



THE SECRET OF SKYHOLD TOWER

M.T. BLACK

INTRODUCTION

The Secret of Skyhold Tower is a Dungeons & Dragons adventure designed to be completed in about 4–6 hours of play.

The combat encounters have been calculated to present a tough challenge to four characters with an APL (average party level) of 5. Information is supplied in the text explaining how to scale the encounters to APL 6 or APL 7. Statistics for new monsters are provided near the end of this document.

Not every loose end is tied up in the following text, nor every possible reaction accounted for. Be ready to improvise, and do so with confidence! Unless stated otherwise, assume NPCs have the stats of a **commoner**.

The adventure comprises 3 chapters.

- **Chapter 1—The Moonstone Mask:** A flying tower is falling—and Neverwinter is directly beneath it! The city steward makes the party an offer they can't refuse.
- **Chapter 2—Skyhold Tower:** The party explores the tower, and makes some interesting discoveries.
- **Chapter 3—The Rift Chamber:** The party scales the upper levels of the tower, and confronts a bizarre and dangerous creature. As time runs out, they fight to save the city.

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CHAPTER 1: THE MOONSTONE MASK

THE SKY IS FALLING!

The adventure begins in the Moonstone Mask, a Neverwinter tavern known for the quality of its drinks, the discretion of its beautifully masked staff, and the spectacular views offered by its rather unique location. After being caught up in the magical mess that was the *spellplague*, the tavern—and the ground around it—hovers some distance above the streets of Neverwinter, secured to the ground by some enormous chains. Entrance is gained via a rope bridge. Read the following:

The streets below the Moonstone Mask are never quiet, but as you chat idly over your drinks, you suddenly notice that the tone of the distant shouts and calls has shifted. The braying, drunken laughs and bawdy songs have disappeared. In their place are cries of fear and panic, and shrill screams.

If the adventurers go outside, they will quickly spot what is causing the trouble. High above the city is a badly damaged tower, resting on a cloud. Read the following:

Even from this distance it's possible to pick out gaping holes in the masonry that would have probably caused a conventional building to collapse long ago. What's more worrying is the fact that the tower is falling—rather slowly, but still fast enough to leave a huge crater in the heart of Neverwinter when it hits the ground.

Compulsory Heroes

A few moments later, a carriage with strange clockwork legs dashes up to the tavern, and a middle-aged human woman in fine clothing emerges, trailed by a distracted-looking Gnome lugging around a huge, clanking sack. She strides directly toward the party (if they are in the tavern, she enters), then pulls out a parchment and reads the following aloud, ignoring all interruptions -

Let it be known that I, **Belifrey Evencott**, Steward of **Dagult Neverember**, Lord Protector of Neverwinter, do hereby indenture to his service the following persons: [ADVENTURERS' NAMES]—with immediate effect.

Those named are charged with the task of preventing the building known as Skyhold Tower from impacting the city of Neverwinter, even at the cost of their own lives. In return for this service, they shall each receive a gift of 500 gold pieces, to be paid from the treasury of Neverwinter.

At this point, all the named adventurers have been targeted by a *geas* spell cast by the parchment. The PCs must each make a **DC 18 Wisdom** saving throw, or be compelled to follow the instructions on the parchment. Belifrey acts as though all the adventurers are affected unless given evidence to the contrary.

She immediately apologizes for using magic on the party, and explains that for obvious reasons she could not risk them refusing. She was alerted to the

descending tower an hour ago, and a divination spell identified the party as those most likely to save the city.

The gnome accompanying Belifrey is named **Gimble Clickcrank**, and he will be busy setting up a thick brass-plated telescope with a large viewfinder at its base. He will absent-mindedly try and dragoon any nearby party members into helping him with this task, assigning them to tighten screws or carefully slot heavy lenses into place.

If the Geas fails...

If the party break or resist the geas, Belifrey will appeal to their sense of self-interest. They are adventurers, after all, and this is a well-paying, heroic sort of undertaking.

Also, she points out that the streets are now jammed with desperate townsfolk and the party may not be able to flee the city before the falling tower turns a good-sized portion of it into rubble. They're gambling their lives either way, and if they work with her, they at least have the chance of leaving with a sack of gold.

THROUGH THE LEAPING GLASS

If the adventurers cooperate (voluntarily or under compulsion) Belifrey will explain the plan. Using the device Gimble is currently assembling, the party will teleport to the tower. They must then quickly (but

BELIFREY

Ideal: The best way to protect my city is to follow the orders of Lord Neverember.

Bond: I may not like everyone in Neverwinter, but they're still my responsibility.

Flaw: The ends usually justify the means.

GIMBLE

Ideal: Magic and technology don't have to compete— together they can achieve wonderful things!

Bond: There's always something new and exciting to learn.

Flaw: People are necessary parts of the world, but they aren't all that interesting or important.

thoroughly) search each floor, to see if they can detect the problem.

Gimble will accompany them. He is an expert artificer, and may be able to repair the tower controls if they are broken.

The party may have questions. Belifrey will answer them briskly, with frequent upward glances. Following is all she could find out from a brief bit of research:

- The tower is called Skyhold Tower, and was constructed by a human wizard known as Frander Skyhold.
- Frander was a powerful wizard, though his specialty is unclear.
- Both he and the tower disappeared some 100 years ago, and were presumed lost.
- Though the tower appears to be falling rather slowly, the rate at which it is dropping is increasing.

Eventually, Gimble snaps the final pieces together and—completely ignoring the party—asks Belifrey if she's found the poor fools who are going to accompany him yet. Once somebody has explained what's going on, he will check that the adventurers know what to do (help search the tower, protect him while he sorts things out), and he then invites them to crowd round the telescope's viewfinder.

Through the glass panel they will be able to see a blurry image of the tower. Gimble adjusts something on the telescope and the image snaps into focus. As it does so, the adventurers all feel a strange pulling sensation in the pit of their stomach...

CHAPTER 2: SKYHOLD TOWER

A. THE CLOUD

Read the following:

There's a brief lurching sensation and a rush of ice-cold air, and you find yourself standing in front of a tall, crumbling tower that stretches up into a clear blue sky.

The years have not been kind to Skyhold Tower, and huge areas of white plasterwork have peeled away to reveal the dirty grey stone beneath.

Fortunately, the ground beneath your feet seems to be holding together much better. Snow-white and as soft and springy as moss, the only flaws are where it's dotted with chunks of fallen masonry.

A winding strand of the cloud-stuff has been smoothed out into a road. One end leads to the arched doorway of the tower itself, while the other connects it to a flattened area littered with ancient, decaying ropes and a handful of rusted iron rings.

Beyond that is a sheer drop, with no wall or barrier. The land below seems impossibly far away.

The cloud is roughly circular, with a diameter of around 200'. The cloud-stuff itself is easy to walk on, but hard to break apart with either tools or magic.

A magical baffle keeps the worst of the freezing wind and cold air at bay, which makes the entire area feel eerily silent. However, it will not prevent anybody from

falling off the cloud. The baffle is only a few dozen feet high, so the upper levels are still very much exposed to the elements.

The front door is made of faded oak planks with a tarnished brass door handle. It is not locked, and opens with a long, drawn-out creak.

How high are we?

Gimble has a magical altimeter on hand, which he fiddles with momentarily before announcing that they are about 2000' up—and falling!

Keep track of the altitude on a scrap of paper (or using a d20). For every level they climb, reduce the altitude by 100'. If they take a short rest, reduce the altitude by 300'. Gimble will tell them the current altitude whenever asked.

Optional: Wandering Monsters

The focus of the adventure is on exploration, roleplaying and problem-solving, with just a few fights along the way. Some parties may want to use their swords a bit more. If so, you may roll on the following wandering monsters table immediately after leaving each level above level 4. The monster can be encountered on the stairs or at an appropriate place on the level. Each monster can be encountered only once.

Wandering Monsters (d8)

1–4	None
5	Air Elemental
6	Water Elemental
7	Earth Elemental
8	Fire Elemental

Optional: Trebuchet Attacks

After the party leave level 6, the city may begin attacking the tower with trebuchets, trying to the knock it out of the sky. These trebuchets are magically enhanced, enabling them to hurl large chunks of masonry high into the sky. You should tell the party that the tower trembles and shakes frequently as the stone blocks strike the tower.

Occasionally a missile will strike the level they are on. It might just explode harmlessly on the outside, doing superficial damage to the tower only. But it might also punch a hole in the wall, potentially hurting everyone in the room. Once per level, roll on the following table:

Trebuchet Damage (d8)

1–4	Superficial damage
5–6	Minor damage (make a DC 10 Dexterity save or take 1d6 bludgeoning damage)
7–8	Major damage (make a DC 15 Dexterity save or take 2d6 bludgeoning damage)

You may choose to get one of the players to make these rolls, in order to heighten the excitement.

1A. ANTECHAMBER

Read the following:

LET'S CLIMB THE OUTSIDE!

The PCs may guess that the control room is on the top floor, and may choose to climb the outside of the tower, or go there directly via magical means.

Climbing the tower itself is quite difficult, as the plaster is in such a bad state that it crumbles as soon as anyone establishes a hand- or foot-hold in it. Climbing up by one floor requires a successful **DC 15 Athletics** check.

Gimble will be upset with this plan—he needs to explore each floor to gain more information about the functioning of the tower. He will stubbornly enter the first floor on his own if the PCs won't accompany him (and will presumably be killed within a floor or two)..

The entrance to this extraordinary tower is rather mundane, with a flagstone floor and peeling plaster walls. It smells damp, with the odor not helped by a long dead plant on a side table. In the far corner, a musty travelling cloak dangles from a tall coat rack, standing next to a set of double doors.

The double doors lead to the **LOWER HALL (1B)**.

TREASURE

Anyone looking in the cloak pockets will find an old leather component pouch and **12gp**, as well as a **large iron key** and a **small golden key**, both of which hang on a brass ring.

1B. LOWER HALL

Read the following:

Light filters in through broken windows.

Several suits of ornate armor flank a wide, red-carpeted staircase made of dark oak.

The stairs split at a landing, where a small portrait of a white-haired human hangs upon the wall.

The painting is maybe a foot-and-a-half high by a foot wide; a plate at the bottom of the frame reads 'Frander Skyhold.' As the adventurers walk past the painting, it will grumpily challenge them, demanding to know what they are doing in the tower.

The painting is imbued with a sliver of the spirit and memories of Frander. Its purpose was to handle guests and other minor issues when the wizard was busy.

If the party is polite and explains why they are there, it will grudgingly give them "permission" to enter. It will, however, demand that they carry it with them so that it can "ensure they don't make a mess." It will complain loudly if they try and put it in a sack or pack.

If they are rude, or simply ignore the painting's questions, it will order the **4 suits of animated armor** [MM p19] flanking the stairs to throw them out.

Adjusting this Encounter

APL 6: Add 1 suit of animated armor.

APL 7: Add 2 suits of animated armor.

2. LOUNGE

Read the following:

The staircase leads up to a lounge, which is warm and filled with the aroma of wood smoke.

PORTRAIT OF FRANDER

A near-century of solitude has left the painting a little unhinged and thoroughly grumpy. It has all Frander's arrogance, but lacks both his intelligence and deep learning. If asked something it doesn't know, it will make up an answer, and if proven wrong will insist that the questioner misunderstood the answer. It is full of opinions.

The painting knows surprisingly little about the rest of the tower, having spent most of its existence in the Lower Hall. You can, however, use it to prompt the party if they get stuck.

Thick carpet coats the floor and a fire crackles away in a hearth set in the far wall, next to a torn and shriveled armchair. A large drinks cabinet flanks the other side of the fire.

In the center of the room is a staircase made from dull silver metal, which spirals around a narrow pillar up through the ceiling.

The fire is magical, and cannot be extinguished except by *dispel magic* or similar.

TREASURE

Most of the liquor in the drinks cabinet has spoiled, but three sealed bottles of 'Maebald's Spiced Brandy' and two of 'High Forest Burgandy' have aged beautifully. A merchant would pay **50gp** for the set.

Tucked amongst the glassware is a small bottle filled with an orange liquid that flickers as if lit with a strange internal fire. It has a hand-written label, which reads "For use at parties & impressing Salamanders only. Not

for consumption by apprentices. THIS MEANS YOU, TOBI.”

This is a *Potion of Fire Breathing* [DMG p187].

3. BOILER ROOM

Read the following:

As you ascend the stairs, the air becomes increasingly warm and damp, and as you enter the room, you are wrapped in a cloud of billowing steam.

Though the white clouds make it hard to see, you make out a rather small room with slick floorboards. A door to the right is topped with a brass plaque reading ‘Fire Control Room,’ with a similar door to the left marked as ‘Water Control Room.’

Thick copper pipes are everywhere, emerging from and disappearing into walls, ceiling, and floor. One of the pipes is split and is spurting out a geyser of hot steam.

8 steam mephits [MM p217] swoop around in the cloud and will attack the party as soon as they explore the room. At the end of every round of combat, 2 more **mephits** will be spawned in the cloud until the damage is repaired or the pipes are shut down.

Adjusting this Encounter

APL 6: Add 2 steam mephits.

APL 7: Add 4 steam mephits.

The pipe can most easily be repaired with the *mending* spell. The party might also try and tie off the leak with a rag or something similar; this difficult action will require a **DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand)**



check. Any creature that touches the pipe with bare skin must succeed on a **DC 12 Constitution** save or take **2d6** fire damage.

Both pipes are being supplied from the control rooms (**LOCATIONS 3B** and **3C**). These sparsely-furnished rooms each contain a crystal box mounted on top of stone plinths and connected to the pipes. The boxes are linked to areas deep within the elemental planes of fire and water, and contain a raging inferno and a roiling torrent of water respectively.

Each box has a master valve. Turning off either one will stop the steam gushing forth, and will prevent any

more mephits from emerging. A **DC 12 Strength** check is required to turn the valves off—they have not been used for decades.

4A. ANTEROOM

Read the following:

The staircase opens onto a chamber that looks empty, save for a few moldering pieces of debris. A shaft of daylight streams through the staircase leading up to the fifth floor, illuminating the signs on the two doors leading out of the room.

Brass plaques mark the one to the left as ‘Experiment Room 1’ and the one to the right as ‘Experiment Room 2.’ Each door is made of dark wood and has an iron door handle and lock.

The doors can be opened with the **large iron key** (from **LOCATION 1A**) or with a **DC 13 Dexterity (Thieves Tools)** check. Frander carried out dangerous elemental research in these rooms.

An experiment in room 3 that went catastrophically wrong caused the damage to the southern part of the wall.

4B. EXPERIMENT ROOM 1

Light pours in through a huge hole in the far wall. The chamber is stuffed with alchemical and arcane equipment, much of it charred and smashed, as well as a long bench holding several cages, their bars turned black by flame.



Amidst some smashed glass cases against one wall are two large, open-topped clay jars. One of these is cracked, but the other is intact.

There are several blackened skeletons inside the cages. A **DC 14 Intelligence (Nature)** check will identify the bones as belonging to an immature **salamander**.

The cracked jar is empty, but the intact one contains pure blue water—and **2 water weirds** [**MM p299**]. These elemental guardians will emerge from the jar when an adventurer gets within 10', but will not attack unless the PC continues to approach, or behaves

threateningly. Destroying the jar (AC5, 10hp, vulnerable to bludgeoning) will also destroy the water weirds.

Adjusting this Encounter

APL 7: Add a water weird.

TREASURE

A **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check will uncover a *ring of warmth* amongst the debris from the glass cases (which are near the water weird's jar).

4C. EXPERIMENT ROOM 2

Experiment room 2 is the least damaged of the three.

It contains several pieces of lab equipment that would be worth **125gp** to an alchemist or specialist merchant. Tattered notes and modified equipment lie scattered around the room, and there is a faded diagram of the planes on the wall.

A PC studying the notes and making a **DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana)** check will deduce that Frander was working on a way to infuse elemental energy directly into a living being. If Gimble reads these notes, he will automatically reach the same conclusion (though he won't think to share this information unless asked).

4D. EXPERIMENT ROOM 3

Experiment room 3 is mostly ruined thanks to Frander's failed experiment (which involved opening portals to the elemental planes). Amongst the debris of equipment and furniture, a thick book lies on a collapsed bench.

The book contained Frander's research notes, though it is now badly damaged, and only two pages are intact and readable. They say:

Tonight, I will test my theories on one of the rodents obtained by Tobi on his last shopping trip. I have stabilized the portals and believe that the elemental siphon is now stable.

My calculations show that I must be careful to regulate the rate of energy infusion lest the reaction run wild. It needs to be balanced with life energy or it could rip a hole right through the material plane.

Still, nothing ventured, nothing gained! If this experiment is successful, then it represents a way for mortals to finally bend the elemental forces to...

5. GRIFFON NEST

Read the following:

The floor here is warped and cracked. Save for a few jagged remnants, the walls are missing altogether, leaving the upper portion of the tower hanging in the air above you, completely unsupported. The only way up is a rope ladder, which dangles down from some 30' above.

About 20' from the stairwell is a large nest, six or seven feet wide and fashioned from scraps of furniture and thick tree branches. It stands about chest-high to a human, and there is a pile of bones stacked haphazardly nearby.

The floorboards are very rotten in the southeast corner. A creature of size *medium* or larger standing on this area must succeed on a **DC 10 Dexterity** check or

fall through to the fourth floor, taking **2d6 bludgeoning** damage.

Climbing up the rope ladder will require a **DC 10 Strength (Athletics)** check. On failure, the PC falls back to the fifth floor and suffers **2d6 bludgeoning** damage.

A PC making a **DC 14 Intelligence (Nature)** check will determine that the nest belongs to a family of griffons.

Indeed, shortly after the adventurers enter the area, **4 griffon cubs** will pop their heads over the rim. Curious and clumsy, the downy little creatures will investigate the party, dropping awkwardly out of the nest, and bounding over with an excited squawking.

The cubs will attempt to climb up the adventurers' clothes and generally make a nuisance of themselves. Putting them back in the nest will upset them, with a **DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling)** check required to calm them down.

If they are put back in the nest without being calmed, or are cornered or threatened, they will cry out for their parents. An answering call will ring out in the distance and one minute later, **3 griffons** [MM p174] will fly onto the scene and attack any creature still on the fifth floor.

Adjusting this Encounter

APL 7: Add a griffon.

TREASURE

The griffons collected several shiny objects while building their nest. Amongst the rubbish is a *figurine*

GRIFFON CUBS

Use the statistics of an eagle [MM p322], but remove their flying speed.

Can I tame the cubs?

Griffons are notoriously hard to tame, even if they are raised from the moment the egg hatches. Though the cubs are friendly now, their instincts are very strong, and trying to control them will take a large amount of time, effort, and skill.

of wondrous power (silver raven). A **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** check is required to find this. The griffon cubs will squawk for their parents if the PCs enter the nest.

6A. PORTRAIT GALLERY

The rope ladder is securely anchored to the ceiling. Only half the floor in this room is intact. Hung upon the walls are several old portraits, which are too damaged to be worth anything.



Anyone examining the ceiling will realise that the rope ladder is attached to an *immovable rod* [DMG 175]. A DC 15 **Strength (Athletics)** check is required to climb the wall and retrieve the rod. If the PC fails the check badly, the DM may rule that they fall through the hole in the floor, back to **LOCATION 5**, suffering **2d6 bludgeoning** damage.

6B. LANDSCAPE GALLERY

This small gallery contains 4 landscape paintings—one of them shows a blue sky, another shows a storm-wracked ocean, the third shows an underground cavern with walls of glittering stone, and the final one shows a swirling mass of flame.

The landscapes are in reasonable condition, and are worth **35gp** each to a collector. They are 2' by 3' in size, and are awkward to carry.

Stairs on the east wall climb up to the next floor. The banister above them is broken and a figure lies on the stairs. A cursory glance will reveal that it is a shriveled, humanoid corpse wearing leather armor. It has an empty sheath and a pouch containing **13gp**.

A DC 14 **Intelligence (Nature)** check will identify that the corpse is that of a **githyanki**.

7A. LIBRARY

Read the following:

The staircase opens into a large wood-paneled chamber. The air is filled with the scent of old books, hundreds of which line the walls.

Four dusty plinths stand in the center of the room—three of which are topped with monstrous creatures, seemingly frozen in time. Two humanoid skeletons lie nearby.

A staircase on the west wall leads further up the tower, while a plain wooden door sits in the east wall.

A thick layer of dust covers everything.

BOOKS

There are hundreds of books stacked on the shelves. They cover a massive range of topics, but there is an especially large collection covering the elemental planes and magical theory.

Following are some sample titles:

- *Clamors & Expeditions* by Dorn Graybrook
- *Famous Etchings of the Dale* (collected by Elminster)
- *A Glossary of Dragon Names* by Aballister Bonaduce
- *The Seven Sleepers* by Bareris Anskuld
- *Art of the Old Empire*
- *The Book of Thori*
- *The Baatorian Folio of Askaz*
- *The Cery Incunabulum*
- *The Astral Enchiridion of Bykyro*
- *The Fiendish Manuscripts of Arcior*
- *The Alin Fragments*
- *The Elemental Esoterica of Cuni*

PLINTHS

The plinths are all labelled with dusty brass plaques. The one to the northwest contains a **gargoyle** [MM p140], the one to the northeast a **magmin** [MM

p212] and the one to the southwest a **water weird** [**MM p299**]. The creatures are all alive but have been magically paralyzed and preserved. They can be freed with *dispel magic* or a similar ability, with the enchantment on them counting as a fifth-level spell.

The final plinth appears to be empty but is labelled as containing an **invisible stalker** [**MM p192**]. If Frander's Portrait is there, it will assure them that the creature is quite real, and recommend they throw dust over it to see the outline.

AMBUSH!

The stalker is actually free and roaming the room, and will attack the party at a dramatically appropriate time.

TREASURE

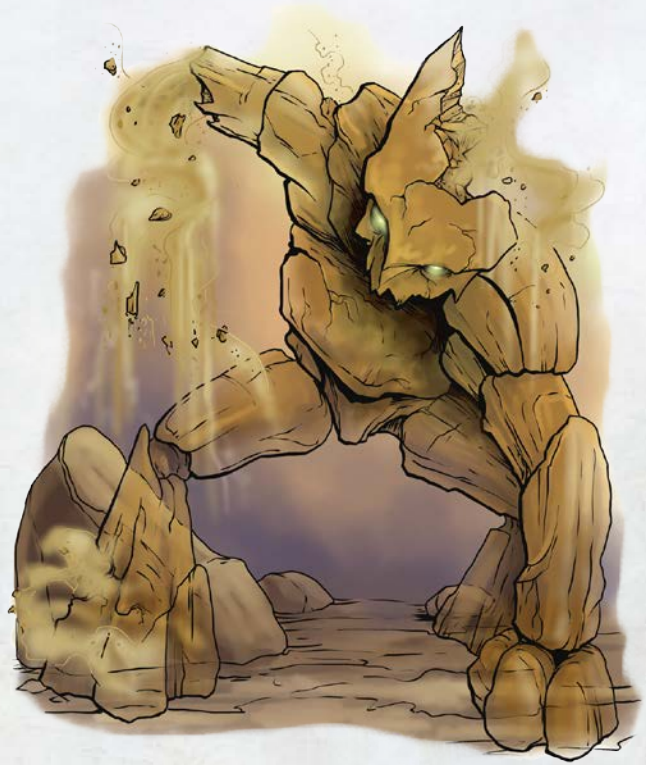
A **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check will locate one of Frander's minor spellbooks amongst the books. It contains these spells—*Locate Object*, *Magic Mouth*, *Major Image*, and *Telekinesis*.

7B. THE GARDEN

Read the following:

You find yourself outside, standing in a beautiful garden surrounded by a low stone wall. The perfect circle of wide green lawn is neatly trimmed and ringed with well-tended beds of roses in shades of white, pink, and yellow. Directly opposite the doorway, up against the wall, are a selection of artistically-positioned grey boulders.

One of the boulders is a **galeb duhr** [**MM 139**], which will roll out and greet the adventurers if they step



on the grass. It speaks a smattering of *common*. If the party is friendly, it will attempt to answer any questions they have. If attacked, it will respond in kind.

All it knows is that it has been tasked with tending to the gardens, a job it has been performing for more than 100 years. It has not seen Frander or Tobi in a very long time, but right before they disappeared, it heard something very loud coming from the very top of the tower.

The only other visitors it can recall were a band of humanoids who arrived on a skyship, some 50 years ago. The tower had started to fall, like it is now. The humanoids climbed the tower but did not come back down—the tower stopped falling after that. The skyship was towed along by the tower for a while, but was lost when the tower passed through a nasty storm.

These creatures were, in fact, githyanki sky pirates, though the galeb duhr does not know the species.

TREASURE

The galeb duhr owns a small cache of gemstones, which are buried near its resting place. The cache can be found with a **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check, and contains:

- a carnelian (60 gp)
- a citrine (50 gp)
- an onyx (50 gp)
- a zircon (55 gp)

8A. TREASURE VAULT

The stairs from the library come to this small landing before continuing up. A **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check here reveals a false panel in the wall. Once the panel is removed, a solid stone door is uncovered, with a golden plate in the middle with a keyhole. This can be opened with the **small golden key** (from **LOCATION 1A**), or can be picked with a **DC 17 Dexterity (Thieves Tools)** check.

Once unlocked, the stone door will swing open smoothly and reveal the following:

You see a small room, constructed from smooth grey stone. A half-dozen wooden chests lie in ruins on the floor. Only one remains intact—a plain-looking box tucked into the far corner.

In front of the chests are the charred remains of a strange three-legged creature

with long, stone teeth. It is clutching the remains of a metal object in its hands.

A **DC 15 Nature** or **Arcana** check will identify the creature as a **xorn** [**MM p304**]. If asked, Gimble can identify the creature and explain that it is a type of earth elemental that feeds on gems and precious metals.

The xorn is clutching an old brass oil lamp, which is engraved with arcane symbols. The front of the lamp has been bitten clean off. A **DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana)** check will suggest that it once housed a **djinni**.

THE STORY

The xorn escaped from the elemental earth plane during one of Frander's experiments. It freely moved about the tower, wading through the stone like water. It came to the vault, saw the brass lamp, and took a bite.

The djinni inside took exception to this, naturally, and blasted the xorn before looting the vault and fleeing to places unknown.

TREASURE

The only intact chest is small, plain, and unlocked.

Inside is a piece of parchment containing **Frander Skyhold's Last Will and Testament**. Though there is a very long and detailed list of beneficiaries, these have all been crossed through and replaced with a very short, handwritten note that leaves everything to "my apprentice Tobi, in return for years of service and his willingness to risk life and limb for the sake of progress."

A **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check will uncover a small jar of *Keoghtom's Ointment* beneath some litter, with 5 doses remaining.

8B. BEDROOM HALL

This area can only be accessed via the ladder from **LOCATION 9A**. The corridor is dark, and a large mirror hangs from the left-hand wall, reflecting the two doors opposite.

8C. TOBI'S ROOM

Read the following:

This small bedroom is cramped, untidy, and smells of mold. The bed is unmade and shabby robes lie in a pile on the floor.

A search of the room will find **15sp** in an old purse under the pile of robes. There is also a dresser against the wall. On the dresser is a cheap journal with the carefully calligraphed title of 'The Diary of Tobi Glumburton, Apprentice Wizard.'

A quick look through the diary shows dozens of pages detailing the tedious life of an apprentice—mostly arranging Frander's shopping, laundry, and cleaning—but the final entry is much more interesting.

It reads:

Dear diary,

Master Skyhold has made me an offer that I simply cannot refuse. His experiments to imbue a living creature with elemental power have been unsuccessful—but now he believes it is because the animals we have been experimenting on lack both

the willpower and vitality to regulate the elemental energy flow. Or something like that.

In any case, he has asked me to volunteer to be the next test subject. If it fails I imagine it will not be very good for me—but if it succeeds, I will become more powerful than I ever dreamed. Master Frander has promised to make me his heir regardless of how the experiment works out.

After all these years, fame and wealth and power will be mine... Tobi the great!

Oh, and I must remember to dispose of the trash tonight.

The entries are dated, but do not include a year.

8D. FRANDER'S ROOM

Read the following:

This bedroom is small but luxuriously appointed—or at least it used to be. Red silk sheets have rotted over the years, and the fine dresser has been reduced to a husk by woodworm.

The only thing that has escaped the ravages of time is a grey-blue cloak draped over the back of a plush chair. This is a *Cloak of the Manta Ray* [**DMG p159**] and is accompanied by a matching pair of goggles with glass lenses.

9A. LIVING QUARTERS

Read the following:

The chamber around you is dusty and decaying, but feels more homey than the rest of the tower. The winding staircase continues behind you, but in front you can see a tiny kitchen, more appropriate for a cottage than a vast tower, and a dining table that leans drunkenly on two collapsed legs. There are three levers set in the wall behind the table.

A wooden ladder is set into the western wall and descends through a wide trap door, while a glass door at the end of the room leads onto a balcony.

The three levers are marked 'Breakfast,' 'Lunch,' and 'Dinner.' Pulling a lever causes the users favorite meal to materialize on the dining table, and promptly slide onto the floor. Each lever only works once per day per person, with the plates and cutlery fading into mist after one hour.

The ladder is well-worn and leads to the Bedroom Hall (LOCATION 8B).

9B. BALCONY

Read the following:

The view from the balcony is both spectacular and horrifying. The teeming streets of Neverwinter are stretched out below you, with logjams everywhere as desperate people attempt to flee with their belongings. Beyond the city walls you see fields and meadows, and beyond that, the peaks of the Sword Mountains.

Mounted on the low wall directly in front of you is a crystalline orb, delicately carved with stylized clouds and howling winds.

The orb is a magical device that allows a spellcaster to commune with the spirits of the air. Determining its purpose and use requires a **DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana)** check.

By spending one minute channeling energy into the orb, a wizard, warlock, or sorcerer can cast *Commune with Nature* without expending any spell slots or components. This may only be used once per day.

The spirits of the air do not provide much information, but will certainly be able to reveal that there is a strong flow of energy from the elemental planes into the tower. They can also detect the presence of an extremely powerful elemental creature near the top of the tower.

10. THE CLOUD STAIRS

Read the following:

Once more you emerge into the open air. You stand on a flat span of grey stone with only a low stone wall protecting you from a sheer drop. Some 30' above you are the final few levels, held up by four vast struts that curve out over the void below.

There is a trap door visible in the level above you with a set of stone stairs beneath it, but the stairway ends after just a handful of steps.

You feel a lurch as the tower shifts beneath you and the buffeting winds howl around

you with renewed fury. Suddenly you see shimmering white steps appear in the air, seemingly formed from wisps of cloud. One by one, they complete the stairway to the level above.

The cloud stairs feel solid enough when an adventurer touches them, and can take the weight of even large creatures. However, anyone watching the stairs for a few minutes will realise that they fade in and out regularly, always from the bottom up.

Anyone making a **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation)** check will conclude that the stairs fade in and out on a 30-second cycle.

If someone climbs the stairs, they must make a **DC 12 Strength (Athletics)** check to reach the top before they fade out. If they fail the check, the stairs fade out beneath them, and they fall to the balcony below, taking **2d6 bludgeoning** damage.

The stairs are only wide enough for people to travel in single file. If more than one person climbs the stairs at once, have everyone make the athletics check. If anyone fails the check, not only do they fall, but so does everyone behind them!

The stairs lead to **LOCATION 11A**.

CHAPTER 3: THE RIFT CHAMBER

11A. ELEMENTAL LOUNGE

Read the following:

As you climb the final few steps, you emerge from the howling wind into almost complete silence. You are in an oval room, with low ceilings and floorboards of dark wood. Another spiral staircase winds up the far wall, flanked by a pair of doors.

Unlike the rest of the tower, this room seems clean and well-kept. To your right is a coal fire that burns away merrily in a hearth, warming a couch seemingly fashioned from a solid lump of stone.

Sculptures made from all manner of materials, from glass to marble, dot the room. Their subjects vary; one shows an orc in deep thought, another shows a dragon devouring several human beings, while yet another depicts a giant head, with its eyes closed.

A character examining the statues can make a **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation)** or **Wisdom (Perception)** check to determine that there are no chisel marks or other sign that tools wrought them.

The statues are of varying quality, but seem to get better the closer they are to the centre of the room, as though the creator was improving their skill over time

RUNNING OUT OF TIME!

If Gimble is with the party, he will check his magical altimeter and tell them the rate of descent is increasing!

(Frander was actually teaching a minor earth elemental how to sculpt).

As the party explores the room, a sudden gust of wind will blow open the door to the left of the staircase, which leads to the Study (**LOCATION 11B**). The other door, which leads to the Upper Hall (**LOCATION 11C**) is held shut by elemental power. Forcing it open requires a **DC 20 Strength** check. There is a trap door at the top of the spiral stairs, also requiring a **DC 20 Strength** check to open. It leads to **LOCATION 12**.

11B. STUDY

Read the following:

A trio of tall bookshelves stand against the far wall and a polished desk is in front of you. The smell of old leather and wood fill the air, and several sconces in the wall seem to burn without torch or candle.

A figure stands in the very middle of the room—a humanoid shape that flickers and blurs. One moment it seems formed of rippling water, then a cloud of steam, next a roaring fire, then glowing magma, grey stone, and then oozing mud.

Even as it changes, some parts stay the same. In the whirling chaos of its form you can make out the face of a young man.

“Erm... hello,” the creature says. “Will you take a seat?”

This strange creature is **Tobi Glumburton**, Frander’s former apprentice, or at least, something with his memories and personality.

He will invite the party to sit down, summoning stone chairs from the floor for them, and explain that, as they probably already know, there isn’t much time to sort things out.

His elemental powers are keeping the tower aloft, and have been for 100 years. However, maintaining those powers comes at a price—namely life force. Tobi doesn’t understand the details, but knows that he requires a regular infusion of life force to balance and regulate the massive elemental energy within him. Without, he will die, and the tower will fall from the sky.

His current stock of life force is almost dry. If the party wishes to save both Neverwinter, and the tower, they will need to supply some as soon as possible.

Though Tobi will try to avoid saying it directly, he is essentially demanding that he be given a sacrifice, or he will drop the tower on the city below.

Dealing with Tobi

Over the course of a conversation with the party, the nervous, elementally empowered apprentice may reveal the following:

ROLEPLAYING TOBI

Ideals: It’s important to preserve things as they are, especially Master Frander’s legacy—and my own existence.

Bond: I need to keep this tower safe, no matter the cost.

Flaws: I am incredibly guilty that Master Frander died to grant this power to me. My long isolation has driven me slightly insane.

- As far as he knows, the life force must come from a sentient creature. Previous experiments used creatures like rabbits and sheep, with disastrous consequences.
- The life force he is using currently came from a group of githyanki pirates who raided the tower several decades ago. They attacked him when he attempted to talk to them, so he defended himself.
- For the past few years he has been guiding the tower over lightly populated areas, in the vain hope that an intelligent, flying creature would alight.
- Bringing the tower to rest completely on the ground was too risky, as he was not sure he would have the energy to lift off again.
- When his energy reached critically low levels he decided to head to the nearest large population center (Neverwinter), hoping that somebody would come to investigate.
- He cannot travel very far from the site where the ritual was originally performed, so is restricted to level 11 and above. The state of the lower levels upsets him greatly.

- He can exert huge amounts of control over the elements, but keeping the tower in the air takes up a significant portion of his focus.
- A single person's life force will sustain him for ten years or so.

He will be reluctant to talk about what happened when he was initially transformed, and will be particularly upset if they ask about how Frander fared.

Getting him to reveal what really happened requires a **DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion)** check, which can be made with *advantage* if the group is carrying Frander's portrait. See the sidebar labeled "A Fateful Night."

Gimble Intervenes

If Gimble is still with the party, he will pull out a magical barometer and will stare at it intensely. After a few minutes, he will suddenly pipe up and ask that the group be allowed to talk privately for a moment. With a small amount of persuasion, Tobi will agree.

*If Gimble read the research notes in **LOCATION 4C**,* he tells the party that he believes the enchantment that keeps the tower aloft *should* be permanent and should *not* require Tobi's intervention. He has detected a massive elemental energy source above them, and it seems that this is *interfering* with the elevation enchantment. If they shut down the disruptive energy source, the tower will stop falling.

Regardless of whether Gimble read the research notes, he will tell the party that he can probably pilot the tower away from the city if they can get him to the control room.

A FATEFUL NIGHT

As the party knows, the tower used to belong to Frander Skyhold. Frander's obsession with elemental magic led him to uncover a way to imbue a living creature with raw, elemental power.

After a rough beginning, including having most of his lab sucked into a planar void, the elementalist honed his technique. Unwilling to test it on himself, however, he asked his bedraggled apprentice Tobi to volunteer.

The experiment turned out to be a partial success, with Tobi being transformed into an elemental creature with fantastic powers. However, controlling the elemental forces required a strong reservoir of life force, and the transformation had exhausted most of Tobi's. Frander sacrificed himself to keep his apprentice from dissipating.

Tobi has now spent more than a century drifting across the realms, topping up his life force as the opportunity presented itself. This was not the existence he dreamed of, and he misses his old master terribly. On the other hand, he does not wish to die....

If Gimble is not with the party, they will need to improvise—fast!

In any case, they will need to get past Tobi, who is impatiently waiting for his sacrifice.

Options

The party now has a few options:

- They can offer up a sacrifice (or pretend to). In this case, Tobi will lead them up to the Rift Chamber (**LOCATION 13**).

- They can attack Tobi. He will be a difficult opponent to defeat, especially for lower-level parties; see the end of the adventure for Tobi's stats.
- They can try to save their own lives by fleeing the tower. In this case, they will suffer psychic damage as per the *geas* spell (if bound by it). When Tobi realizes they are escaping, he will desperately attack the weakest member of the party.
- If they manage to destroy or bypass Tobi, they can head up to the Rift Chamber (**LOCATION 13**) and try and close the rift.
- Alternatively, if they can get Gimble to the control room (**LOCATION 11D**), he can try and fly the tower away from the city before it crashes.
- The party may come up with something completely unexpected; if so, remember that creative ideas should always be rewarded!

Adjusting this Encounter

APL 6 or 7: Add a fire elemental.

11C. UPPER HALL

Read the following:

This plainly decorated hall is lit with grey light streaming in through clear windows. There are five doors, three of which are decorated with plaques reading *Study*, *Lounge*, and *Control Room*.

The remaining two doors lead to the Upper Deck (**LOCATION 11E**).

11D. CONTROL ROOM

Read the following:

Before you is a small, narrow chamber with panels of polished wood. The only light source is a glowing dot shining on a beautiful map, directly over the city of Neverwinter. Another panel is covered in various dials and a confusing array of knobs, buttons, and levers.

There is a glass case hanging on one of the walls.

If Gimble is with the party, after a few moments of concentration, he will state that he thinks he can fly the tower.

Piloting the tower away from the city requires an extended skill check. Gimble needs to make a **DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana)** check every round; if he succeeds three times before he fails three times, the tower successfully clears the city walls before crashing.

Get the players to take turns rolling for Gimble, who gets a **+6** on Arcana checks. If someone with Arcana assists Gimble, he gains *advantage* on the rolls.

If Gimble is not with the party, a PC making a **DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana)** check will be able to figure out how to control the tower's flight. At that point, the extended skill check described above will be required.

On failure, the party is unable to pilot the tower clear of the city, and a crash is imminent.

TREASURE

The glass case on the wall contains a half-dozen rings. A brass plaque above it reads FOR USE IN EMERGENCIES. These are all *Rings of Featherfall*, and automatically cast *Featherfall* on a creature wearing

one if they fall for more than 15 ft. They have only one charge, and do not automatically recharge.

11E. UPPER DECK

Read the following:

A wooden deck, some 25' wide, runs all around the tower, with only a thick strand of rope running between fence posts protecting people from falling.

The descent through the clouds has left it wet and slippery, so any creature moving more than half their speed in a single turn must make a **DC 10 Dexterity** saving throw. If they fail, they fall prone.

Anybody knocked off the deck must succeed on a **DC 14 Dexterity** saving throw to grab the rope as they pass it. On failure, there is a 50% chance they will fall to the garden on level 7, 40' below. Otherwise, they will fall to the magic cloud stuff 100' below.

12. TOWER

Read the following:

The spiral staircase climbs through the final stages of the tower. A strange humming noise comes from above as the walls bend in to create a bottleneck that closes around a small trapdoor in the ceiling.

There is nothing of interest in this area.

13. RIFT CHAMBER

Read the following:

The humming noise gets louder and louder, and as you enter the room, it becomes almost deafening.



The chamber itself is cone-shaped, with the timber beams of its roof coming together at the very top. There, hanging in the air, is a boiling, bubbling rift of energy. Multi-hued tongues of flame lick out of the jagged rent, as does a spray of fine mist and puffs of crumbling sand.

On the floor are scattered bones and the remnants of armor. These mortified remains are strewn about haphazardly, except for one withered body sitting in a tall chair against the wall.

The corpse in the chair belongs to Frander, and is wearing a faded cloak embroidered with elemental

symbols. The bones on the floor are all that's left of the githyanki pirates.

The peak of the tower, and the rift, is about 20 ft. up in the air. Any creature that gets within 5 ft. of the rift takes **1d6 fire** damage and **2d6 bludgeoning** damage each turn.

If Tobi is in the Rift Chamber, he can drain the life force from one restrained, helpless, or willing creature. The process requires him to concentrate as though he were maintaining a spell, and kills the target at the end of one minute.

Closing the Elemental Rift requires an arcane spellcaster to pass an extended skill check. They need to make a **DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana)** check every round; if they succeed three times before they fail three times, they close the rift. If Gimble assists, they gain *advantage* on the rolls.

Tobi is always aware of the rift's state. If the adventurers have somehow snuck past him, and are attempting to close the rift secretly, he will immediately rush to this chamber, prepared to fight.

If the rift is closed, the tower's descent will slow and eventually stop. With his energy supply cut off, Tobi will lose 5% of his hit points every round until he is destroyed.

If the party fails to close the rift, they might still have time to rush to the Control Room (**LOCATION 11D**) and attempt to guide the tower away from the city.

HEY—WE'VE GOT A TOWER!

If the party closes the rift, it may occur to them that they now possess a functioning (if battered) floating tower. Indeed, they might simply fly off in it without returning to Neverwinter at all.

If this fits with your campaign, you might permit them to keep it. If not, you've a couple of options to take it off their hands. The controls might start to fail after a few days—finally worn out after a hundred years. Or the Griffon Cavalry of Waterdeep might show up on the doorstep to take possession of the tower, the Lord's Alliance having realised what a dangerous weapon it is.

Escaping the Tower

The most obvious way to escape Skyhold is with the *Rings of Featherfall* in the Control Room (**location 11D**).

Alternatively, if the party managed to avoid fighting the family of **griffons**, they may be able to implore the creatures to bring them back down to the ground. The **galeb duhr** gardener may also encase them in a ball of soft earth that protects them from the impact.

Creatures still in the tower if it makes an uncontrolled crash landing take **20d6 bludgeoning** damage. If the landing is reasonably controlled, reduce the damage by half.

Conclusion

Should the party fail in its task, the city of Neverwinter will be devastated by the falling tower. Thousands of its residents will be killed, and the survivors will begin the slow process of once again rebuilding the great city. Belifrey will be furious with the party for their failure, and will accuse them of not trying. She will banish them from the city and will treat them harshly if they cross paths in the future. Even poor Gimble will not escape her wrath.

If the party prevents the tower from falling on Neverwinter, Belifrey will see that they are paid in full and will declare that she owes them a massive favor. Their extraordinary deed will be celebrated in the city for many weeks.

NEW MONSTERS

Tobi Glumburton

Medium elemental, lawful neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 102 (12d10 +36)

Speed 30'

Str	Dex	Con	Int	Wis	Cha
16 (+3)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	17 (+3)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Senses darkvision 60', passive Perception 10

Languages Aquan, Auran, Common, Ignan, Terran

Challenge 5 (1,800 xp)

Dual Nature Tobi is considered a native of both the material and elemental planes

Eternal Energy When Tobi is reduced to 0 hit points he does not die. Instead he is reduced to a form of pure energy that is completely invulnerable, reforming his body in an unoccupied space within 10' of the elemental rift. He loses this ability if the Rift is closed.

Elemental Form As a bonus action on his turn Tobi can switch between several elemental forms which bestow various benefits and alter which Elemental Strike he can use:

- **Fire Form:** Tobi gains immunity to fire damage, a fly speed of 30' and sheds bright light in a 30' radius
- **Earth Form:** Tobi's AC increases to 17 and he gains a burrow speed of 30' which allows him to pass through nonmagical earth and stone without disturbing the material
- **Water Form:** Tobi gains immunity to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons, and can move through a space as narrow as one inch wide without squeezing
- **Air Form:** Tobi gains a flying speed of 60' and becomes invisible while not moving

Spawn Mephits When Tobi changes Elemental Form, he can choose to create 1d4-1 mephits. They appear in an unoccupied space within 5' of Tobi and follow his commands, taking their turns at initiative count 0. The type of mephits spawned will depend on the forms he has switched between.

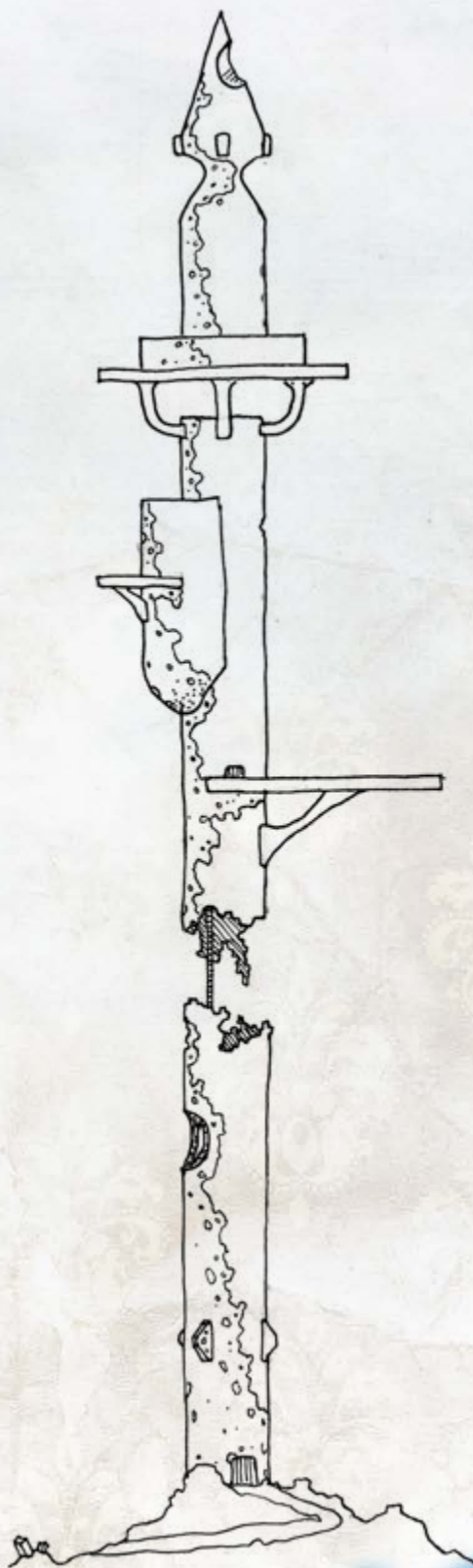
- Earth/Air: Dust Mephit
- Water/Air: Ice Mephit
- Earth/Fire: Magma Mephit
- Earth/Water: Mud Mephit
- Air/Fire: Smoke Mephit
- Water/Fire: Steam Mephit

Elemental Combo. Tobi uses his Elemental Strike ability twice. He can split these up throughout his turn, allowing him to switch form between uses.

Elemental Strike. Tobi lashes out with elemental force. The exact nature of this depends on his form at the time.

- *Earth Grasp:* Stone erupts from the floor or walls and attempts to grab one creature within 60'. The target must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage and be restrained until the start of Tobi's next turn (escape DC 15). When a creature is restrained in this way Tobi can use this ability again to move them up to 30'.
- *Fire Wave:* A 15-foot cone of fire bursts from Tobi's body. Each creature in the area must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (3d6) fire damage.
- *Water Jet:* Tobi fires a line of water 5' wide and 30' long. All creatures in the line must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.
- *Air Blast:* A creature within 30' of Tobi must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be pushed 15' away from him. If this movement is blocked (by a wall or heavy furniture, for example) the target takes 10 (3d6) bludgeoning damage.

MAPS



5



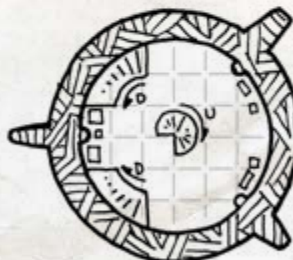
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3



2



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