival and Cochort appear on the inside cover.

Fortunately, not everything about the situation is weighted against the heroes. Bratorn aids them as best he can, for he knows that all is lost for him now that Hragris knows of his betrayal. Bratorn will *not* go with the player characters to the secret vault, however. Instead, he chooses to flee into the city. Further, Hragris, not trusting any of his fellow priests, does not call for help and flees after suffering more than twelve points damage.

Bratorn, hm, F5: AC 4 (chain mail and shield); MV 12; hp 34; THAC0 16 (14 w/Strength and long sword +1); #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+1 (long sword+1) or 1d4 (thrown dagger); SZ M (6' tall); ML champion (15); AL CG.

S 16, D 14, C 15, I 12, W 14, Ch 12.

Appearance: To look the part of a cutthroat mercenary, Bratorn keeps a rough appearance. He has messy blond hair, dark eyes, and a large scar on his right cheek.

Personality: Bratorn put himself in his current position, risking his life on a daily basis, to gather information for the good folk trapped in Citadel Cavitius. He is giving and generous, though gruff.

Magical items: long sword +1 (his cherished possession).

Also, if the heroes have not already figured out that they can again cast spells, this is the perfect time for them to find out. Hopefully, they will give it another try after Hragris casts a spell or two at them.

The other priests and their bodyguards take no action to save Hragris, fighting only if personally threatened. This means that if the player characters can just manage to take care of their assailants, they can easily make it out of the priests' quarters.

Also, if the heroes slay the evil quasit, they can find a small pouch around his neck. Zarenival took great glee in collecting tokens from his victims. The pouch contains several locks of hair, some cheap jewelry, and even a small finger. Any hero that makes a successful Wisdom check recognizes that one of the rings matches the one that Marit wears.

Hragris, hm, M2/P5: AC 10; MV 12; hp 33; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 (dagger +1); SA spells, command undead; SZ M (5'7" tall); ML unsteady (7); AL NE; XP 975.

Magical Items: dagger+1, potion of extra-healing.

Priest Spells (3/3/1): 1st—cause fear, command, protection from good; 2nd—hold person (x2), heat metal; 3rd—pyrotechnics.

Wizard Spells (2): 1st—comprehend languages, magic missile.

The Mirror Room

Once the heroes discover the secret door in the main temple (described on page 45), they can descend the stairs into the vault. When they open the secret door, read or paraphrase the following text:

Beyond the secret door, a short black stone staircase descends into an oppressively low-ceilinged chamber. This room must be within the platform supporting the temple. Opposite the stair, across a black and red carpet embroidered with strange and unknown symbols, a pedestal holds a clear glass box.

The ceiling in this room is only six feet from the floor. Tall characters must duck slightly or risk bumping their heads. No exits, other than the stairs, present themselves.

The glass box, which opens easily, holds three stones carved into strange shapes. Removing the stones from the box causes another secret door to open, revealing the passage to the mirror room. (Returning the rune stones, or three items of similar weight, closes the door.) Anyone examining the rune stones can attempt a Wisdom check to notice

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that the shapes resemble those depicted on the red and black carpet found here, yet they are not complete. This is because these stones must be taken to the Mirrors of the Dance to complete the symbols.

When the heroes go through the second secret door, read or paraphrase the following text:

Beyond the recently revealed door, a narrow, and still low, passage leads to another room. The air, thick with dust and age, belies the fact that few come to this arcane chamber.

Three full-length mirrors, their golden frames ornately engraved with baroque, soul-chilling images of horror and death, stand in the room's center. In the middle of each mirror, a dark symbol is etched blackly into the otherwise unmarred surface.

Any heroes that recognized the symbols on the rune stones (by making a successful Wisdom check) automatically recognize that the symbols etched on the mirror also match the carpet designs. Those who failed the initial check can attempt another one when investigating the mirrors. Importantly, the symbols on the mirror are much smaller than those on the rune stones.

The Mirror Dance

To complete the Mirror Dance, the heroes must take the three rune stones and hold them in such a way so that their reflections match up with the etched symbols to complete the image of three powerful magical runes (which are depicted on the carpet in the vault). Essentially, the characters should think of each of the rune stones that they have as “half” of the needed symbol, and the etching on the mirror as the other half. When all three stones are held so that the two halves match up, the Mirror Dance is complete. This means that the stones must be held at the right height and the right distance, which is more difficult than one might think.

To complete the dance, the person holding each rune stone must make both a successful Intelligence and a successful Dexterity check to provide just the right positioning. Because of how the mirrors are positioned, it is theoretically possible for one person to hold all three stones just right at the same time, but it is extraordinarily difficult. In such a case, the person must make three successful Dexterity checks with a -2 penalty and three successful Intelligence checks.

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An Unexpected Interruption

While the heroes are attempting to figure out the Mirror Dance, another player figures into the plot. Qoolarn, the Ghoul Lord, has long wanted access to the Shadowed Room, but his maimed master has forbidden him to enter. However, the heroes have given him an excuse to pursue his goal. After all, he could not allow them to steal Vecna's priceless treasures, could he? And to stop them he must follow them in, right?

After deducing that the heroes were seeking the Shadowed Room, Qoolarn and several of his loyal minions secretly followed the heroes, hoping to learn the room's location and method of entry. He plans to bargain with the heroes, go into the room with them, gather the knowledge he needs to usurp his rivals, and dispose of the heroes once they return. He is sure that rather than being angry, Vecna will be pleased.

As the ghoul lord and his followers enter the room, they make no secret of their presence. When the heroes turn to see who is behind them, read or paraphrase the following text:

Through the doorway behind you shamble many terrible creatures, their sickly gray flesh twisted and rotting. The largest of the group steps out in front. It licks a long, coarse tongue over its jagged, pointy teeth and gazes intently at the rune stones as it speaks in a rough whisper.

"It appears that you have discovered the means of entering the Shadowed Room. I, too, have searched for the knowledge contained within. If you let me join you, I am certain I could return the favor."

Qoolarn would much rather bargain with the heroes than kill them at this point. He does not know the ritual for entering the Shadowed Room, so he still needs their help. Once they get back, however, things will be different.

If the heroes ask what he seeks within the room, Qoolarn implies that he is seeking a way to end Vecna's terrible tyranny. If that does not seem to convince the heroes, he adds that with Vecna gone, the inhabitants can again return to the peaceful lives they held before his rule. Qoolarn pretends to care about the welfare of both the living and dead inhabitants of Cavitius. In fact, he says whatever it takes to get the heroes to show him the way into the Shadowed Room!

If nothing else works, Qoolarn has one final offer: his *helm of teleportation*. Because he is undead, Qoolarn does not need it to leave Citadel Cavitius; therefore, it is not as valuable to him as it would be to a living being. (Besides, he can take it back when he kills them afterward.) Keep in mind that even if the characters get hold of this helm, it cannot take them past the borders of Vecna's domain. Even more importantly, it cannot transport them to the Shadowed Room.

Ghoul (2 per hero): AC 6; MV 9; HD 2; hp 13 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6; SA paralysis; SD immune to *charm* and *sleep* spells; SL M (6' tall); Int low (5-7); ML steady (12); AL CE; XP 175.

Notes: The ghoul's touch forces humans, dwarves, gnomes, half-elves, and halflings to save vs. paralyzation or become rigid for 1d6+2 rounds.

Qoolarn (Ghoul Lord): AC 2 (*cloak of protection* +2); MV 15; HD 6; hp 41; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6/1d10 (claw/claw/bite); SA paralysis, disease; SD weapon and spell immunities, aura of evil; SZ M (6' tall); ML elite (14); Int high (14); AL CE; XP 3,000.

Notes: Victims hit by Qoolarn's claws must save vs. paralyzation or become unable to move for 1d6+6 rounds. Victims of his bite must save vs. poison or contract a disease. This disease causes the loss of 1 point of Constitution and Charisma each day. If either score reaches 0, the victim dies and rises again as a ghast. This disease is cured only by a *heal* spell.

Qoolarn is harmed only by iron weapons or those of +1 or better magical enchantment. He is immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, holy water, and death magic.

All good-aligned characters within 30' suffer a -4 penalty on attack rolls. Opponents also suffer a -2 penalty to fear checks.

Magical Items: *cloak of protection* +2, *helm of teleportation*.

If the heroes agree, Qoolarn sends his minions back into the vault. He does not want to share any of Vecna's secrets with them, after all. At this point, the adventure continues with "The Shadowed Room."

If the heroes do not agree to let him come along, Qoolarn and his servants attack. Unlike normal ghouls, however, these undead creatures have no interest in eating the bodies of their victims. Instead, they attempt to take the rune stones (which Qoolarn has decided must be important to the entrance ritual) and use them to get to the Shadowed Room.

Importantly, Vecna's temple functions as a -4 *sinkhole of evil*, inflicting a -4 penalty on all turning

ACT TWO: THE CLUTCHES OF VECNA

attempts. In addition, Qoolarn possesses a *helm of teleportation*. He will use it to retreat if he suffers more than twenty points of damage.

The Shadowed Room

One way or another, the heroes most likely complete the Mirror Dance and enter the Shadowed Room. When this happens, read the following text:

Once you have completed the mystic symbols in the strange Mirror Dance, the room begins to quickly spin and then fade.

The new scene that greets your eyes is very different. A high ceiling reaches above you, and a vast chamber, filled with books, surrounds you. The view through the windows suggests that you are high in the air, a cloudy sky above you with the vast sprawl of a stone city below. The room itself is quiet and devoid of life.

Background

This library lies in not only a different place but a different time. This grand place was the main library used by Vecna himself when he was still in the process of conquering the world of Oerth. Vecna had built a great fortress city, the likes of which was never seen again on that world—miles and miles of towers, castles, and cathedrals all dedicated to him. Ykrath was its name, lost now to all but the most obscure and arcane texts.

One of the greatest and grandest towers was Vecna's personal library, the topmost room of which held his most valuable books and tomes. So powerful was the magical lore of these books that even after Vecna fell and the city was razed by those he had so long oppressed, the room lived on in shadow. Vecna, wise in the ways of such things, found the shadow of his ancient library and devised the Mirror Dance ritual to return there. The windows of this room still look out over dread and wondrous Ykrath, though no means exists to leave the room and travel into that long-dead city.

Research

If Qoolarn is with the heroes, he immediately begins opening up books and researching furiously. He has no idea what to look for exactly (and, in fact, understands very little of the writing in these

books), but he knows that the information held in this room could make him more powerful than all of his rivals, perhaps even powerful enough to oppose Vecna himself.

Unless the heroes are well versed in ancient languages, the vast majority of books in the Shadowed Room provide no information to them. Looking around, however, they might find one book, open on a bookstand, that they can understand. The yellowed pages of this tome were obviously long ago cut from an unimaginably old scroll and crudely bound into this book. Due to the powerful magic within this book, all who gaze upon it can read its contents—though understanding them might be a different matter. This powerful tome is none other than the *Book of Inverted Darkness*, one of Vecna's most cherished possessions.

Alas, most of the knowledge that the *Book of Inverted Darkness* (and, indeed, the entire library of the Shadowed Room) holds is beyond the comprehension of modern peoples. Even the most learned wizard could glean only small bits of useful knowledge from it. Its chapters tell tales of distant planes and give histories of peoples whose worlds no longer exist.

Anyone sifting through its contents should make an Intelligence check. If successful, the reader finds the passage relating to the situation at hand after 1d4+18—(the reader's Intelligence score) hours of reading. Read or paraphrase the following text:

"Thus, though the words are many, in this case there are three. The first of the Three Words must be preceded by the Ritual of Recession, and requires speaker's hands to be red with the blood of an outsider spilled in violence.

"The second of the Three Words requires a plague to ravage the land. This plague must be without mercy, its survivors clinging to life through fortune alone. The Ritual of Cavernous Thought must be performed upon the pyre of diseased souls, and then can the second of the Three Words be uttered.

"The time for the speaking of the final Word comes after the murder of a king. Upon his death, the Ritual of Lorn Malison must be performed, and the last of the Three Words spoken.

"Then, and only then, can a long-dead wizard, great in power and like unto a god, be born anew in woman's womb. Thus born, he is free of whatever shackles or chains bound him before—free to go and do as he pleases. No power, no magic, no force, not even death can hold him then.

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"Woe to his enemies. Woe to any unwilling to serve him. Their days are short."

The mention of magical "Words" and a ritual calling for the "blood of an outsider" seem to mesh with what Loreward Banquo said back in Tor Gorak. Having read this, the characters now know (although perhaps still do not fully understand) the nature of Vecna's dark plan. More than likely, they also suspect Marit's role in all of this. In any event, it should be obvious that someone is performing dark rituals in Tovag that will result in a horrible ending.

Leaving the Shadowed Room

No exits from the Shadowed Room exist. Passing through a window is impossible. The walls, floor, and ceiling are immutable, and no magical spell can provide an exit. (*Teleportation, passwall, disintegrate*, and other such spells do not function.) This absolute extends even to a *wish* spell, for the room is only a shadow of its former self, and the areas around it simply do not exist.

Returning to the Temple of Vecna is possible, but only through magic: Those traveling to the room bring the rune stones with them. In the Shadowed Room, however, these stones take on a different form—that of the entire symbols depicted on the carpet back in the vault where they were found. These completed stones must simply be reflected in a mirror, any mirror, to return everyone to Cavitius.

If someone travels to the Shadowed Room without a mirror, all hope is not lost. After 1d4 hours of searching through the books, a character can stumble upon a strange book, completely unintelligible to anyone alive today, which has a reflective metallic cover. This, like any reflective surface, functions as a mirror for purposes of the magical symbols.

On the Other Side

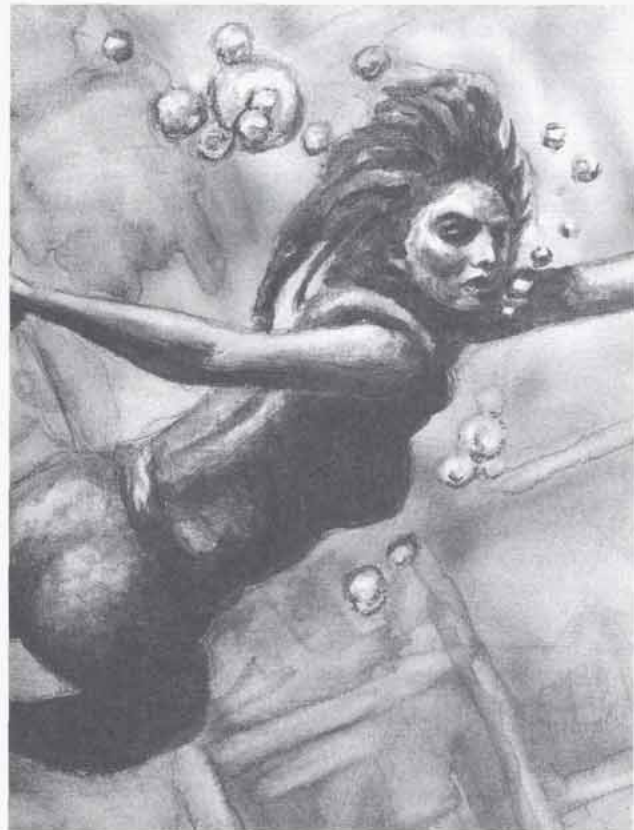
When they return, the heroes find that no time has passed since they entered the Shadowed Room. The mysterious chamber exists outside of time's reach. Thus, if Qoolarn and his servants were somehow left in the Mirror Dance room, they are still there, waiting for the heroes. Even if Qoolarn came with the heroes, however, his servants still wait for him on the other side. Either way, they attack the heroes immediately. Stats for these creatures and details of their fighting methods appear on page 49.

Because nothing in the Shadowed Room truly exists any longer, those who travel there cannot bring anything back. Further, anything left there cannot be found by going back. The Shadowed Room and its original contents cannot be changed, altered, or destroyed in any way.

Once back in the Mirror Dance room (and finished with Qoolarn), the heroes should make their way out of the Temple and back to the main city, where they then, hopefully, can figure out how to get out of the citadel. Unless they have caused a large commotion at some time during their stay in the temple (in which case they may have to fight their way out), leaving the temple should not pose a problem. Essentially, the guardians and priests ignore those leaving the temple.

Leaving Citadel Cavitius

More than likely, the heroes have heard that leaving Citadel Cavitius poses a good deal more of a challenge than entering, so they might be prepared for the difficulties before them. If they agreed to bring Valuriss with them, she brings with her only a small cloth sack of clothes and food. She knows



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very little about the obstacles they must overcome to leave the city, but she has heard (from Bratorn) that the drainage ditch is the most likely option.

The only other way out of Citadel Cavitius is through magic, and of course, spells cannot function there. However, magical items do function.

The Guardians

Though the heroes do not know this, Vecna has appointed several special Guardians to make leaving his city extremely difficult. These Guardians are spirits that inhabit the skull around Citadel Cavitius. Their sole duty consists of watching the living inhabitants of the city and preventing them from leaving.

Having no physical forms, these undead beings attack through fear, despair, and loathing. This attack amounts to a stab of negative emotions into the victim's mind. Anyone thus attacked must make a successful saving throw vs. paralyzation to avoid it. (Bonuses for high Wisdom apply.) This saving throw suffers a -1 penalty for each additional spirit focusing its attack on that victim. Thus, the attack of one spirit requires a normal saving throw, two spirits inflict a -1 penalty, three spirits inflict a -2 penalty, and so on.

Those who fail the saving throw fall into a stupor of fear and loathing, wandering aimlessly into the center of town for 3d10 minutes. If a Reaver (described on page 8) notices that a particular living creature makes numerous attempts to leave—that is to say, notices a citizen embraced in this negative emotion stupor more than once—the undead watchman is likely to attack, figuring the person to be a troublemaker.

It is impossible to fight a Guardian, but they attack only those attempting to leave. Once someone is beyond the walls of Citadel Cavitius, the Guardians are powerless to do anything about it.

If any living beings attempt to leave through the main gate, they must contend with the giant skeleton gatekeeper as well as the Guardians. Since the gate is the only obvious way in or out of Cavitius, Vecna's servants watch it very closely. Sixty-six Guardians watch this gate at all times. Thus, if a group of six living people attempted to leave, each would have to make the saving throw with a -10 penalty.

Throughout the rest of the city's perimeter, the Guardians watch, but not in such great numbers. This is because the only way for anyone to leave Citadel Cavitius other than the main gate is by digging or smashing their way out. Those making such an attempt draw the attacks of 1d6+4

Guardians. Of course, if the attempt continues after that, the Reavers can be expected to make an appearance soon afterward.

The Drainage Ditch

The best way for the player characters to escape Citadel Cavitius is through the drainage ditch. This ditch flows into a large pipe through the skull and out into the desert. Characters wishing to escape this way must be able to hold their breaths for at least four rounds (as described in Chapter 14 of the *Player's Handbook*) as they submerge themselves in the filth and swim out of the city. Also, this murky sludge is in no way "water," so a *breathe water* spell (from a magical item since spells do not function) or similar magical ability does not function.

To make matters worse, while the Guardians foolishly ignore the drainage ditch, something else lives in this dark pipeline of filth—a single ghoul. While one ghoul would not normally present much of a threat, it needs only paralyze its victim within the pipe and let him or her drown.

The ghoul always achieves surprise and attacks normally despite the environment. If it fails its attack roll, its victim will probably never be the wiser. If it succeeds, the victim will be rendered immobile, which could prove deadly underwater. Characters fighting in the tunnel suffer a -4 penalty from the darkness and an additional -2 penalty for fighting underwater and in the narrow channel.

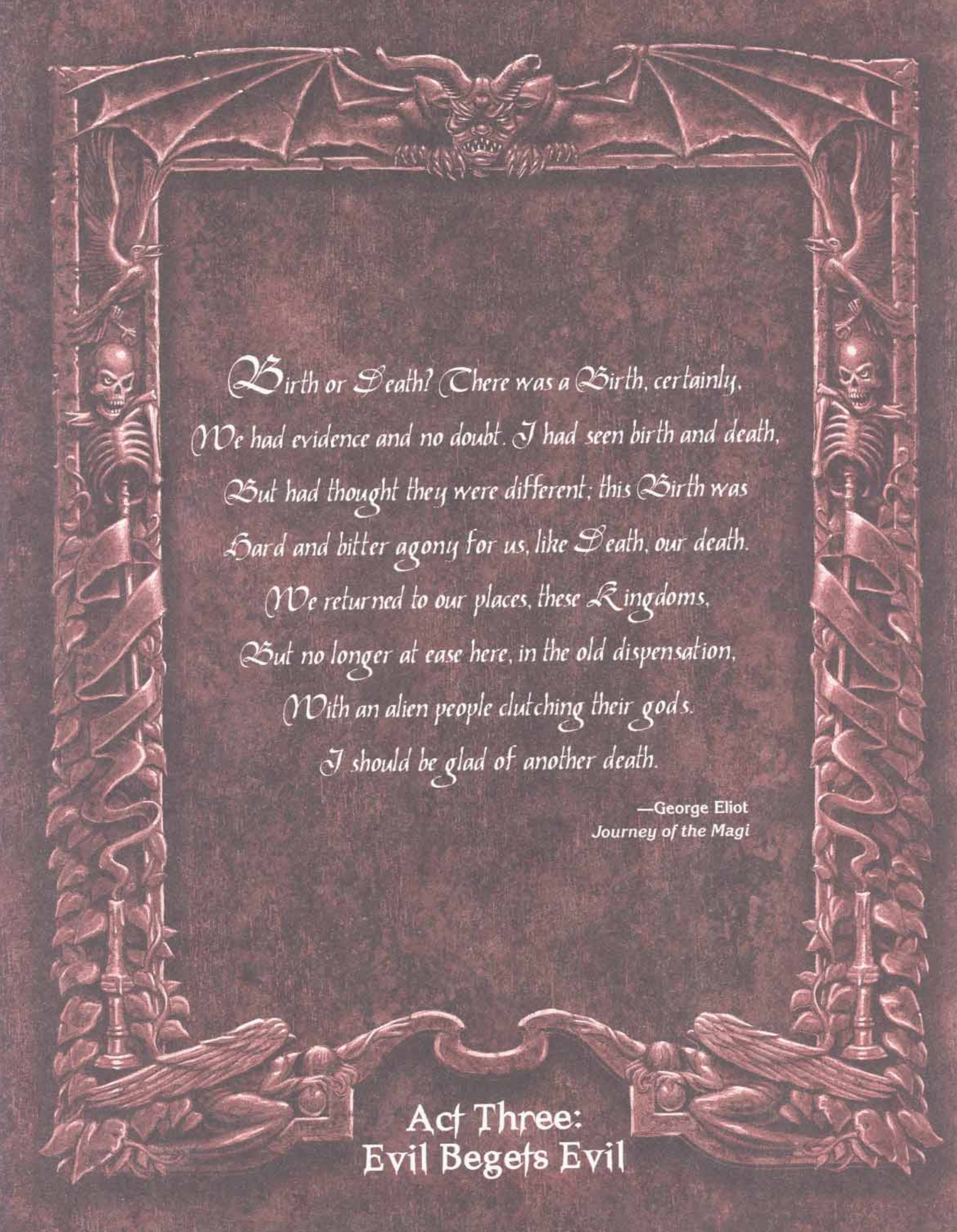
Ghoul: AC 6; MV 9; HD 2; hp 13 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3/1d3/1d6; SA paralysis; SD immune to *charm* and *sleep* spells; SL M (6' tall); Int low (5-7); ML steady (12); AL CE; XP 175.

Notes: The ghoul's touch forces humans, dwarves, gnomes, half-elves, and halflings to save vs. paralyzation or become rigid for 1d6+2 rounds.

Unfortunately, the other side of the drainage pipe opens into the desert. Still, careful travelers can quickly make their way carefully around the outside of Citadel Cavitius and get back to the safety of the road without suffering the life-draining effects of the Ashen Wastes.

Moving On

When the heroes escape Citadel Cavitius and begin traveling back toward Tovag, continue the adventure with Act Three: Evil Begets Evil.



*Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different: this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.*

—George Eliot
Journey of the Magi

**Act Three:
Evil Begets Evil**

ACT THREE: EVIL BEGETS EVIL

SCENE EIGHT: RETURNING TO TOVAG

The trip out of Cavitius is long and hard, but perhaps not as bad as going in. The pass through the Burning Peaks remains a frightening, haunted place, but the characters should encounter actual threats only if it serves to heighten the mood (for example, if the characters are in a terrible hurry to get back).

In the short time since the heroes left the domain, Tovag has been beset by a terrible plague. No doubt, heroes with the words of the *Book of Inverted Darkness* in mind will quickly ascertain that this is the plague foretold in that dark tome. Vocar has completed the second step of his despicable plan and has spoken the second of the Three Words. This leaves only the third, which requires the death of a king. Though the heroes may not be aware of this, Vocar has chosen a particularly devious plan for the final ritual. Rather than attempting to slay Kas (which Vecna has commanded is to be his right and privilege), he has sought a different king—the King of the Madmen.

The Plague

This disease, a sorcerous creation set upon the land by Vecna's cult, is called the Vicar's Curse. Legend has it that it was created long ago by a cleric who was betrayed by his own congregation and uttered as his dying words. Wherever it stems from, the disease sets upon its victims quickly and with great ferocity.

The first symptoms that victims experience include weakness, dimmed eyesight, and difficulty breathing. Within a day after these maladies take hold, victims develop horrible, bruise-like sores on their skin. Within another day, they lose control of the muscles in their extremities. In three to four more days, the disease works its way to the victim's heart, resulting in death. It is not recommended that any of the characters fall victim to the plague. The threat of disease is frightening enough.

The disease began in Tor Gorak but has now spread to those outside of the city and even to the soldiers defending the passes through the Burning Peaks (making sneaking by them relatively easy). Fully one tenth of the domain's population is infected, and another tenth may die before it is over.

First Encounter

The player characters' first witness the effects of the plague while on the road (unless they somehow become aware of it at the fortress guarding the pass). As they make their way back to Tor Gorak on the well-kept flagstone road, they spot something off to the side. If they investigate, they find a body, much like the first time they traveled this road. When this happens, read or paraphrase the following:



Looking more closely, you see that the dark shape near the ground that you spotted from the road is a human corpse. This, however, is no dead soldier like those you have seen far too often in this realm, but a shepherd or herder. His body lies in a contorted pose, his skin covered in purplish-black sores. The man's flesh is shriveled and withered, though he does not appear to have been dead long enough to explain such decomposition.

Beyond the body, deeper into the trees, you make out more shapes. A steady gaze reveals them to be the bodies of goats—perhaps this man's flock—and each seems to have been overcome by the same malady as the man.

Strangely, no scavengers have come to claim these tainted meals.



The inhabitants of the realm have no doubt that the plague is the doing of the Chained God and his foul minions. They believe, however, that it comes to weaken their fighting force so that Tovag makes for an easier invasion. They have no idea that Vecna has far more terrible and insidious plans and, for the moment, has no thoughts of invasion at all.

Tor Gorak

Lord Kas's rage knows no bounds. He curses at the very flesh of his soldiers, which is too weak to stand up to the plague. His own undead minions do not share their vulnerabilities. When the plague began, he traveled to Tor Gorak to oversee its defense with his remaining, healthy troops. By his cruel orders, the Daggers round up the diseased and send them out of the city, where they cannot spread the contagion further.

When the heroes first approach Tor Gorak, read or paraphrase the following text:

ACT THREE: EVIL BEGETS EVIL

Tor Gorak is no longer the same city that you left just a short time ago. Though a dire, dismal place before, it is now far worse. Smoke rises up from burning pyres both within the walls and without. The smoke billows into the sky carrying the stench of death, disease, and burning flesh. It joins with dark clouds, which coat the area in a sharp, icy drizzle.

Men, women and children, obviously diseased and dying, remain around the outer wall, obviously cast out of their own city. Cruel (or perhaps simply desperate) guards keep them from the gates with long halberds. These same guards eye you warily as you approach.

To get into Tor Gorak now, visitors must prove that they are not afflicted with the Vicar's Curse. This should not be hard for the relatively healthy heroes. When the heroes enter the city itself, read or paraphrase the following text:

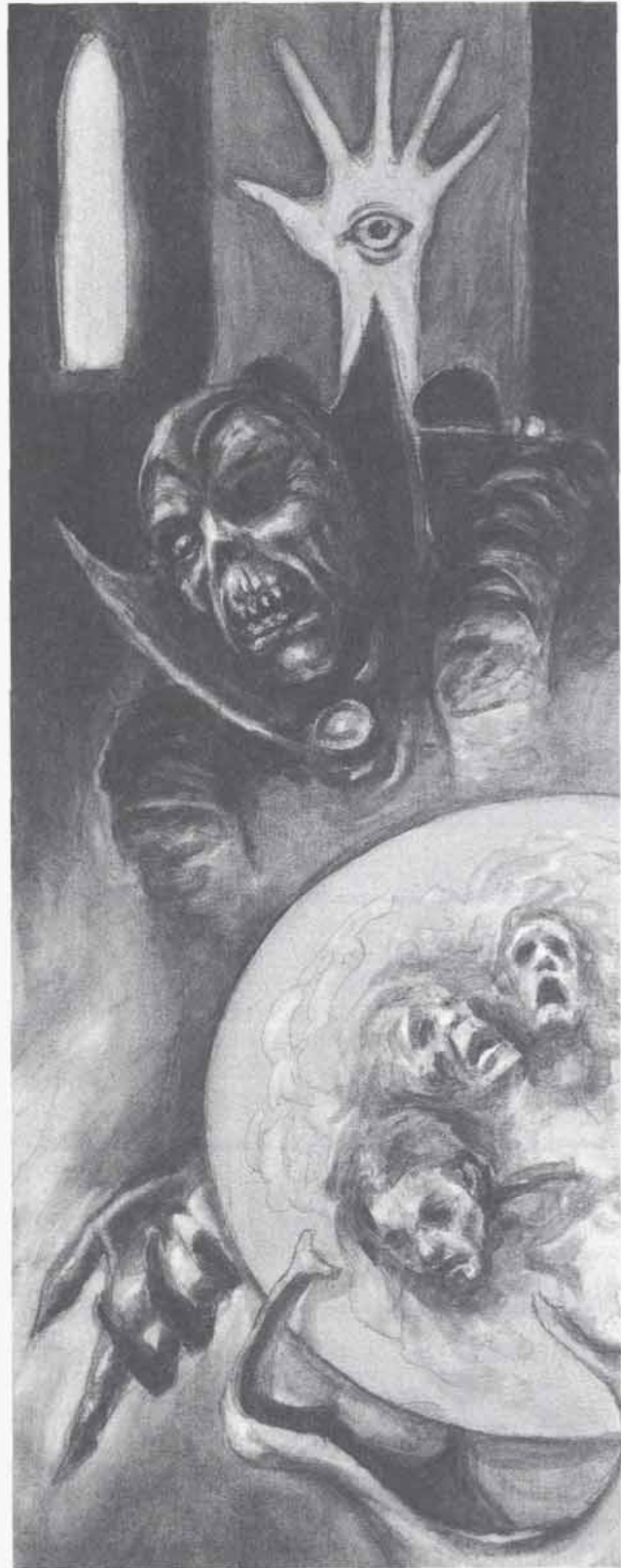
The streets of Tor Gorak are as empty as you remember them, and the few people you see seem even more filled with dread than before. If you listen carefully, the sounds of sobbing drift in from all around.

A Last Goodbye

Before the heroes go to the Madhouse, they may choose to visit Larossa or Banquo. If they do not, she finds them and urges them to see Banquo first, because he has some very important information for them. (If they instead try to find Marit, she and her uncle have both disappeared.)

Larossa has so far weathered the plague, and, being the sort of person that she is, has secreted away a number of victims in her house, caring for them and protecting them from being cast out of the city. Larossa can provide the heroes with details about the plague.

When the heroes go to visit Banquo, she can again accompany them if they need a translator. When they arrive at his home, read or paraphrase the following text:



ACT THREE: EVIL BEGETS EVIL



Upon arriving at Banquo's home, you can smell the stench of illness hanging in the air. Inside, you see the gruff scholar curled up in his bed, feverish beads of sweat clinging to his brow. The Loreward's flesh has shriveled, and bruise-like sores mar his countenance. There can be no doubt that he has succumbed to the plague that grips the city.

Banquo tells the heroes in a hoarse whisper the following (translated by Larossa, if necessary).

"I do not have much longer. I wish that I could hear of your quest in Cavitiis, but there is still one thing that you do not know. [cough] You must hear me out. The dread lord of Cavitiis keeps a small coven of cultists here in Tovag. These are led by a powerful, despicably evil priest named Vocar."

That said, Banquo falls into a fit of coughing. He does not know anything else about Vocar, and did not even know that the heroes were familiar with him. If they tell him what they know of Marit, he reinforces what the heroes should already know: that Marit must be the one who will give birth to Vecna.

As for the final ritual, Banquo has one further bit of advice. Read or paraphrase the following text:

"To truly stop the Whispered One's terrible plan from succeeding, you must do more than simply prevent the final loathsome Word from being spoken. [cough] Even more importantly, you must destroy all possibility of the ceremony ever happening."

At this point, Banquo is again overcome with coughing, and he finally succumbs to the Vicar's Curse. If the heroes have the ability to cure diseases, they can save Banquo's life, but they must allow him time to recover. Even with a *cure disease* spell, Banquo needs a great deal of rest in order to recuperate. In any case, the heroes must hurry if they hope to stop the evil events that threaten to transpire.

If Banquo does die, the heroes may feel it necessary to find someone to take his place as Loreward. Of the people they have met at this point, the only one who would seem qualified for this position is Virianis (as one of the few Tovagians with the ability to read). If they do not realize this (having explored Virianis's office in the Madhouse), Larossa can reveal this information to the heroes.

Moving On

At this point, the heroes should realize that Dast is the key to the final ritual. If they do not realize it, Larossa or Banquo could help. If either of them is asked about a king, he or she explains that Tovag has no king. Kas is the overlord and master, but he is not a king. In addition, either one of them could suggest the following to the heroes: "Not every king rules an earthly kingdom—some rule over less defined territories."

From here, the adventure continues with the finale, "Scene Nine: The Third Word."

ACT THREE: EVIL BEGETS EVIL

*I have't; it is engender'd; hell and night
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.*

—William Shakespeare
Othello

SCENE NINE: THE THIRD WORD



The final stage of the adventure involves the cultists' actions at the Madhouse. The heroes arrive at the Madhouse just as Vocar is beginning the final ritual. If they do not hurry, he will kill Dast and speak the final Word, allowing Vecna to be reborn in Tovag.

Timing and pacing is very important in this climax. Ultimately, the events in this scene can take many *strange turns*, not all of which can be covered here. Be very aware of the cult's basic plan, their resources available, and the layout of the Madhouse.

The Madhouse

Four cultists guard the outside of the Madhouse. Each watches one side of the building, summoning the others they spot interlopers. They are mostly concerned about the Daggers at this point, but the heroes, if spotted, also draw their attention. They silently attack any who attempt to get in, and fight to the death.

These crazed warriors dress much like those that attacked in the first scene—black clothes, white face paint to look like one-eyed skulls, and gloves that look like skeletal hands. Each wields a long black knife.

Cultist, hm or hf, F4 (4): AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 29 each; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SD 58% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'-6' tall); ML fanatic (18); Int avg (8-10); AL CE; XP 175.

The doors are locked, which is normal. Only a successful lockpicking attempt or great strength provides the means to get in. If characters attempt to batter them down, the doors can take one hundred points of damage before they collapse. All of the windows are too small for a person to climb in or out (which was intentional due to the nature of the place).

If the heroes get through the doors, read or paraphrase the following text:



Upon entering, the first sight that greets you is a rivulet of blood running across the stone floor toward you. Its source is the shadowed form of a corpse sprawled on the floor. From somewhere in the building, you hear shrieks of terror, and underlying that sound, you hear something even more sinister—a low, resonant chanting in a language you cannot understand.



The body is that of one of the caretakers. The screams come from the insane residents trapped in the confinement cells. The chanting comes from the third floor, where most of the cultists prepare for Vocar to begin the Ritual of Lorn Malison. The rest of the cult members are fighting with those few residents that have managed to resist them.

Five of the six caretakers are already dead by the time the heroes arrive. Similarly, ten of the residents lie dead somewhere in the building, while twenty of them have been crammed into the confinement cells, all of them screaming madly.

The First Floor

As the characters make their way through the first floor, a single insane resident should leap out in a mad attack. This ambush should not pose a real threat to the heroes, but they have to quickly ascertain that the madman is not a cult member and then figure out a way to subdue him.

Cultist, hm, T4: AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 18; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SA backstab, 58% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'8" tall); ML fanatic (18); Int avg (10); AL CE; XP 270.

Thief Skills: PP 15, OL 45, F/RT 5, MS 35, HS 78, DN 15, CW 50, RL 5.

If the heroes search the office, they find Virianis there, unconscious and bleeding. If he does not receive treatment within the next three turns, he too dies.

ACT THREE: EVIL BEGETS EVIL

As the heroes make their way up the stairs, they are again attacked, this time by a single cultist who wears the bloody coat of one of the caretakers over his black clothes, which should put them on edge.

The Second Floor

The few residents that have not been confined battle a handful of cultists in the common room. Most of the inmates, however, do not have much skill. Their actions serve only to delay the cultists, but the heroes can perhaps utilize this delay and distraction to their advantage.

From large room at the top of the stairs you hear the sounds of fighting. Screams of fear, pain, and madness accompany the clash of arms. When you arrive at the scene, you see the black-clad cultists struggling with a handful of the insane residents. The madmen seem to struggle in vain, since at least four of them appear to have already fallen under their foes' black blades.

Cultist, hm or hf, F4 (5): AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 29 each; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SD 58% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'-6' tall); ML fanatic (18); Int avg (8-10); AL CE; XP 175.

Average Resident, hm or hf, 0-level (8): AC 10; MV 12; hp 4; THACO 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 (fist) or 1d4 (heavy object); SZ M (5'-6' tall); ML fanatic (17-18); AL N.

In the confinement cells, many residents try to reach through the barred windows. These small rooms hold twenty inmates, some of whom are injured. If the heroes search the residents' quarters, they also find one old man hiding under his bed and crying softly. He has been injured slightly but is not in any danger.

Third Floor

When the heroes begin climbing to this floor, the chanting becomes louder. The cultists have moved Dast's "throne" out into the hallway in front of his room. As soon as the heroes head down either hallway toward Dast's room, read the following text:

The window across from the stairs has been covered with several thick boards, casting the area in darkness. The darkened hallway before you is lined with black, flickering candles that throw strange, twisting shadows on the walls. These strange candles produce no smoke, but they emit a soft hissing noise that rises and falls with the chanting of the cultists.

Several of these evil Vecna worshipers line the hallway here, their white-painted faces gripped in expressions of intense concentration as they intone a quiet mantra of words that fall distastefully on your ears. As you approach, they look up and draw their blades, continuing their foul chant.

These cultists, like all the rest, fight to the death. At this point, however, their goal is to keep the ritual progressing; thus, though they attempt to repel the player characters, merely holding them at bay is adequate.

There is one cultist per hero in each hallway. If the heroes attack the cultists in one hallway, the others will quickly join in the fray.

Cultist, hm or hf, F4 (2 per hero): AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 29 each; THACO 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SD 58% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'-6' tall); ML fanatic (18); Int avg (8-10); AL CE; XP 175.

As soon as the first hero steps into the large hallway in front of Dast's room, read the following:

In the center of the hallway you see the large chair that serves as Dast's throne. It has been pulled out of his room and painted with strange red symbols, which seem to shudder and twist with the rhythmic chanting. Tied to the throne is the King of the Madmen, looking small and terrified. Vocar stands beside him, holding up a large silver knife engraved with black markings similar to those on the throne.

Just then, the chant stops, and the weapon in Vocar's hands flashes with a blinding light. At the same time, you hear a piercing scream from nearby. It sounds like Marit!

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Marit is on the bed in Dast's room, along with the only remaining caretaker, who is supposed to help her deliver her baby at the end of the ceremony. They are both guarded by a single cultist. The minute the chanting stopped (indicating the beginning of the Ritual of Lorn Malison), Marit began having labor pains.

Cultist, hm, T4: AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 18; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4 (dagger); SA backstab, 58% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'8" tall); ML fanatic (18); Int avg (10); AL CE; XP 270.

Thief Skills: PP 15, OL 45, F/RT 5, MS 35, HS 78, DN 15, CW 50, RL 5.

If the heroes rush in to save Marit, they find her lying on her back, screaming. Vocar stopped drugging her this morning in preparation for the ceremony, and he finally revealed his plan to her moments before beginning the chant. For the first time in months, Marit is coherent enough to comprehend the situation.

If a hero comes into the room to help Marit before the ceremony has been effectively ended, she begs for someone to kill her. She does not want to bring Vecna into Tovag, spelling the end of the domain and all of its inhabitants. She knows only one way to automatically halt the ritual, and that is through her death.

The Ritual of Lorn Malison

At this point, the heroes have a great many of options. The final ritual has begun, and if they do not prevent its conclusion, Vocar will speak the Third Word, bringing Vecna into Tovag. The cultists have until Marit's baby is born to complete the ritual. You can take as little or as much time as needed for this scene to reach its climax. Because her labor is by no means natural, the entire process could be over in a matter of minutes! Basically, you should make it clear that the heroes do not have much time, but then give them the time they need to succeed, as long as they do not dawdle.

The heroes can end the ritual in several ways. However, the two easiest options (killing Dast or Marit themselves, which would cause automatic powers check failures) are not actions that the heroes are likely to take.

The best way for the heroes to end the ritual is to successfully accomplish at least three of the six feats listed below. Note that no matter what actions the heroes take, the cultists will try their hardest to continue the ceremony anyway.



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Prevent Dast's Death: As soon as the ritual begins, Vocar is ready to kill Dast. To save Dast's life, the heroes must prevent Vocar from striking him in the first round. If they do prevent this first strike, Vocar (or another cultist if he is killed) will try again each round unless he is somehow prevented.

Kill Vocar: Killing Vocar also sets the ritual back. Another cultist must step forward to take his place, beginning the ritual where Vocar left off.

Vocar's stats appear on the inside cover.

Destroy the Knife: If the heroes destroy the knife Vocar has prepared for the ritual, another one must be substituted, further weakening the ritual's magic. Unfortunately, destroying the knife also causes a small magical explosion, which inflicts 1d6 points of damage to everyone within a five-foot radius.

Obliterate the Symbols: If the heroes somehow smear, destroy, or erase the symbols on Dast's altar, they further weaken the ritual. These symbols do not have to be repainted by the cultists, but the ceremony must continue without them.

These symbols have a mesmerizing effect on those who are not worshipers of Vecna. Any hero who comes near the symbols and looks directly at them must make a successful saving throw vs. spell or become disoriented for 1d4 rounds.

Snuff the Candles: Thirty black candles line the hallways into the area where the ritual is being performed. Extinguishing these candles also weakens the ceremony. The ritual can go on without them, but the hallway is plunged into darkness. Also, anyone who extinguishes a candle suffers a *curse* (the reverse of a *bless* spell).

Depose the King: This last one is the most difficult of the options, but it allows for a great deal of roleplaying and creativity. To accomplish this, the heroes must somehow convince Dast either to give up his throne or that he is no longer a king. Any process that cures his insanity obviously does this, but so can careful trickery.

Failure

If the heroes do not manage to stop the ceremony, the cultists will complete the Ritual of Lorn Malison. If this happens, the heroes have but one round to stop Vocar (or his replacement) from speaking the last of the Three Words. If he speaks it, Vecna's essence fills Marit, and then consumes her.

The word he speaks is strange upon your ears. It is not an evil word, but rather one of power, pure energy somehow vocalized. Once the word has been

spoken, Marit's body lifts into the air, and her entire form begins to swell. Dark light streams from her eyes, nose, her open mouth, and even her ears. Finally, this blackness consumes her utterly and then the entire room.

When you can see again, standing in her place is a naked human male. His form is tall and gaunt. Your worst fears are confirmed as you notice that one of his eye sockets is hollow and empty, and one of his arms ends in a jagged stump. Vecna has been reborn.

Success

As soon as the heroes successfully end the ceremony, several things happen: The candles burst into flames and melt into formless blobs; the red paint on Dast's throne dissipates, leaving only an oily residue; the knife stops glowing and cracks, breaking into two pieces; and the ropes around Dast loosen and fall to the ground.

However, the adventure is not over. Any remaining cultists will try to kill both the heroes and Marit, now that Third Word cannot be spoken. Marit is still in labor, so the heroes will now have to protect her from Vecna's worshipers.

Virianis will fight for a few rounds, but he fears that the Daggers (maybe even accompanied by Kas) will soon arrive at the scene. Though this attempt to free Vecna failed, Virianis plans to keep his anonymity within Tovag and continue his work. Thus, he leaves soon after the heroes thwart the ceremony.

Though her labor is now normal, the baby is born very quickly. If none of the heroes know how to deliver a baby, then the caretaker directs the entire process. When the baby is born, read or paraphrase the following text:

The caretaker cries out with excitement: "You did it. It's a boy! A beautiful little boy!"

The exhausted Marit looks over expectantly, though still a little frightened, to see her newborn son. The caretaker holds up the squirming child, who makes no sound whatsoever. And though you are not absolutely sure, you think you see the shadow of a smile flicker across his lips.

The baby is absolutely normal, but the heroes do not know that. This should leave the heroes wondering whether or not they were truly successful.

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Just as a hundred fools do not make one wise man, a heroic decision is not likely to come from a hundred cowards.

—Adolf Hitler
Mein Kampf

SCENE TEN: DENOUEMENT



hough there are many variables in the conclusion of this adventure, it can ultimately end in one of two ways: Either Vecna is reborn, or he is not.

Vecna Reborn

Fortunately for the player characters, they are beneath Vecna's notice. His entire attention is focused on revenge, and he immediately disappears with a wave of his hand to find and destroy Kas the Bloody-Handed.

Hopefully, this is not what comes to pass. If it is, your campaign might be significantly altered. Kas cannot stand up to the power of his former master, and will probably be slain (unless he can successfully flee). Tovag is laid waste. Vecna then turns his attention toward the rest of the Demiplane of Dread. You must decide if the domains of Ravenloft now fall under siege of the dread sorcerer or if Vecna makes his way out of the setting and to some other world or plane.

Vecna Thwarted

With Vocar defeated, Vecna's following in Tovag has suffered a terrible blow. However, as the heroes well know, the Maimed Lord still has agents and followers in Tor Gorak. Never before in the history of Ravenloft has an actual demigod been held. Vecna will always remain a threat to all of the Demiplane (and beyond) simply because with his mere existence, he breaks all the rules.

Vecna saw his plans fail. He knows that mere mortals thwarted his scheme and destroyed his followers. Cavitius shudders with his outrage. While he certainly does not give up his dreams of destroying his former lieutenant, Vecna knows that another plan must be forged. Due to the nature of the magic involved, the speaking of the Three Words cannot be attempted again. *The Serpent's ways must not be questioned.*

Even if none of his servants survived to report back to him, the Chained God's spells allow him to

learn all that transpired and who is to blame. With such a powerful enemy, the heroes would be wise to leave the Burning Peaks cluster altogether if they are to avoid his considerable wrath.

Yet so much remains to be done in Tovag and Cavitius, and can true heroes really shirk from such responsibility? In all of the Demiplane of Dread, no place is so obviously evil and hostile than Cavitius, and Tovag is a realm of wrongs to be righted.

Tovag

The Vicar's Curse eventually runs its course. Such tragedies are beyond even the scope of heroes. The people of the land of Tovag have grown accustomed to death and loss, and thus recover more quickly than could normally be expected.

Other wrongs, like the evils of the Daggers and even their lord Kas are not like a disease. They can be opposed by bravery and might. Kas's hatred for his former master grows even greater with the plague and the attempted rituals—of which he will certainly hear. The heroes, however, should expect no gratitude from this raving lord. Even if he were capable of such sentiment, his mind is too focused upon the defeat of his eternal foe. He can afford not a moment to acknowledge their efforts. Kas merely heightens the search for his sword and does what he can to increase the lessened ranks of his army. The heroes should feel fortunate that they do not rot in Kas's dungeons or suffer the tender mercies of the Daggers. One can expect no more good fortune in the beleaguered domain of Tovag.

Future Adventures: Tovag needs men and women that will stand up against the tyranny of despots like Kas and his harsh terror-troops. Although she will understand if they want to leave, Larossa asks the heroes if they will stay and fight against the Daggers and eventually even Kas himself. There are those in Tovag, she tells them, that have the willingness to fight back against the injustice of the evil ruler and his minions, but they lack leadership and inspiration.

If you wish, take this opportunity to create a series of follow-up adventures in which the heroes help the people of Tovag struggle against their lord

ACT THREE: EVIL BEGETS EVIL



and his Daggers. This fight for freedom from oppression would be a great undertaking and would require months of battle, shrewd planning as well as bravery and power on the part of the heroes. Of course, if the rebellion were successful, Vecna would of course attempt to take advantage of the situation. . . .

If the heroes do not feel up to taking part in a rebellion (or if you do not want your campaign to go in that direction), the danger of Vocar (or his successor) still looms in Tor Gorak. The evil priest and his covey of cultists hide somewhere, plotting terrible deeds. Feel free to devise a plot of Vocar's that will not only once again put the people of Tovag in jeopardy, but put him back into his lord's good graces. For example, Vocar may attempt to undermine Tovag's military by killing or capturing the high-ranking officers or poisoning the food supply. The evil priest might even attempt to assassinate Kas himself.

Cavitius

Those heroes who feel truly ambitious can even take on the monumental evil of Cavitius, the undead population, and its extraordinarily powerful master. The heroes may never reach a level of

power in which they can challenge a demigod like Vecna. (His game stats can be found in *Domains of Dread*, but he is so powerful that they have not been included here. A direct confrontation with a deity is not recommended for any but the most high level of campaigns.) However, they can still oppose his minions and schemes.

Future Adventures: Those heroes wishing to return to Cavitius have innumerable adventures ahead of them, facing ancient sorcery and undying evil. Using that evil against itself might prove to be the undoing of Cavitius, however. Pitting the undead lords like Haroln and Qoolarn against one another weakens the strength of that undead realm. Further, a land of secrets and arcane magic may even hold a secret that can be its own undoing. If you prefer, finding a magical secret located in an ancient vault or hidden in the Shadowed Room can be an important step in the completion of another adventure, perhaps one involving other Ravenloft domains.

In the end, as in Tovag, uniting the force of the living in Cavitius may one day allow them to throw the chains of their evil master aside. For today, however, the heroes can be content with their current victory, for it is deeds such as this which keep evil at bay.

NAREK (THE THING IN THE SHAFT)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	The Library of Kas (Tovag)
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	None
INTELLIGENCE:	Highly (14)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral Evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	6
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	14 (94 hp)
THACO:	7
NO. OF ATTACKS:	2d6
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d6 each
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Constriction
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to fire and some spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	G (25' across)
MORALE:	Elite (13)
XP VALUE:	9,000



Alas, poor Narek! One of the many bastard children of Kas the Destroyer, he—it—now resides forever in a prison forged of betrayal and jealousy. Kas the Bloody, Kas the Wicked, Kas the Warlord sired a son and called him Narek. Narek had great talents for the sorcerous arts. Even Kas's master was impressed with the youth. Narek was too young to have learned never to outshine Kas in his master's eyes. Kas imprisoned the young man in a tomb, trapping him there for all eternity with his magical books.

Narek, filled with not quite enough skill and a little too much confidence, attempted a spell that was beyond him. Its energies transformed him into an unspeakable monstrosity. Now Narek is nothing more than the Thing in the Shaft. Nameless, soulless, loveless, the son of Kas seeks nothing but the pain and suffering of others.

Combat: The Thing in the Shaft is a horrible slimy mass with hundreds of tendrils. It attacks with 2d6 of these tendrils each round, which grasp and lunge for any and all victims. The Thing can attack up to four different targets in a round, and the tendrils can stretch to strike at targets up to forty feet away.

If a foe is hit with four or more tendrils in the same round, the ropy appendages grasp and snare the victim, who is now immobilized. Characters so grasped suffer 2d6 hp of constriction damage. The Thing draws grappled victims in close to it at a rate of ten feet per round. It does not eat its prey, however (since it does not even have a mouth) but merely

continues to squeeze the drawn-in victim into its mass until it is dead. Slain foes are haphazardly tossed aside. To break free, the tendrils holding the victim must be severed (each can sustain 4 hp of damage) or the victim must make a successful Strength check for each constricting appendage.

Due to the slime and ooze that covers the Thing, it cannot burn and is thus immune to fire. No *charm* spells or magic of a controlling or form-altering nature (such as *polymorph* spells) can affect it.

Habitat/Society: The Thing in the Shaft dwells alone in its prison. If freed, the creature would begin a silent reign of terror and madness as it lurked in dark places large enough to accommodate it (dark alleyways, wide wells, cellars, and so forth), striking out at anyone who would dare to come near.

Ecology: If a sage learned in the ways of monstrous biology ever got the chance to examine the Thing, it is likely that he might suggest that it possesses many characteristics similar to the monster known as the roper. Perhaps this has something to do with the spell Narek attempted and failed so long ago.

The Thing needs no nourishment, sustained merely by its own hatred and chagrin. It attacks others out of cruelty and rage, not hunger or need.

And thus it came to pass in those days that the One Named Only in Whispers looked upon his tortured domain and saw that there was much amiss. Woe to those in that realm in those days, for cities were laid waste and the earth itself rebelled against man, all at the behest of the Dying King. The dark and forbidden land had prospered a little, as the Whispered One's attention had been in the endless wars that he waged, and his lieutenant had likewise entreated other lands with his cruel considerations. Now that the sinister lord's gaze turned back to Cavitius, the foul place became even more befouled. While the mad and unspeakable Ras continued to crush the enemies of his dread master, the Dying King looked upon his own homeland and saw that there existed matters which required his cursed attentions. One wrong in the dark master's eyes was that the Book of Inverted Darkness had slipped from his evil grasp. Sorcery great and vile located the baleful tome of the Ancient Brethren and brought it back into the skeletal clutches of the Master of the Spider Throne. Restoring it to its rightful place with his other darkling treasures, he placed the book in that sorrowful place which some name the Shadowed Room, where few can go and fewer can leave. The Whispered One holds the key to this hidden chamber of forlorn secrets, as do his most faithful of servants. The key, it is said, is likewise a secret, and the umbra of the dark mystery that holds the way into the Shadowed Room lies deep within the fact that there is no way in at all. After the fall of Regelios and the Night of Golden Death,



Vecna Reborn

by Monte Cook

*From the depths of antiquity, he arises. . . .
Trapped in a mockery of his former kingdom, he broods. . . .
In hatred and spite against the one who betrayed him, he schemes. . . .*

*The other lords of Ravenloft may possess horrific power . . .
but Vecna is a god.*

*Trapped by the Mists of Ravenloft, the lich lord Vecna plots his escape
and revenge against Kas the Destroyer, his traitorous former lieutenant.*

*Vecna Reborn takes brave heroes into the dark, oppressed domain of Tor
Gorak, where Kas whips his subjects into submission to serve in his
never-ending war against Vecna and Cavittus, a realm in the grip of
ancient magic and malevolent undeath. The heroes must struggle to stop
arcane rituals, insane cultists, and monstrous abominations from
granting Vecna, the Chained God, the power to fulfill his dark dreams.
Vecna Reborn presents a terrifying tale of betrayal, madness, and sorcery
that may tear apart the Demiplane of Dread itself.*

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Cohort (Invisible Stalker): AC 3; MV 12, FI 12 (A); HD 8; hp 39; THAC0 13; #AT 1; Dmg 4d4 (vortex of air); SA -6 penalty to foes' surprise rolls; SD opponent's unable to detect invisibility suffer a -2 penalty on attacks; MR 30%; SZ L (8' tall); ML elite (14); Int high (13); AL N; XP 3,000.

Dast, King of the Madmen, hm, F3: AC 10; MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d2 (fist) or 1d4 (heavy object); SZ M (6' tall); ML fanatic (17-18); AL LG.

S 15, D 9, C 11, I 10, W 9, Ch 13.

Personality: Dast was a precocious young lad, bright, pleasant, and kind. Then, his typically short childhood was cut short by the tides of war. Dast went to war against the hordes of Vecna as they attempted to cross through the Burning Peaks and into his homeland. A year later, Dast returned to Tor Gorak a changed man. He no longer remembered his friends and family, and he claimed that great and powerful lords from beyond time and space had appeared before him on the fields of battle. These lords told him that the blood of kings flowed in his veins and that he was the rightful king of all Tovag.

Of course, to speak such things, even in jest, is to beg for the unwanted attention of the Dagers. Thus, his family called upon the charity of Virianis to take Dast in before he was slain for treason.

Now Dast, still claiming to be the proper ruler of the land, is known as the King of the Madmen. The other residents all think of him as their king (with a few possible exceptions), and address him as "Your Majesty."

Dellis Baru, hm, F4: AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 35; THAC0 17 (16 w/Strength); #AT 1 (short sword); Dmg 1d6+1 (Strength); SZ M (6'2" tall); ML steady (12); AL CG.

S 17, D 12, C 17, I 4, W 7, Ch 10.

Appearance: Dellis is a huge tower of a man with an extremely large nose. His thin hair is unkempt and his clothes are usually disheveled. His simplemindedness is usually betrayed by his confused but happy expression.

Personality: As good natured as his mother, Dellis does not allow his mental capacity or inability to communicate get in his way.

Larossa Baru, hf, 0-level: AC 10; MV 12; hp 4; THAC0 20; #AT 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d4; SZ M (5'8" tall); ML steady (12); AL CG.

S 11, D 9, C 13, I 14, W 17, Ch 15.

Appearance: Larossa has a matronly appearance. Her build is stout, and she pulls her graying hair tightly in a bun.

Personality: Truly good hearted in every sense of the word, Larossa is generous, kind, and self-sacrificing. She is secretly known throughout the city as one who will always help others in need, no matter what the cost.

Loreward Banquo, hm, 0-level: AC 10; MV 12; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d4; SZ M (5'4" tall); ML unsteady (5); AL LG.

S 7, D 11, C 9, I 17, W 13, Ch 7.

Appearance: In a city full of warriors, Banquo's bookish appearance is even more pronounced. His eyes are squinty, his back slightly stooped, and his build is paunchy. Thinning brown hair covers his head. In a normal place, one might think him around fifty years old, but he is actually twenty-three.

Personality: The position of Loreward has existed for a long time in Tor Gorak, and he takes his responsibilities very seriously. Nothing is more important to him than his books. Gathering and recording knowledge come a close second, however.

Marit, hf, 0-level: AC 10; MV 12; hp 3; THACO 20; #AT 1 (knife); Dmg 1d3; SZ M (5'4" tall); ML unsteady (5); AL LG.

S 8, D 8, C 9, I 12, W 11, Ch 14.

Appearance: Marit is an attractive young woman with short blonde hair and brown eyes. Her tattered clothes and grimy appearance somewhat hide her beauty, however. Currently, she is a little over four months pregnant (which is a full term for Tovagians).

Personality: Marit is normally a kind, if somewhat skittish, person. However, the recent death of her husband, along with the drugs her uncle has been sneaking into her food, has caused a mental breakdown. She seems to have blocked out all memory of the tragedies she has recently suffered and wanders around in a dazed state.

Virianis, hm, 0-level: AC 10; MV 12; hp 4; THACO 20; #AT 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d4; SZ M (6'5" tall); ML steady (12); AL NG.

S 9, D 8, C 10, I 12, W 11, Ch 13.

Appearance: Virianis's extreme age (forty-three) shows in his wrinkled, emaciated form. On the other hand, his steely blue eyes give the impression of great strength.

Personality: Virianis is wealthy. Although no one knows for sure how he obtained his wealth, most people do not question it, for the uses that he has found for his gold have always been most charitable. He, like Larossa and a few other kind souls in Tovag, is a shining beacon of goodness in a dark and dreary realm.

Special Equipment: headband of mental speech (functions like a *helm of comprehending languages*).

Vocar the Obedient, hm, M4/P16: AC 2 (bracers AC 2); MV 12; hp 64; THACO 10 (7 with dagger +3); #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+3 (dagger +3); SA spells, command undead; SD 82% chance to hide in shadows; SZ M (5'9" tall); ML fanatic (18); AL

CE; XP 9,000.

S 13, D 12, C 16, I 17, W 18, Ch 9.

Appearance: Vocar is an old man with a long gray beard hanging from his otherwise bald head. He wears simple gray and brown robes except during rituals, when he wears the traditional red and black.

Personality: Vocar is devoted to Vecna and will go to any ends to fulfill his master's orders.

Magical Items: bracers AC 2, dagger+3.

Priest Spells (9/9/8/7/4/3/1): 1st—*bles*, *cause fear*, *command* (×2), *curse*, *detect magic*, *protection from good*, *sanctuary* (×2); 2nd—*aid*, *enthrall*, *hold person* (×2), *flame blade*, *heat metal*, *produce flame*, *silence 15' radius*, *spiritual hammer*; 3rd—*animate dead* (×2), *dispel magic*, *locate object*, *meld into stone*, *prayer*, *protection from fire*, *speak with dead*; 4th—*cloak of fear*, *detect lie*, *divination*, *free action*, *protection from good 10' radius*, *protection from lightning*, *tongues*; 5th—*air walk*, *flame strike*, *transmute rock to mud*, *wall of fire*; 6th—*fire seeds*, *stone tell*, *animate object*; 7th—*creeping doom*.

Wizard Spells (3/2): 1st—*burning hands*, *color spray*, *message*; 2nd—*invisibility*, *strength*.

Zarenival (Imp, Quasit): AC 2; MV 15, FI 18 (A); HD 3; hp 20; THACO 17; #AT 3; Dmg 1d2/1d2/1d4 (claw/claw/bite); SA poison, spells, fear (1/day, 30' radius); SD spell and weapon immunities, regenerate (1 hp/round); MR 25%; SZ T (2' tall); ML avg (10); Int avg (10); AL CE; XP 2,000.

Notes: Victims hit by Zarenival's claws must save vs. poison or lose 1 point of Dexterity for 2d6 rounds. The effects of multiple wounds are cumulative.

He can cast *invisibility*, *detect good*, *detect magic*, and *polymorph self* (into a wolf or bat) at will. Zarenival can be hit only by cold iron or magical weapons. He is also immune to cold, fire, and lightning, and saves as a 7-HD monster.