

TOWER IN TURMOIL

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 7TH TO 9TH LEVEL



TOWER IN TURMOIL

AN ADVENTURE FOR CHARACTERS OF 7TH TO 9TH LEVEL



OWER IN TURMOIL IS A FIFTH EDITION adventure for three to six characters of 7th to 9th level, optimized for a party of four 8th-level characters. A watchtower in the city of Dorran has been struck by a lightning bolt which has opened a portal to the Elemental Plane of Air. The guards posted at the tower are outmatched against the elemental forces that now run rampant within its walls. This adventure is set in the city of Bharzul in the Cartosia campaign setting, but the names of people, places, and locations can be changed to adapt the adventure to any high-fantasy urban environment.

BACKGROUND

Four towers, connected by slender sky bridges and colloquially dubbed the Towers of Isolation, stand watch over the city of Bharzul. The solitary sentinels are manned by dedicated guard companies, who endure months of solitude, their only contact with the city being reports dispatched through arcane means. As the city's first line of defense, these towers provide a vantage point to spot any threats beyond the mountain range. Equipped with ballistae and other siege weaponry, they stand ready to counter ground and aerial threats with lethal accuracy. The towers also serve a more somber role – should the city fall, the towers can rain deadly volleys upon the overrun streets, becoming also its last bastion of defense. This dual role necessitates their isolation—any breach severely compromises the city's defensive capabilities. It is commonly said that these four towers, perched high above the city, reach for the clouds and succeed in grasping them. Yet, in their grand ascent to the heavens, the towers invite the ire of the sky.

In the fabric of reality, the Elemental Planes and the Material Plane exist as interweaving threads, separate yet connected by unseen seams. Under very rare and specific circumstances, a powerful force of nature can jolt these threads, causing a temporary rift between the planes. The surge of raw elemental energy can open a conduit, allowing beings from the Elemental Planes to traverse into the Material Plane. The Towers of Isolation are frequently hit by lightning. But hours ago, the northwest tower was struck by a bolt so powerful as to jolt the threads of planar reality. As the forces of the Elemental Plane of Air poured through the new rift, the guards scrambled to defend themselves. The tower's mage sent out a distress signal before being killed in their attempts to seal the breach. Now, those who remain at the tower are locked in a struggle for survival, where every minute counts.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

There are numerous reasons the party may be called to action to address the situation at the Tower of Isolation. A few of these reasons are outlined below:

Familiar to the Authorities. The party is already familiar with the city authorities, who have come to trust and respect the party. As the elemental disturbance is beyond the capability of the guard to adequately address, the party is called to intervene. If successful, they may be granted honorary titles or a handsome sum of gold.

A Debt to Pay. One of the guards stationed at the Tower of Isolation is an old friend or former companion of a party member. They managed to send a distress message directly to the party, pleading for help as the tower succumbs to the elemental chaos. The party is asked to intervene to save their friend and the rest of the guards.

Dire Prophecy. A local oracle is struck with a vision of the city's destruction, originating from the Tower of Isolation. The oracle, respected and feared by the city's populace, insists that the party intervene to prevent this looming disaster. If the party heeds the word of the oracle, they arrive at the tower in the immediate aftermath of the lightning strike.

GENERAL FEATURES

The Tower of Isolation consists of several levels connected by an elevator, each dedicated to the living and working needs of the guard company, with some areas serving solely for the purpose of defense. In the aftermath of the lightning strike, the tower is in turmoil. Micro-storms rage within it, and many rooms have been damaged and partially flooded in the chaos. The general features of the tower are as described below, unless otherwise stated.

Ceilings, Walls, and Floors. The tower is constructed primarily from sturdy, grey stone. Ceilings are uniformly 10 feet high, while the walls are adorned with the city's emblems and the insignia of the guard. The floors are made of the same stone, kept polished and smooth by the constant traffic of guards.

Doors. Doors within the tower are heavy oak, reinforced with iron bands. They feature the city's emblem and are built to withstand a siege. They have AC 17 and 30 hit points. All doors are unlocked for ease of movement and open inward, into the rooms they connect.

Light. Scones holding everburning torches are mounted on the walls, providing bright light throughout the tower. During times of alert, these can be dimmed to a soft glow.

Micro-storms. Elemental energies pouring through the rift have created micro-storms that rage within the tower. Violent wind blows and torrential rain falls throughout, at times limiting visibility and impeding movement. When an area in the tower is under the influence of a micro-storm, all creatures have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight, and any creature that attempts to move more than half its speed on a turn must make a successful DC 12 Strength (Athletics) saving throw or have their movement speed reduced by half.

The following areas are keyed to the provided map of the Tower of Isolation:

I. TOWER ENTRANCE

As the characters travel along the adjoining skybridge and come within site of the tower's doors, read aloud the following:

Stone stairs rise before you to a platform mounted with two ballistas pointed in your direction. A pair of flaming braziers flank the doors of the tower, which are held ajar by rushing wind, the heavy iron quivering in the force of the gale. The bodies of two guards lie sprawled across the steps, their forms twisted and broken.

The two guards that man the doors to the tower attempted to enter when they became aware of the commotion inside. They were quickly beaten by the elemental forces within, their bodies thrown from the platform beyond the doors by the powerful winds. A character who makes a successful DC 10 Wisdom Medicine check, however, can confirm that one guard remains alive, if only barely. This guard's life can be saved with a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Medicine) check or if they receive at least five points of healing. They return to consciousness in 1d4 hours.

2. LOWER PLATFORM

Water rushes into this chamber from the skybridge's canals and cascades over the edges of a large circular elevator platform in the center of the room. The elevator shaft in the ceiling provides limited view to the upper levels of the tower, and frantic shouting can be heard coming from above.

The water funneled into this room falls hundreds of feet toward the base of the tower, where it provides power to the large wheels that raise and lower the elevator. As a defense measure, however, the elevator's only activating lever mechanism is on the above level.

Encounter: Elevator Elementals. Three **air elementals**, released by the portal opened in the lightning strike, fly about this room in a frenzy and attack any creatures that enter the area. They fight until they are destroyed.

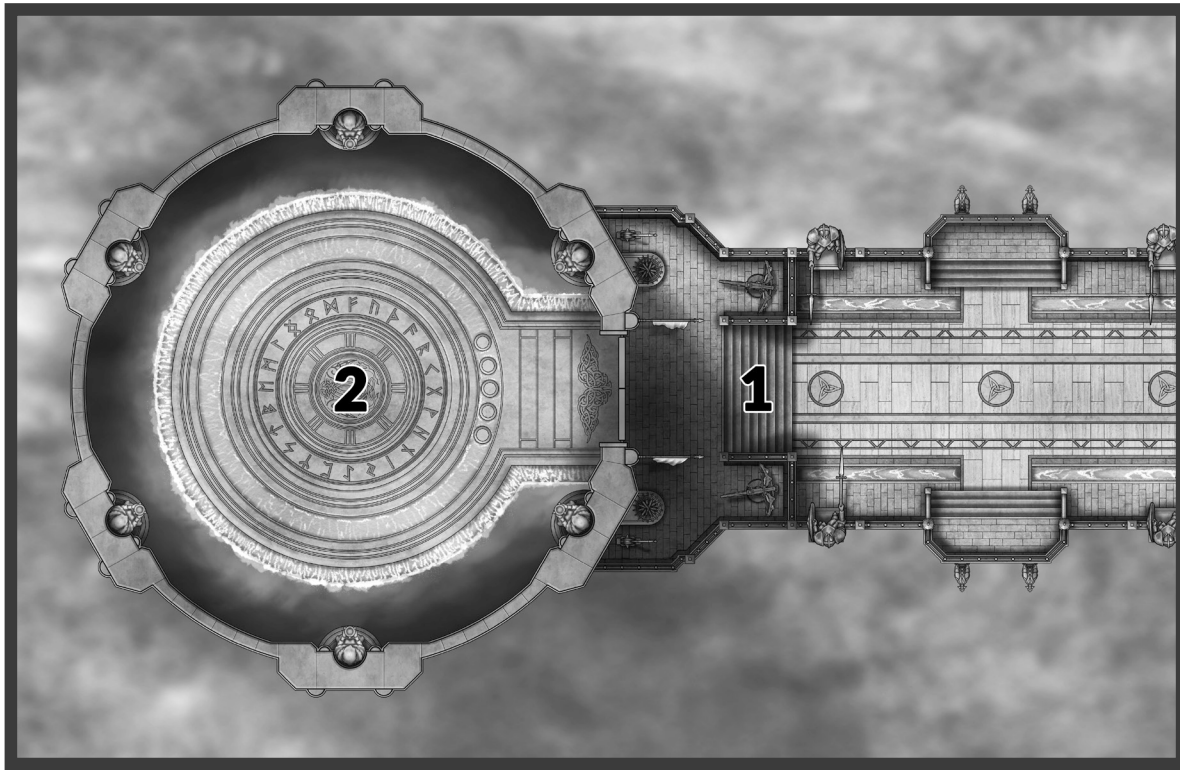
Raising the Elevator. The only way the party can raise the elevator is by getting the attention of one of the guards above. If they shout for assistance, a woman named Greta Blackwood responds, looking to clarify their identities and intentions, but eager to take the chance on anyone claiming to offer assistance in such a dire situation. As long as the party is non-hostile, Greta pulls the lever from above and the elevator begins to ascend to the second level of the tower.

MISSION BRIEFING

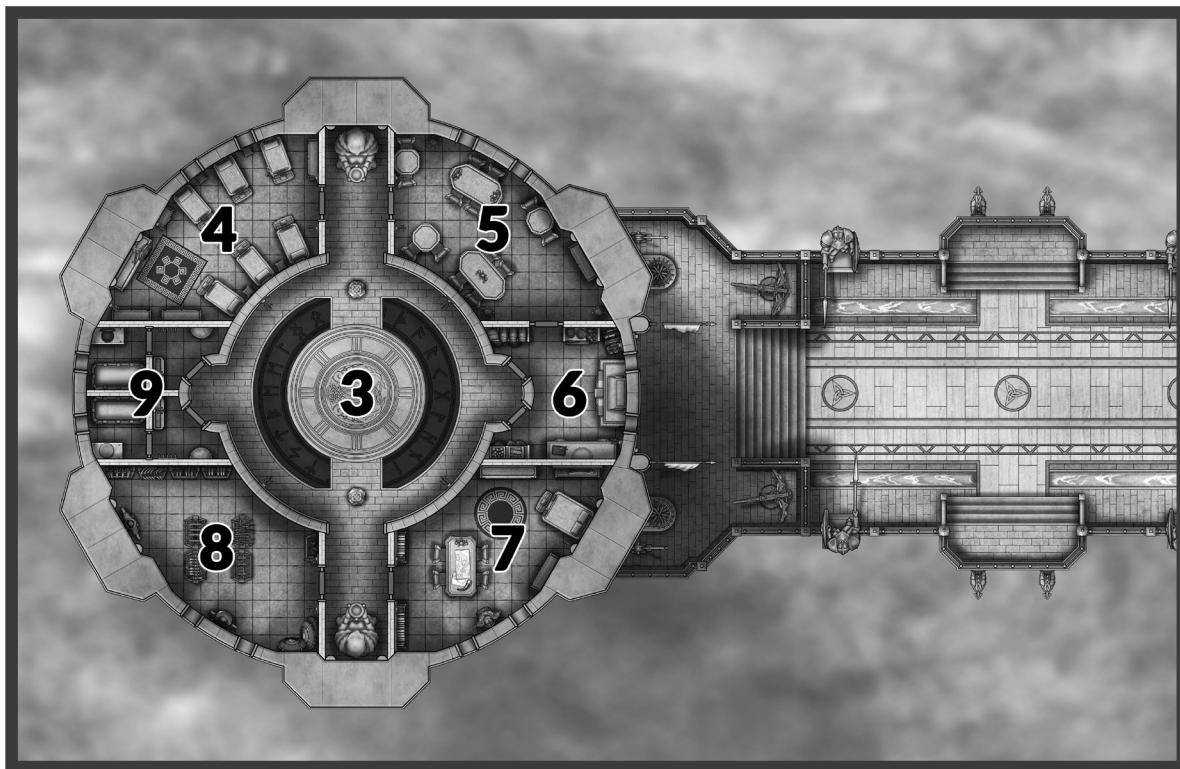
The winds that greeted the party at the entrance of the tower continue unabated on the second floor, and heavy rain falls from clouds that have formed just below the tower's ceiling. The party is greeted by Greta Blackwood, who quickly ushers them into the adjoining room that is the kitchen, while another guard props its door open with all of his might to allow everyone to pass through. As the kitchen door closes behind them, the party finds themselves in the only room of relative calm within the tower. Three other guards are present here, each of them nursing non-life-threatening injuries. Greta can explain the following information to the party while the storm rages just beyond the door:

- Just a short time ago, the tower was struck by lightning. This happens frequently, but this time, some sort of rift was opened to the Elemental Plane of Air.
- The tower mage quickly realized that elemental forces were pouring through the rift, causing further tears in the planar fabric.
- The tower mage and a contingent of the guard attempted to ascend the tower to close the rift, but the elementals were too strong and the tower mage was slain. The guards retreated back down and attempted to fend off smaller

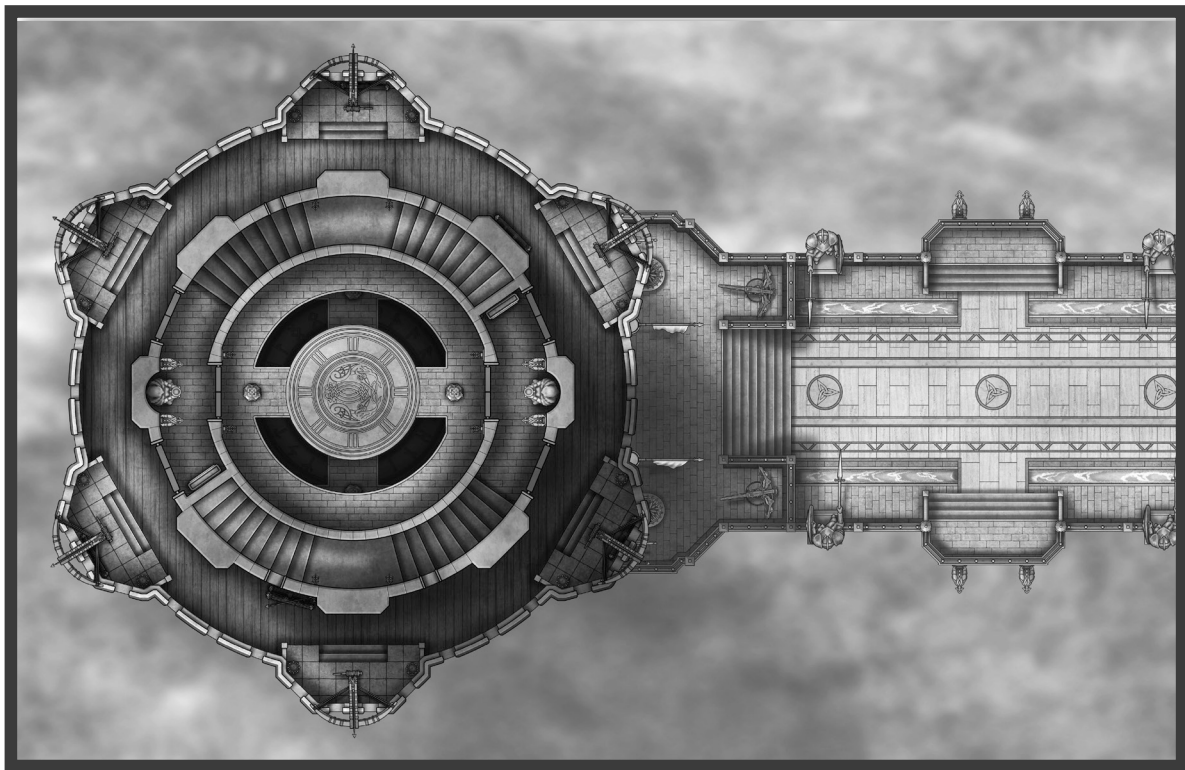
TOWER FIRST LEVEL



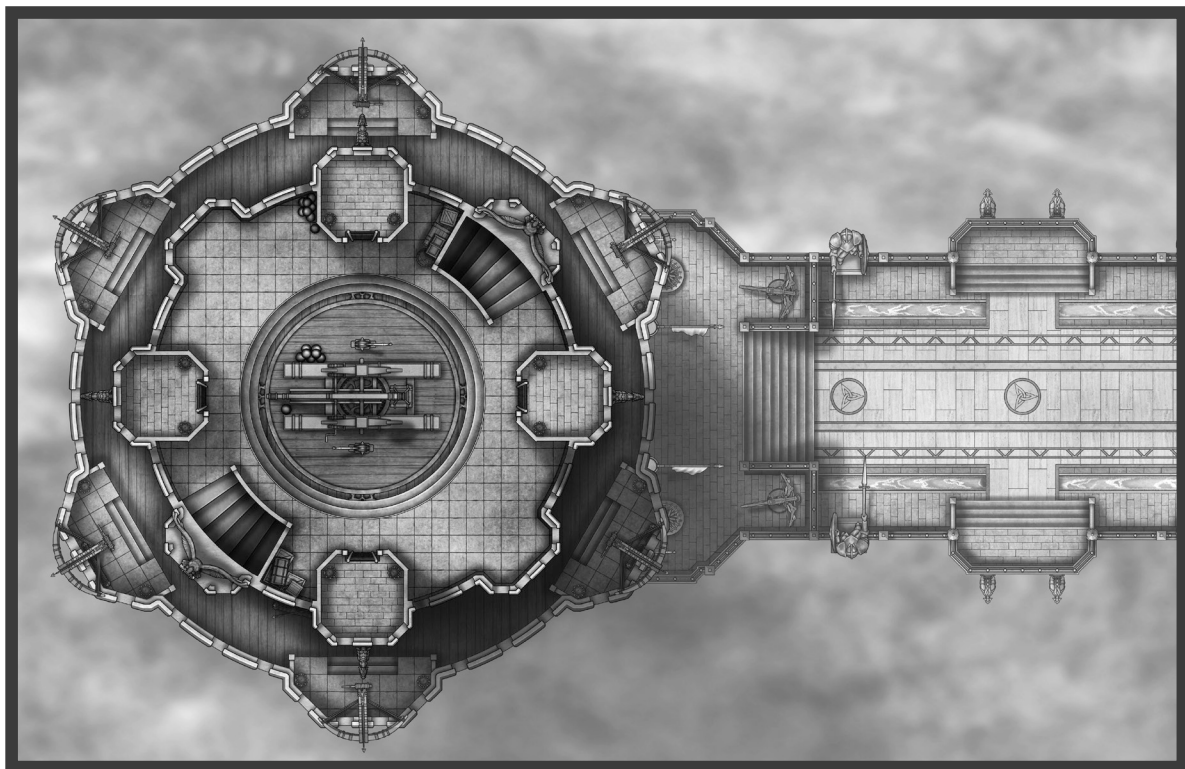
TOWER SECOND LEVEL



TOWER THIRD LEVEL



TOWER FOURTH LEVEL



elementals attempting to open secondary tears in the fabric.

- The rift at the top of the tower must be closed, but the elevator can't travel any higher unless the storm that rages within the tower is calmed somewhat. The guard needs the party's help in closing at least one of the secondary tears at this level of the tower.
- The guards are overwhelmed. Several of them are still scattered throughout the tower under overturned debris, facing assault by the rain, winds, and elementals. No person should be left behind—while the party works to close the tears, they should also work toward getting the rest of the guards to safety.

CALMING THE STORM

Elemental forces run rampant throughout this level of the tower. Before the elevator can be raised any further, they must be quelled. But quelling these elemental forces is no easy task, and simply moving through the tower is difficult enough due to the conditions. The party must complete a skill challenge to move throughout the tower in search of a secondary tear, quell the elemental forces, and rescue any guards in distress.

To succeed in this skill challenge, the party needs to accumulate six successful skill checks. Potential skill checks and their DCs are listed below. The GM is encouraged to consider any suggestions from the players, assigning an appropriate DC at their discretion.

Athletics/Acrobatics (DC 15): With the intense winds and destabilized structure, moving through the tower is challenging. On a successful check, a character is able to maneuver through debris, hold onto or leap over shaky structures, or even anchor oneself against powerful gusts.

Arcana (DC 14): Chaotic patterns of elemental energies swirl throughout the tower, obstructing movement and posing a hazard. On a successful check, a character is able to identify these patterns. Recognizing the ebb and flow of the rift's influence, they begin to weave a counter-rhythm with their own magic, either drawing upon arcane energy within themselves or channeling it through a focus or implement. This counter-rhythm acts like a dampening field, making it easier to move and navigate through the tower.

Religion (DC 17): Characters can appeal to the powers of order and stability to shield the party from the elemental fluctuations. On a successful check, a meditative prayer is answered, and the elemental energies in the party's immediate vicinity are temporarily calmed.

Medicine (DC 15): Guards are scattered throughout the tower, injured by debris or the elemental chaos. On a successful check, a character is able to locate and stabilize an injured or shocked guard sufficiently enough so that they are able to assist in the calming effort.

Persuasion/Intimidation (DC 16): There are terrified and disoriented guards within the tower. On a successful check, a character is able to calm them, get useful information, or convince them to help in the calming effort.

Perception/Investigation (DC 16): Spotting safe paths or hidden dangers amid the chaos will be key to the party's survival. On a successful check, a character is able to notice structural weaknesses, locate safer routes, or identify dangerous elemental manifestations before they pose a threat.

Failure Consequences. Each failed check represents a setback in the effort to navigate through the tower. For every two failures, or any single failure by 5 or more, the elemental forces within the tower manifest directly in opposition to the party and fight until they are destroyed. Refer to the Elemental Manifestations table to determine the nature of the encounter.

Success Rewards. The only limit to the number of failures the party can accumulate during the skill challenge is how many elemental manifestations they can fight off before being defeated. Succeeding in the skill challenge means that the party has located and reached a secondary tear, which they can now work towards closing.

ELEMENTAL MANIFESTATIONS

To determine the nature of an encounter during the skill challenge, roll once to determine the creatures, and again to determine the approximate location in the tower where the encounter takes place. If a perimeter location has previously been rolled, the GM may roll again. Alternatively, GMs can select their preferred options.

d8	Creatures	Location
1	Three air elementals	Elevator Platform (Area 3)
2	Four thunderhounds (use winter wolf statistics, they deal lightning instead of cold damage)	Sleeping Quarters (Area 4)
3	Two air elementals and three lightning imps (use imp statistics, they deal lightning instead of poison damage)	Mess Hall (Area 5)
4	Two air elementals and three storm-bound specters (use specter statistics, they deal lightning instead of necrotic damage)	Elevator Platform (Area 3)
5	Three wind whisperers (use ghost statistics, they deal lightning instead of necrotic damage)	Captain's Quarters (Area 7)
6	One air elemental and two wind whisperers (use ghost statistics, they deal lightning instead of necrotic damage)	Armory (Area 8)
7	One air elemental and three electrowisps (use will-o'-wisp statistics, they deal lightning instead of necrotic damage)	Bathrooms (Area 9)
8	Five electrowisps (use will-o'-wisp statistics, they deal lightning instead of necrotic damage)	Elevator Platform (Area 3)

CLOSING THE TEAR

After the party has accumulated six successful checks, they reach the location of a secondary tear. To determine the location of this tear, roll or choose an area from the Elemental Manifestations table that the party has not previously had an encounter within.

Hovering a few feet above the ground is an opened seam in the planar fabric, no more than a few feet across. Wisps of grey mist seep out from the rift, curling and twisting in the air, their forms suggesting outlines of unseen, extraplanar entities. The air seems to vibrate with magic; a pressure you can feel in your chest. Occasional sparks of lightning crackle from the edges of the fissure, dancing along the floor and walls before dissipating.

Two **air elementals** hover beside the open seam, their wispy forms coursing with small bolts of lightning that jump back and forth between them and the tear. A character who makes a successful DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana or Investigation) check can discern that the tear is held open by their life forces. Destroying the air elementals will close the tear and calm the chaos enough for the party to take the tower's elevator to its top level. Once the party engages in combat with the air elementals, beginning in the second round and repeating each round until the air elementals are defeated and the portal is closed, three electrowisps (use **will-o'-wisp** statistics, they deal lightning instead of necrotic damage) emerge from the portal on Initiative Count 10 and join in defending the tear against the party.

Closing this tear means that this level of the tower becomes significantly less hostile as much of the elemental energies quickly begin to dissipate. Rain continues to fall and wind to blow, but not at the violent levels previously.

ASCENDING THE TOWER

Once the secondary tear has been closed, the elevator can be taken to the tower's lookout level, which leads to its rooftop. Once the party reconnects with Greta, she is eager to show them the levers used to control the elevator. Greta's preference is for her and the rest of the guard to remain on this level of the tower, so that they can defend against any other elementals attempting to open more tears. Furthermore, Greta is not confident in the guard's ability to provide much help in combat against the forces of the rift above, given that their mage was felled so swiftly during their initial attempt and their weapons are of limited use against the elemental energies. If, however, the party really wants the help, they can convince Greta and another guard to join them in their ascent of the tower with a successful DC 18 Charisma (Persuasion) check. The guards are veterans, and Greta is a veteran with 80 hit points.

The elevator ascends to the tower's outer platform level. Once there, the party will have to climb the steps that rise to

its lookout point, bracing themselves against the winds and rain along the way that become ferocious in intensity at the tower's peak.

CLOSING THE RIFT

When the party climbs the staircase and reaches the top of the tower, read aloud the following:

Your senses are assaulted by the raw, unchecked force of elemental energy. Above you, a massive rift in the fabric of reality yawns wide, the edges sparking with incandescent electricity. The breach pulses and undulates, thunderous energy cascading from it in waves that ripple through the air. Below this maelstrom, the shattered remnants of a trebuchet lie scattered, the mighty siege weapon reduced to splinters by the onslaught of the storm. Amidst this chaos, a creature of elemental fury takes form. It is a serpentine dragon wrought of storm clouds and searing lightning, its body a twisting tempest that crackles and roars with the sound of a thousand thunderclaps. Each move it makes is punctuated by a flash of blinding light, illuminating its terrifying form against the stormy backdrop of the rift.

Characters who look around the platform and make a successful DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check can spot the broken body of the tower's mage lying under a piece of trebuchet debris. The serpentine form that coils itself around the rift is a lightning elemental, the essence of which provides the energy necessary to keep the rift open. Under normal circumstances, spontaneous rifts close within a matter of minutes, but in rare circumstances such as this when powerful forces find their way through, rifts can be held open indefinitely by the force of their presence. To close the rift, the party must destroy the lightning elemental. The lightning elemental uses **young blue dragon** statistics, with the following modifications:

- Its type is elemental
- It is resistant to nonmagical weapon damage
- **New Feature: Storm Form.** The elemental can enter a hostile creature's space and stop there. It can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.
- **New Feature: Electric Discharge.** When a creature touches the elemental or hits it with a melee attack while within 5 feet of it, that creature takes 5 (1d10) lightning damage

Once the party engages in combat with the lightning elemental, beginning in the second round and repeating each round until the air elementals are defeated and the portal is closed, two electrowisps (use **will-o'-wisp** statistics, they deal lightning instead of necrotic damage) emerge from the portal on Initiative Count 10 and join in defending the rift against the party. The lightning elemental fights until it is destroyed. When reduced to 0 hit points, it dissipates with a deafening thunderclap, and the rift quickly begins to dissolve, the surrounding weather rapidly calming until all is still.

AFTERMATH

If the party successfully destroys the lightning elemental and consequently closes the rift, the threat facing the city is eliminated. The party is likely to be recognized by the authorities as city heroes, and honored with a public ceremony and accompanying reward of gold, land, or titles at GM discretion. If instead the party was unsuccessful in destroying the lightning elemental and were killed or had to retreat, the threat swells as increasing energy pours through the rift from the Elemental Plane of Air. Depending on the setting and the authorities' ability to respond, the entire city might face disastrous flooding and an overwhelming force of elementals that can only be subdued by the realm's greatest heroes. If intervention at that point is unsuccessful, it's possible that the city is either entirely destroyed or so damaged that recovery and rehabilitation efforts take years.

REFERENCES

This work includes material taken from the System Reference Document 5.1 (“SRD 5.1”) by Wizards of the Coast LLC and available at <https://dnd.wizards.com/resources/systems-reference-document>. The SRD 5.1 is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>.

CREDITS

Written by: Alexander LeFort of TavernTales

Map by: Tom Cartos

Art: Shutterstock

InDesign Base Template: Nathaniel Roux