



Secrets of Fire 3

The Tower of Babble

Product Tie-In: Fireborn Gamemaster's Guide

Authors: Roberta Olson and Rob Vaughn

A bright and shining tower has arisen in London, and the players are drawn to it like a moth to the fire. What secrets does this bastion of wealth and technology hold? They say that those who built it dabble in the occult . . . but do they use it, or does it use them?

The Tower of Babble is an introductory scion adventure for the Fireborn roleplaying game. This adventure premiered at Gen Con Indy 2005.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Jared Apollo and Xavier Lyon are publicly known as two of the United Kingdom's most successful entrepreneurs. Their company, Apollo & Lyon International, handle advertising, merchandising, and representation for several of Europe's hottest commodities and celebrities. They are young, ambitious, and eminently marketable, and their meteoric rise to fame and wealth have placed them at the tops of who's who lists on both sides of the Big Pond as well as in Southeast Asia.

Five years ago, Apollo & Lyon International launched its most ambitious subsidiary: Babble On Entertainment. Through Babble On, Jared and Xavier produce television shows and movies, coordinate advertising campaigns, and orchestrate transcontinental tours of the world's most popular and successful entertainers. Everything is controlled from gleaming Apollo & Lyon International tower. It has been dubbed the "Tower of Babble" by the tabloid press.

This adventure takes place in the Tower of Babble. Jared and Xavier have opened the tower to a VIP ball to showcase some of their new entertainment acts, as well as to create a media event to reveal what they call "the newest thing in entertainment." The players may work for Babble On, may be one of their clients, or might be a member of the media doing a story on them. Each has some relation to the company that fits their character concepts, and a reason for them to be in the tower (whether legally or not). Each character arrives at the Tower alone—they have not yet met the other PCs, their long-awaited broodmates, in this lifetime.

Preparation: Before the adventure, have each player write down a memory of some dramatic event that happened to their character. It should be something that no one else, or at least very few people, would know about.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

Scene 1: Players enter the Tower of Babble On. Describe various strange aspects. Introduce Jared and Xavier (or acquaintance). Once all are inside, all will receive Memory Notes giving them a connection/memory with at least one of the other PCs.

Scene 2: Jared and Xavier give speech on the new media and the carrying of a dramatic message: everyone knows that magic exists. What they have discovered is how to use it in their communications equipment. It's all in the technology, of course, something that is unprecedented. In order to see how it works and how they do it, please come on this tour. You are separated into groups based on a number found on the individual invitations.

Scene 3: The PCs are separated into groups with

each other, (a few may have a choice whether or not to try and join a different group) and end up in an elevator taking them into the basement. They're accompanied by a female guide, Carrie, who works in the Marketing department and has only a rudimentary knowledge of how everything really works (but, it is possible that she "has it in her notes somewhere"). She is a perfect GM tool for keeping the players moving. The elevator opens up to a strange artifact that immediately gives the players a weird sort of vision. As they awake, the lights have gone out and everything is dark and creepy.

Scene 4: The electricity is out, so the PCs must either break open the elevator and crawl up the shaft or manipulate the electric lock on the door at the other end of the lab to take the stairwell up. Whichever route they use to escape the lab, Carrie leads them toward the closest exit, the underground car park, as per the "emergency evacuation drill." Going through the darkened corridors, the party is attacked by strange, zombie-like security guards with clubs.

Scene 5 (Quick End): If time is short, the PCs will be chased through the car park where they will see something large and scary at the exit that used to be the toll booth watchman . . . but is now big and scary and tentacled. They need to steal a car and bust out through the parking garage door.

Scene 5 (Longer End): If time allows, the PCs will run into Xavier who, surprise surprise, is himself a scion. Xavier will engage them in combat. Depending on time and player enthusiasm, the PCs can fight Xavier until: 1) he takes enough damage and flees/jumps away in a bound/teleports out of there or 2) if they are having success, PCs can take him down—but don't allow him to be caught; he will reveal to them no useful information.

SCENE 1

Read the following aloud.

As you approach the vaunted "Tower of Babble On," as the media has named one of London's more recent constructions, you can feel a sense of energy and purpose about the place. Its architecture borrows from many sources, both classic and modern, creating a synergy of old and new rarely seen in contemporary office buildings and skyscrapers. Several others appear to be heading toward the tower tonight; Jared and Xavier, the moguls of Babble On, have invited a strange mix of folks to their debut, whatever it is. You have your suspicions as to the not-quite-natural nature of their latest project. Both men, in addition to being successful businessmen, are known dabblers in the new wave of occult fervor that's sweeping London. Who could blame them? Only the most superstitious (an ironic situation, it's true) refuse to believe that something, whether it should be called magic or psychic energy or the coming of God, is going on.

Whatever your reasons for accepting this invitation (or forging your own), it seems you are not alone in your interest.

Players walk through the guarded gates, guarded doors, past dogs, etc. It's a pretty well buttoned-up place.

NPC:Mr. Butterkiss

The main guard is a very large, bald man with a most impressive handle-bar mustache. His jacket says, "Mr. Butterkiss" but he looks like someone who may have been teased about it once . . . and ONLY once.

Characters with forged invitations need to make an Air (Interaction) or Air (Trickery) check to get past him. Others may make Air (Knowledge: Street) checks to see if they know him from his bouncing days in South End.

Ultimately, let the players enter. Once inside the grand foyer, they are amongst an impressive crowd of reporters, socialites, and celebrities. Champaign and finger food are ushered in on trays by Adonis-like waiters, clad in waistcoats with tails. If the PCs have not yet been united as a brood, you may use the memories the players wrote earlier. Each time a PC is seen or met by any others, give those who meet him *that* PCs' memory. Tell the PCs experiencing the memory that, when they meet the character's eyes, the image flashes into their consciousness, leaving them slightly daze. The memories connect each PC with at least one other in some enigmatic way. Give them a chance to react/interact if they wish. Everyone is asked to come into the press room. Jared and Xavier step up to podium.

SCENE 2

As everyone gathers, the members of the press muscling to the front of the crowd with well-honed practice, Jared and Xavier step up to the podium. Jared is a tall man with dirty blond hair, a hawkish nose, and chestnut brown eyes. He wears a plain black tie with a well-cut suit, and looks fairly serious and stern. Xavier, by contrast, seems delighted and full of energy. He is of average height, with brown hair with beard and moustache (streaks of gray), light blue eyes. He has a ready smile, as he says:

"My friends, associates, and ladies and gentlemen of the press. For the past decade or so, we've all seen London change around us. The streets have become less safe from thugs and strange animals, we've had to question our religious faith as we've seen things that, frankly, are beyond belief . . . of course, on the other hand, we've had just endless material for new sitcoms. Who'd have thought that having a "wacky warlock next door" would be such a good ratings convention?"

There is polite laughter from the crowd, as they catch his reference to one of the currently running hit shows.

Jared then steps in front of the microphone, taking over the speech.

"While the rest of the entertainment industry has been squirming about trying to use these strange events as fodder, we at Babble On have been looking to the heart of the matter. We have discovered how to use these new energies, which some insist on calling 'magic,' <gives a sneer> in our broadcasting techniques. This, my friends, is the cutting edge of entertainment technology.

With that, he sweeps his hand to the large video screen behind him, which to this point has simply been playing an image of the two men giving the speech. As his hand moves in real life, however, the hand on the TV screen changes. It grows in length and bulk, claws extending where once a hand was. The rest of his body changes as well, hunching, crouching down to all fours. Large, bat-like wings erupt from the expensive Italian suit. The crowd reacts with what varies between the "oohs" and "ahhs" of being impressed and the staid silence of those who are over-exposed to CGI effects. Their confident calm decomposes rapidly into shock, however, when they see what you do: it's not just the screen that has changed.

Looming over the crowd, the serpentine form gives what passes for a smile, pulling back leathery lips to reveal razor-sharp teeth.

Allow the players to respond, but cut them off before they do anything violent. The various attendees begin to shuffle out of their seats in what looks like the prelude to a stampede, when the soothing voice of Xavier interrupts them.

"Please, my associates, my friends, do not be afraid. This is merely a demonstration. The television does not reflect reality, as is so often assumed. Rather, the television creates reality."

With a nonchalant flick of his hand, the executive points a remote control at the screen and turns it off. The screen goes dark, and it seems the entire room follows suit for a moment before everyone takes a few moments to blink, and everything is as it was.

Jared is human once more . . . though there's something about his sneer that remains disconcertingly inhuman, and it seems to be reserved specifically for you.

The now normal-looking Jared addresses the crowd:

"As you can see, altering reality for our viewers is a dramatic step forward in our industry. All of the sci-fi claims of a virtual reality future have failed to arrive, but we have brought it from a new and unique direction. The limitation, of course, is that the technology is still quite new. The cameras that created this effect are linked to quite powerful, yet quite sensitive, mystical objects in our secure vault below. Just as they manipulate reality via the screen that you saw, viewers of those objects can manipulate their reality.

At this time, we'd like to give you a chance to examine this object. Their fragile natures, however, require that only a handful of you may view them at one time. On your invitation you will find reference to a Group Number. Please, find the appropriate Babble On employee guide for your group number. After you've viewed the objects, we'll have a question-and-answer session back here.

SCENE 3

All the PCs' invitations, including any forged or stolen ones, are for Group Number 6. Their guide steps forward, an attractive young woman in a trim business suit who announces herself as Carrie, Marketing Services for Babble On. She looks quite eager and enthusiastically blah-blahs about some technological advances she only has a basic understanding of, and how it applies to the future of the entertainment industry. She loves working with the "seeds," as she call them. All she knows about the "seeds" are that they seem to have relations to ancient Sumerian culture, that they were found in the Middle East, and that they respond to thoughts in an interesting fashion, creating illusions of the viewers' thoughts. They can even produce those illusions through radio waves and television signals, if the proper equipment is attached to them. Carrie leads them into the elevator that takes them several floors underground. Read the following aloud.

As the elevator opens, you are ushered through several rooms into a lab that has obviously been "sanitized" for viewers. Empty desks and bays surround a curtained-off section of the room, wires and lighting leading into the area. Carrie leads you forward. The rest of the lab is ominously quiet, but you forget that as soon as you see the "seed." It is a large, brownish gray ovoid, about the size of an adult bear, resting securely among many padded supports. Inscribed on the side of the object are many strange glyphs and symbols that at first seem to squirm and move about of their own volition.

Characters may make Air (Knowledge: Mythology; Occult; History; Ancient Cultures) TH 3 tests for info on the seed. Success gives them enigmatic answers:

—You seem to recall a myth from the ancient Middle East about such things.

—The idea of it resonates in you vaguely.

—The glyphs and symbols look familiar, like others you've seen, but you can't quite read them.

Let the players respond. Regardless of their actions, read the following:

As you watch, a blinding light seers outward from the markings, filling your vision. For a moment, you

are dazzled and confused. The dirt around you is brown and gray, streaked with lines of mud and small piles of animal corpses. A rank wind howls across a barren plain covered in rough grass. You can't seem to remember what distracted you from your mission . . . a vague memory of a building, a woman in strange clothing . . . she was pink, fleshy, and weak . . . but then, the distracting memory rabbits away. There are more important things at hand. The egg, covered in runes and sigils, rests on its pedestal before you. Its magic and bindings are so strong that you cannot remove it instantly . . . it will require a ritual lasting several hours to claim it and take it back to your mistress.

You look about at your brood, and in an instant are aware that they, too, were momentarily distracted. As one, your reptilian heads turn from the circle in which you stood, facing one another, to the low mound of dirt before you. This is the entrance to a hell, the depth of which there is no plumbing, and you know that its minions will come forth to protect the egg.

You flap your huge wings in anticipation, tails lashing, breath smoldering . . . and then you hear the screams. Boiling forth from that pit before you, the screams of beasts that are less than men. You are ready to do battle. And then the egg seems to shatter before you, bathing you in searing light and burning into your mind and body.

And then you are back in the basement lab, staring at the seed and at each other. Carrie looks pleased, "Such a wonderful illusion . . . I just love bunnies!"

Let the players react and discuss their vision. Carrie will let them know that a "shared vision" is unheard of, and that usually the most dominant mind controls what the seed does. Even stranger, not only did she experience a serene moment in a TeleTubbie-like environment, she shared in nothing of the players' "illusion." None of the players had even an inkling of dragons or strange beast-men when they looked at the seed, nor did any of them feel like they were "in control during the vision."

Do not let the discussion go too far before telling them that the lights begin to flicker, then go out. Carrie is visibly disturbed and confused by the lights being out, and recommends that they get back to the press room.

Unfortunately, the power is out. The emergency lights DO NOT come on. The "seed" gives off an eerie, green, foxfire-type light. There are only two ways to get out of the lab: the stairwell or the elevator.

The emergency exit stairwell has an electronic lock. PCs can pick the electronic lock with an Air (Tech: Electronics or Tech: Mechanics) 4 test, and go through the door.

The elevator door, meanwhile, is jammed. PCs can pry open the door with a successful Fire (Athletics) 4 test, open and climb up the trap door at the top of the elevator with another successful Fire (Athletics) 2 test,



and open the elevator door to the next floor up with a third successful Fire (Athletics) 4 test.

Whichever avenue the players use, it will lead them to a network of corridors in the third-level sub-basement, where, Carrie tells them, there is an exit to the lowest car park level. When there's a power outage, that's the evacuation route they've been trained to take. They won't get there easily however. . .

SCENE 4

Read the following aloud.

As you step cautiously through the darkened halls, you can't help but feel like something is wrong. A building this size should have a backup generator, and someone should have come down to get you by now. Then your prayers are answered by the tapping of feet. You've come to a 4-way intersection, and from the hallway directly in front of you come two men, security guards by the looks of their uniforms. Carrie starts forward to talk to them and ask them what's going on, when she suddenly stops. You see it too . . . their eyes. In the dark, it's almost like their eyes are . . . glowing. As they come closer, their nightsticks in hand, you hear tapping from behind you as well. Four more guards, equally attired and armed, come out of adjacent doorways. You're surrounded . . . and as the guards silently raise their sticks, you realize that their intentions are definitely NOT friendly.

The security guards are possessed by an unnatural force, and attack mindlessly. They only get one action and one stance change each round (which will always be to attack, and will always be a stance change to Fire using the Melee skill), so you don't need to keep track of their dice pools.

Possessed Guards (1 for each player)

Race natural being; **AP** 0. **Aspects** Fire 5, Water 3, Air 1, Earth 3. **Init** 4; **Health** 3m; <3 / 3+ / 6+ / 9+ / 12+ / 15+ / 18+ / 21+. **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft.; **Armor** 0; **Karma** 3; **Stride** 20 ft.

Weapons: Fist (2) ~ 3/L; Kick (2) ~ 4/M; Club 5/M; **Sequences:** Flying Fists.

Skills: Athletics 3, Melee 4, Quickness 3, Stamina 2. **Knowledge:** Street 4, Senses 2, Stealth 4, Trickery 3, Will 2. **Edges:** Brawler, Strong, Survivor.

Traits: Mindless, tainted.

SCENE 5

After the players defeat the guards (whom, it becomes obvious during the fight, are mindless, zombie-like creatures), Carrie leads them in a panic to the car park. Depending on the time left, one of two endings may happen:

Quick End: The players hear pounding on the door behind them, and see large, ominous shadows approaching. The only way out is past a toll booth . . . but now there's a large, scary, tentacled creature in the way! It undulates and writhes and looks far too terrifying for the players to even think about actually hurting. The pounding gets louder, the bad guys are closing in . . . and the players see an unlocked car but no keys. Someone needs to make an Air (Tech: Mechanics) 6 check to hotwire that car. The PCs can barrel through that scary creature, or a locked and closed exit, and escape into the night.

Longer End: Intercepting them in the car park is a very angry looking Xavier. Read the following aloud.

Xavier stands in your way, seemingly taller than he was before, his once blue eyes now full of golden fury. He has sword in his right hand and a grim on his face.

"Well done. You passed the test. No mere wormy humans, you . . . from the way you responded to the seed, I know . . . you are scions. You bear the fire within you, as do I." For a moment, his grim look relaxes, and he appears almost paternal. "That is why it grieves me, my misguided scions, to have to kill you." With that, he raises his sword and charges.

He will begin his attack against the biggest, most dangerous-looking PC. Xavier is motivated by an old hatred, and attacks to kill. Use the attached character sheet for Xavier, using 2 stance changes, appropriate fighting style sequences, and karma spending as normal. Ultimately, Xavier will use his Teleport legacy to get away. He will likely take some damage and disappear before actually dying; just don't allow him to be captured and questioned. It should be a clean break with his death or disappearance, leaving the PCs with only more questions.

XAVIER, TAINTED SCION

Race Supernatural being; **Sire** Jormungand; **APL** 3; **Init** 8; **Aspects** Fire 4(1), Water 3, Air 5(1), Earth 4(1); **Health** 6m; <3 / 3+ / 6+ / 9+ / 12+ / 15+ / 18+ / 21+; **Size/Reach** 0 / 2 ft.; **Armor** 3; **Taint** 25; **Stride** 20 ft. (Moderate)

Weapons: Claw (2) ~ 5/L, Kick (2) 5/M, bastard sword ~ 17/H; **Sequences** Eastern Small Style, Luring Blade, Kingsguard.

Skills: Athletics 5, Interaction 5, Melee 5, Quickness 5, Senses 5, Stamina 5, Stealth 5, Trickery 5, Will 5; **Edges:** Dervish 5, Forceful Will 4, Weapon Specialist 3 (+3 damage); **Powers:** Child of Fire 4, Crushing Will 5, Instinct 3; **Legacy:** Fire Wyrn

Possessions: Bastard sword, leather trenchcoat, and torc of the coward (enchanted item: when wearer suffers 6 wound dice or more, he is teleported to a predetermined place of sanctuary).

