

# The Circle of Fire

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Surrounded by swarming giant fire ants, the end appears near and only a smoldering pyre will mark your death.  
But escape may be at hand. Is it salvation or are you only jumping into yet another Circle of Fire?

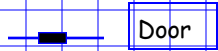
The **Circle of Fire** is an adventure designed for four to six characters of fourth to sixth level using the First Edition game rules. This module includes a 36-page adventure book, pre-generated characters and maps and a separate color, cardstock cover.



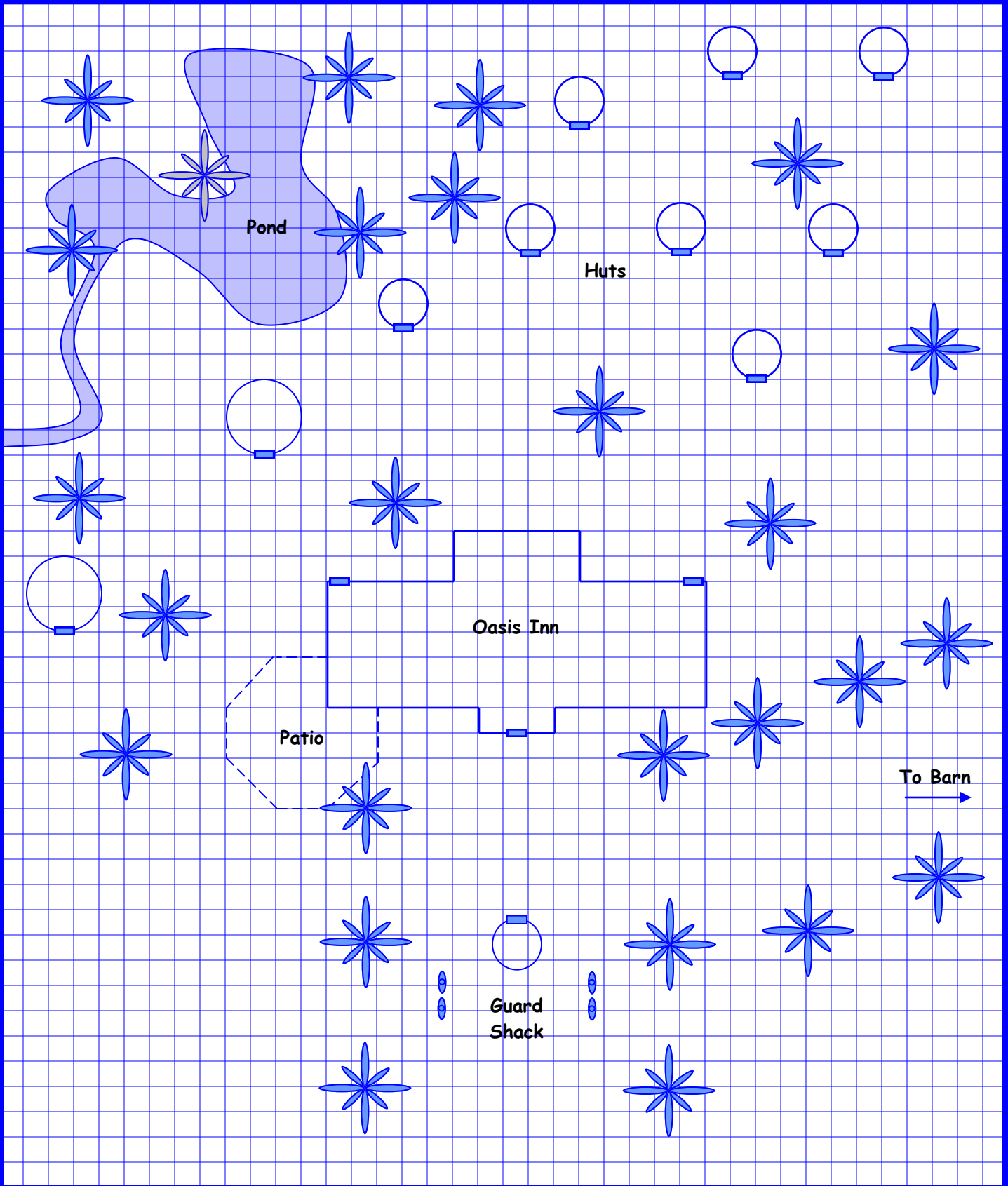
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Each square = 10'



Pond

Huts

Oasis Inn

Patio

Guard Shack

To Barn



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*The Circle of Fire* literally places the player characters (PCs) within a closing ring of flame that is slowly collapsing in on their location. The scenario takes place in the depths of the Great Waste, an immense desert, and specifically, at an oasis located at the epicenter of the inferno. The adventure is designed for four to six characters of fourth to sixth level (or about 24 total character levels). Unlike most scenarios, the PCs do not have to search out the adventure or travel to some distant, mysterious land. The adventure has come to them, and they are trapped within an impending catastrophe that will destroy them unless they can engineer an escape.

The PCs have several avenues of escape including the use of an ancient portal that leads to another dire predicament. In using the portal they may have escaped the closing circle of fire, but are now trapped in an ancient tower that is besieged by the Wretched – human-like creatures that seek to destroy the PCs in an animalistic frenzy. To make matters worse, the only escape route leads through the lair of a blue dragon. The adventure will lead the PCs to one catastrophe to another!

The only requirement for this adventure is that the PCs must be travelling through the Great Waste (or any large desert area). The opening encounter will set up the adventure for the players – their mission is simply one of survival.

*The Circle of Fire* introduces the wretched which are described in the **New Monster** section at the end of the module book. Additionally, there are several new magic items that are described in the **New Magic Item** section.

### **The City of Spire Module Series**

*C1 The Circle of Fire* is a module that can be used on its own or as part of the City of Spire module series. The City of Spire series includes modules *C2 The Goblin Crown* and *C3 The City of Spire*. Modules *C1 The Circle of Fire*, *B1 Legacy of the Unknown*, *G2 A City in the Sand* include minor, or optional, plot lines that lead into the City of Spire series, but are not necessary for play. All of these modules are placed within the Pacesetter Games & Simulations upcoming campaign setting. However, the use of the campaign setting is not required for play in any of these products.

### **Section I: The Fire Swarm**

*The Circle of Fire* places the PCs within a collapsing ring of flame. The inferno is created by a fire ant swarm. Every 10 years a massive horde of giant fire ants surface from their underground warrens and form a circle, often more than 100 miles in diameter. The ants slowly tighten and collapse the circle, trapping their food source inside.

As the circle collapses, the outer “wall” of fire ants grows ever larger making it impossible to escape on foot.

At the start of the scenario, the PCs will be on a merchant road that cuts through a portion Great Waste. They will suddenly realize they are trapped within the confines of a giant fire ant swarm. The epicenter of the swarm is an oasis not far from their current location. As the swarm closes on the oasis, the PCs must formulate an escape or die in the inferno.

The oasis is a way point on the desert road and it includes a lodge and tavern. There are several rental cottages and a large stable area. However, the inhabitants of the oasis have fled – they know the initial signs of the swarm and escaped with all haste. Also, the PCs are not the only victims caught in the swarm. As the PCs search for an escape, they will encounter several other victims that converge on the oasis in search of sanctuary – some are friendly and others are not.

The PCs introduction references a mekillot. This is a large beast of burden and a complete description can be found in the New Monster section.

### Section One: The Fire

Blazing hot sand and rocks have assaulted your feet for days and what seem innumerable miles. Crossing the Great Waste has never been an easy task, but this voyage has tested your body, if not your spirit. Not a cloud has crossed the sky in three days, which is not unusual, but the lack of even the faintest breeze has made conditions nearly unbearable. The dryness in your mouth filters throughout your body, but now, not a few miles away, lays an oasis and lodge. Already the faint, but distinctive, odor of a mekillot assaults your sinus. The massive beasts of burden can traverse the desert without effort, but the pungent smell they exude is simply nauseating. How the merchants endure the stench is a mystery unto itself. Nevertheless, you welcome the smell as it simply means that you are close to the comforts of the oasis.

Suddenly your languid thoughts are shattered by a panicked shout. Before you can turn to see the reason for the alarm, a wave of heat washes over your back. The intensity of the heat is not natural, even in the Great Waste. There is danger behind you.

Spinning around your suspicions are confirmed. Your focus on the relief of the upcoming oasis has lowered your guard. Somehow, nearly a dozen huge red-colored ants rush into your midst. Several, with huge mandibles, emit searing flames that ignite strands of clothing and incinerate the few plants that grow nearby.

**DM’s Description:** The PCs are under attack by a forward group of giant fire ants. The attacking ants are comprised of both worker ants and warrior ants. After the battle, the PCs will clearly see a wall of flame and smoke rising hundreds of feet into the air about a mile behind them. From their vantage point they can discern that the wall of flame has them encircled. It appears that the oasis is at the center of circle of fire. The circle is moving forward, albeit very slowly. It will appear to the PCs that they have no more than eight hours before the inferno is upon them. For more details on the swarm and wall of flame, see the Fire Ant section in the New Monster section of this module.

Additionally, the PCs will observe hundreds of giant fire ants scouring the land at the leading edge of the wall of fire. There are two types of ants: worker ants and warrior ants. The giant worker fire ants are larger than the warrior ants but emit less heat and have much smaller mandibles. Both types of ant have a sand-colored hides streaked with irregular red stripes.

The PCs may attempt to probe the approaching swarm but it should become apparent very quickly that they will be overcome. Any creature within 100’ of the approaching swarm will suffer 1d6 heat damage per round. For every 10’ less than the 100’ minimum distance, an additional 1d6 of damage will be suffered (i.e. at 90’ from the wall of flame, the damage is 2d6). This damage is in addition to any combat damage. For each round spent within 1,000’ of the wall of flame, the PCs will be attacked by 1d4 worker ants and 1d2 warrior ants.

Giant Fire Ant, Worker (6) AC 4; HD 3, hp 14 each; #AT 1 + special; Dmg Bite 1d6 / 1d4 heat damage (save vs. dragon breath for ½ damage); SA None; SD Immune to fire; MV 150’; AL N; Size L; THACO 17; EXP 105+3/hp

Giant Fire Ant, Warrior (2) AC 2; HD 4+2, hp 24 each; #AT 1 + special; Dmg Bite 2d4 / 1d6 heat damage (save vs. dragon breath for ½ damage); SA None; SD Immune to fire; MV 150’; Size L; AL N; THACO 16; EXP 205+5/hp

### The Oasis

**DM’s Description:** The Oasis Lodge is a large facility and includes several structures including a security/concierge post, 10 huts, a huge stable and barn, and the two story lodge, itself. All of the buildings are primarily made of adobe and stone, but feature no particular architectural style.

All of the structures sit within the confines of small oasis. The oasis is formed by approximately 100 palm trees and several other species including juniper, pinyon, mesquite and even a few lime trees. At its center, a small

pond holds clear water that is fed by an underground spring. A thin stream exits the pond and moves off to the west following a rocky landscape.

From a distance, the oasis appears deserted. Only a pair of mellikots are wandering in the corral that is connected to the stable and barn. The owner, servants, and guests of the Oasis Lodge fled at the first sign of the swarm as it formed in the distance. They took the few horses and camels that resided the barn.

### 1. Security/Concierge Station

This small hut, like the others in the oasis area, is made exclusively from adobe and stone. The front half of the building is open with a counter built at waist-height. There are two entrances, neither of which have actual doors, but are covered by draped cloth. Behind the counter at the front of the building are two weapons racks that hold a few spears and scimitars.

A log book lies on the counter, its pages flipping as an occasional hot breeze whistles past. A sign over the counter indicates the building's purpose as security and concierge center.

Standing next to the building, in perfect order, are four human-like statues. The figures appear to be warriors but instead of stone, they are made of hardened sand.

**DM's Description:** There is little of actual interest in the guard shack. The weapons are not magical and are clearly in disrepair. The log book contains a list of guests going back to the start of the year. The ink well has gone dry as the stopper is missing, but the quill lies on the ground inside the shack.

The sand guardians will only animate if the PCs fail to sign the log book. Each PC must sign in. If the PCs do not sign in and attempt to move on, the sand guardians will animate and block the PCs from moving away from the guard shack. One of the sand guardians will point toward the shack.

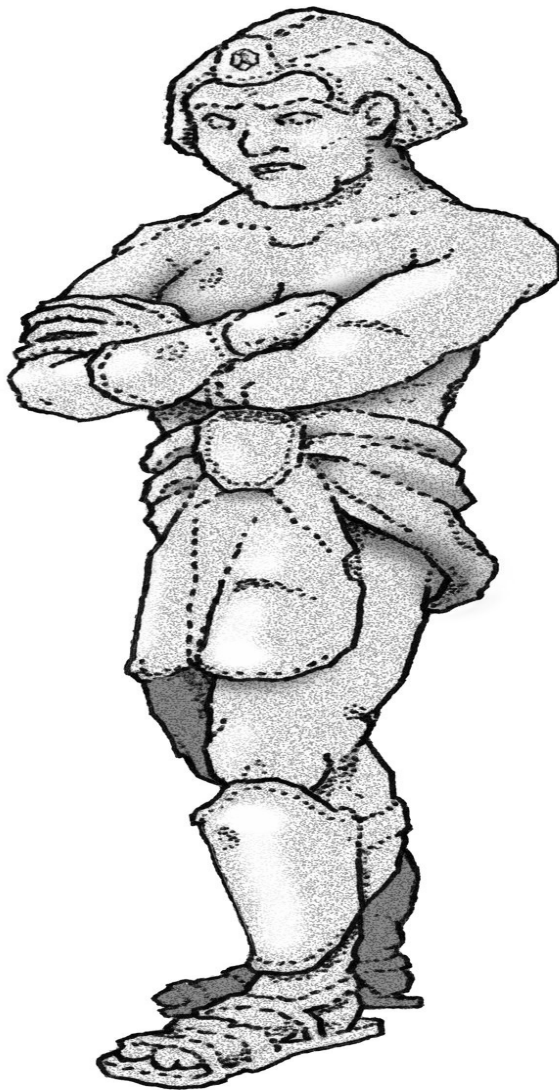
If the PCs continue in their attempt to leave (without signing the book), the sand guardians will attempt to grab the PCs using their grasp attack. The sand guardians will carry any grasped PCs to the counter and then release them. Any PC that continues to avoid signing the log book will be attacked without mercy. Alternatively, any members of the oasis staff (who are now all gone) could utter a secret phrase to animate the guardians in the event of an attack.

Sand Guardian (4) AC 4; HD 4; hp 17 each; MV 120; #AT 2; Dmg fist 2d4/2d4; SA Grasp attack; SD Limited Spell Immunity, edged weapons inflict ½ damage; AL N; THACO 16

### 2. The Oasis Lodge

This two-story building is rectangular with long open balconies on its second floor. Numerous shuttered windows line the walls. The roof of the building is flat but is covered with a large canopy. A break in the canopy allows a look-out tower to rise 20' above the roof. A very large patio area with numerous tables and chairs projects off the north end of the building. The patio is served by a very long bar built right into the lodge itself.

**DM's Description:** The lodge emptied in a matter of minutes when the swarm began to form. The owner managed to empty his safe, but he forgot about the cash box under the bar. It holds 34 gp, 78 sp, and 110 cp. Also lo-



cated under the bar is a light crossbow and two *bolts +2*. The bar is fully equipped and stocked. There are numerous wines, liquors, liqueurs, and beer.

Many of the patio tables hold half-consumed meals and drinks. By the looks of things, dinner was in full swing at the lodge. Flies swarm about the tables.

The large common room inside the lodge also appears to have emptied hurriedly. Many tables hold food and drink, and several chairs lie on their sides. The kitchen looks to have been closed properly, if not quickly. The cooking utensils are in disarray but the large fireplace is without fire, though it still radiates heat. The perishables have been sealed or stored away.

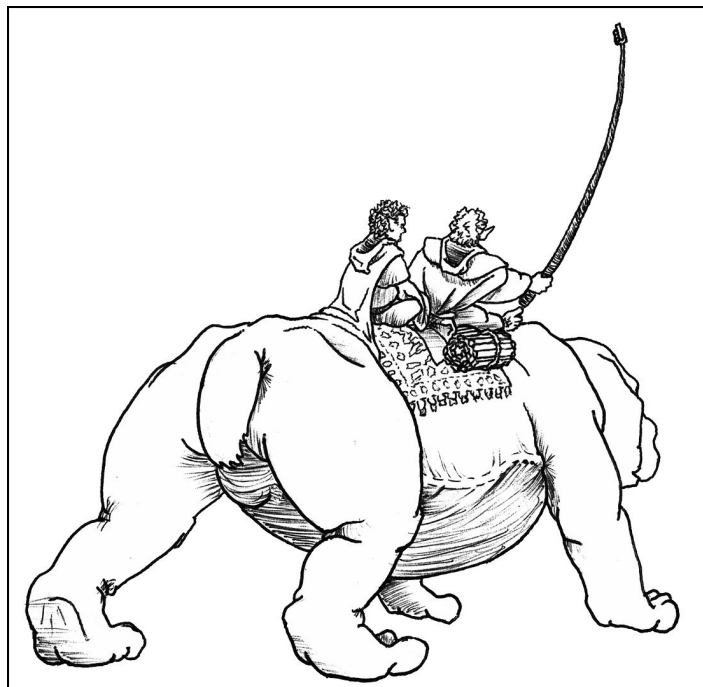
A wooden trapdoor gives access to a wood-lined cellar that holds additional wine and food. The cellar is actually quite cool; however, it will not offer protection against the fire swarm as the entire lodge will go up in an inferno when the swarm arrives.

The owner's quarters, guestrooms and servant's quarters are all in the same state of disarray. Clearly, the people left in a hurry and took anything of value with them. Some items such as clothing remain, but all are of no real value.

The roof level is generally used to serve drinks after dinner. A wide set of stairs offer easy access. There are tables and chairs across the entire roof. A spectacular view of the terrain around the lodge can be viewed easily from the roof. The look-out tower is accessed by a ladder. From this perch, the desert can be monitored for many miles. The tower is generally manned as a precaution against raiders. The guard spotted thin trails of smoke in all directions as dinner was being served and he immediately recognized it as a fire ant swarm in progress. The alarm was sounded and the lodge evacuated.

As the PCs conclude their investigation of the lodge, two halflings will arrive. They head straight for the bar and begin to drink and laugh as if nothing is amiss. If the PCs disturb them, they will ignore the intrusion and continue to drink and make merry. After some time, the halflings will finally give the PCs their attention. If questioned about the fire ant swarm, the halflings will only say that they are protected by "big magic" and they wish to be left alone. They will not reveal their "big magic" under any circumstances.

However, if a bribe is attempted, the halflings will suggest that the PCs "fight fire with fire." They will give no further information and consider any threat of violence as an attack. They will not offer any further information. If threatened prior to being offered a bribe, they simply will not accept the bribe. If attacked, the older halfling (hp 30) will use his *ring of darkness* and they will attempt to escape.



If left to their own devices, the halflings will continue to drink. Approximately 30 minutes before the fire swarm reaches the oasis, the halflings will ride one of the mekillots out of the oasis and right into the swarm. They will disappear into the smoke and flame. It will appear as if the inferno simply swallowed them and incinerated the duo and their slow steed. If the halflings are blocked from taking a mekillot, they will escape from the PCs' sight. The halflings know that covering oneself in mekillot dung will ward off the fire ants. They will secretly use this method if all else fails. They will only use the dung when out of sight of the PCs.

Using the mekillots to escape will end the scenario for the PCs. In order to play the second portion of this module, the PCs must use the transport arch at the barn.

Jir (5th level halfling fighter) AC 7; HD 5, hp 30; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA None; SD None; MV 90'; AL N; THACO 16. Jir wears a *ring of darkness* (see **New Magic Items**, page 30). He will use the ring to aid in their escape if attacked or threatened by the PCs.

Kir (3rd level halfling fighter) AC 7; HD 3; hp 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6; SA None; SD None; MV 90'; AL N; THACO 18.

Both halflings wear no armor and carry a short sword.

### 3. Huts

**DM's Description:** Hiding amidst the huts are 12 waste orcs. They are waiting to ambush the PCs as they enter the hut area. The orcs have hidden themselves under the sand and several are on the curved roofs of the huts.

The waste orcs know of the mekillot trick to avoid the oncoming fire swarm. However, they are out for treasure and will not reveal the secret of the mekillot under any circumstances.

Of the ten huts on the oasis grounds, two are much larger than the rest. The huts are all of the same neutral design and feature several porthole-type windows covered with thick cloth drapes. Each has a single door which is also covered with a cloth drape.

**DM's Description:** The interiors are Spartan and contain the bare essentials such as a cot-style bed, small table, empty chest and chair. The two larger huts have four beds each and additional furniture to match.

Waste Orc (11) AC 5; HD 1+2, hp 7 each; MV 120'; #AT 1; Dmg scimitar 1d8, great bow 1d8; AL NE; THACO 19

Waste Orc, Leader (1) AC 4; HD 2+2, hp 14; MV 120'; #AT 1; Dmg *spear* +2 1d6+3, scimitar 1d8+1, great bow 1d8; AL NE; THACO 17\* (15 w/spear). The leader carries a *spear* +2.

\*This orc is unusually strong and gains +1 to hit and damage in melee combat.

#### 4. Corral and Barn

A huge stone barn surrounded by two large corrals is clearly the largest structure in the oasis. A massive, arched portal serves as the entrance to the barn. The keystone of the arch is solid yellow in color. The arch appears to be new as it is not affected by erosion from desert winds and sand. Dozens of large, oval windows provide ample air circulation to the large building. Of the two pens, the larger holds two disinterested mekillots. The smaller pen's gate hangs open and it sways with a creak. Nervously roaming around the pens are numerous chickens, a dozen goats and several large pigs. A breeze has kicked up as the fire swarm encroaches on the oasis.

**DM's Description:** The barn holds a number of interior stables for various beasts, but mostly for horses. Several long, stone basins contain water. Feed bags are hung along the west wall. A loft runs the length of the barn and it is accessed by a ramp at the south end of the building.

If the PCs take the time to inspect the arch, they will notice almost immediately that it is not of the same manufacture as the rest of the building or any other structure in the oasis. The arch has existed for a thousand years and there are some carvings along the top of the arch that can

only be seen by close inspection – this cannot be accomplished, or noticed, at ground level. The inscriptions can only be read with the help of a *comprehend language* spell or similar magic means. The inscription cryptically refers to using the arch for passage to the City of Ascend.

If the PCs dig directly under the arch, they will discover the shattered remains of what appear to be yellow gemstones of some unknown origin. They will not find any gemstones intact; however, there are some in the pond (see encounter #5). If the PCs recover the yellow gems and crush them (one per character) while under the arch, they will be magically transported to the City of Ascend (See Section II: Siege in the City of Ascend, page 7).

The animals in the pens are completely domesticated and will not act aggressively, unless provoked. Mekillots exude a stench that is very offensive, but completely harmless. Merchants typically shower them with perfumes to mask the smell, but these two have long since overcome their treatments. Mekillots are by nature completely fire resistant (normal fire only). In fact, the chemical they secrete which creates the odor also creates a fire-proof barrier within 5' of the creatures. Therefore, any who are within five feet of the creatures also become completely resistant to normal flame and heat. By wiping the dung of a mekillot on oneself the same effects are generated. However, the dung must be fresh and the effects last for six hours. Furthermore, giant fire ants are repelled by the smell of the mekillots and will neither attack nor come within 10' of the hulking creatures.

When the giant fire ants finally arrive at the compound, the mekillots will flee in their own fashion. They will move as quickly as they can, but not in panic. Obser-



vant PCs, who are close enough to witness the spectacle, will notice the fire ants avoid the mekillots and the beasts seem unaffected by the flames. Note, the halflings may have already taken a mekillot. Also, if any of the waste orcs have escaped, they may try to steal the mekillots.

**Special Note:** If you do not wish to run the second section of this adventure, simply remove the arch portal from the barn description. If you want the PCs to move to the second section of this adventure, have the halflings or waste orcs steal the mekillots (or even kill them).

## 5. The Pond

The vegetation of the oasis grows thickly by this clear-water pond. The palms grow more densely and tall reeds line much of the bank. The pond is set into a natural rocky outcrop that rises two feet above the rest of the oasis. At the west end of the pond an opening in the rock creates a short waterfall that feeds a narrow stream that runs away from the oasis through the jagged rock.

**DM's Description:** The water in the pond is clear and cool. It is fed by a very deep underground spring. The pond is only two to three feet deep at its center. The PCs may get the idea that they can wait out the impending fire ant swarm by wading to the center of pond. This will not work as the heat generated by the fire swarm will cause the water to boil and evaporate quickly. The spring feeds the pond much too slowly to prevent evaporation.

If the PCs take the time to carefully inspect the pond and waterfall, they may notice that a yellow light seems to illuminate the waterfall. This is caused by a deposit of yellow gemstones (see Encounter #4). The gemstones can easily be removed. There are 30 with a value of 5 gp each.

### The Fire Swarm Arrives

Exactly eight hours after the PCs arrive in the oasis the fire swarm will converge. If the PCs have not discovered the secret of the mekillot, or the magic arch, they will most likely perish. The swarm will remain in the oasis area for approximately one hour. Everything will be incinerated and even the pond will have completely boiled away (the spring will continue to flow and refill the pond in two days). The structures will be in ruin and only the stone sections will remain as will the magic arch at the barn. The magic arch will be completely unharmed by the inferno.

### Section II: Siege in the City of Ascend

The City of Ascend is a satellite of the City of Spire. Ascend is more than 1,000 years old and very little re-



mains. The only recognizable structures standing are the Great Tower, four transport arches, and sections of the elevated walkway. The city is encased within a huge dome and is buried almost entirely under the sands of the Great Waste. The city ruins are inhabited by a race of creatures called the wretched (see New Monster section). Also inhabiting the dome is a blue dragon named Skys-trike.

After the PCs arrive, they will quickly realize they have literally jumped from the frying pan into the fire. As they make their way into the ruined city, they will be attacked by the wretched. Initially, the PCs will only be attacked by a few small groups, but then the entire colony will be alerted to the PCs' presence and the wretched will clearly overwhelm the PCs if they do not find shelter. The only obvious choice within reach is the Great Tower in the center of the ruined city. If the PCs have brought additional yellow gemstones from the Oasis, they will dis-

cover that the gemstones will not activate any of the four gates within the city. The yellow gemstones will only activate the gate at the oasis.

The PCs, in a running battle, will be able to reach the tower and the wretched will not follow them inside. But the tower will be besieged by a horde of the wretched. The PCs will be trapped within the tower and must search for an escape route. From the tower, the PCs will see the other transport arches at the four compass points of the city. Unfortunately, they do not have the appropriate gemstones at hand.

Read the following player description to the players when their characters have teleported into the city via the transport arch. Only read the player description to those players that have had their characters use the arch. There is no communication between characters that have been separated due to teleportation.

Finally, the transport arch has not only teleported the PCs to Ascend, but it has sent them back in time some 200 years. The PCs will not be aware of this fact. Eventually, the PCs will use the green arch to return to the oasis and they will also return to their own time.

## 1. Arrival in the City of Ascend

In a brilliant flash of yellow your eyes are dazzled and it takes a few seconds to fully regain your vision. The effects dissolve quickly and you take in your new surroundings. An arch, similar to the one you passed through at the oasis, stands behind you; however, this arch has a bright green keystone. The air is cool and slightly damp. You are no longer outside, but find yourself standing at one end of an enormous dome. The dome is oval in shape and the opposite end appears to be almost a mile away. The domed roof gently curves to its apex at least 2,000' above your heads. What appears to be a huge opening at the apex of the dome allows sunlight to filter down and illuminate the ruins below. Directly beneath the opening, a steady stream of water and mist tumbles down into the city just beyond the tower.

The crumbled remains of what must have been an ancient city cover the floor of the domed structure. At its center, a single tower rises four hundred feet above the rubble-strewn ground. No other structures remain and all have fallen into ruin. Some must have been very large as the debris piles are more than 100 feet tall.

You are standing on an elevated stone platform that forms a road leading to the center of the ruined city and the tower. The road appears to be raised almost 20' above the ground level of the city, but no obvious support columns are present. The road is broken in several

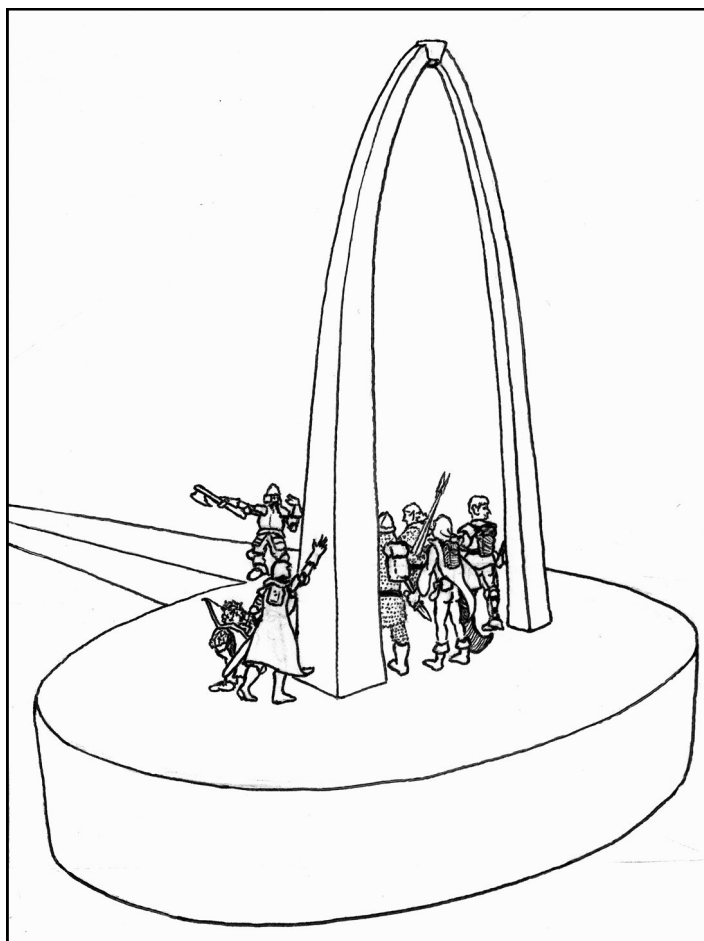
places. Piles of debris have fallen against and over it in other spots. The road has numerous intersections, but all look to be buried in the debris or have collapsed into heaps of debris.

**DM's Description:** The PCs (some or all) have made the trip to the City of Ascend via the transport arch. While they have escaped the inferno of the fire ant swarm, they are only minutes away from an all-out assault by the inhabitants of the City of Ascend – the wretched.

It will be clear to the PCs that they are in a ruined city and virtually nothing is recognizable other than piles of debris. The only remaining structure is the Great Tower at the city center. The tower appears to be in degraded condition. The white stone outer wall is discolored in many places and small sections have flaked away, though no gaps are evident. The massive stone doors are lying on the ground just outside the tower. However, the tower is sturdy and in no danger of immediate collapse.

If the PCs look closely, they will see what appear to be crude huts made of stone throughout the ruins. Also, there appear to be many cave-like openings in some rubble piles. Soon, the wretched that inhabit the huts and caves will emerge to attack the PCs.

The domed ceiling arches to its apex 2,000' above the ground level of the city. A 200' diameter section is made



of clearstone at the dome's apex. Clearstone is a magical stone that has all the features of granite, but is as transparent as glass. Several areas of the dome are hidden behind dark shadows. From one of the enshrouded areas, a thin, whispery, waterfall emerges. The water falls to the city below in a thin torrent of mist. At ground level, the water forms a dark pool. Water from the pool slowly seeps deeper into the earth through small fissures in its basin. In the shadowy area of the waterfall's origination point, there is a small cave system. This is Skystrike's lair and the location of the green gemstones required to engage the green arch (where the players first arrived). Finding these stones is one avenue of escape for the PCs.

The PCs will be able to mill about the arch for several minutes and take in their new surroundings. If they have brought additional yellow gemstones from the oasis, they will discover that the arch will not activate when a yellow gemstone is crushed. The yellow gemstones will only activate the gate at the oasis. This arch is activated by a green gemstone that can only be found in the lair of Skystrike (see Skystrike's Lair). If the PCs search around the arch, they will find small traces of green powder similar to crushed glass. Also, they will notice the transport arc has a green keystone. There are three other arches in the city located at each compass point. Gemstones to activate these gates are not available in this scenario.

Two turns after the PCs have emerged from the arch, they will be noticed by a small number of the wretched. They will immediately attempt to stalk close to the PCs and launch an attack. There are eight of the creatures. When the battle is concluded, the PCs will have a few minutes to recover, but soon the sounds of activity will echo throughout the domed city. The PCs will see movement in the ruins and finally a horrible screeching will shatter the air. It should be obvious at this point that the city is full of the wretched and they are mobilizing to attack the intruders (the PCs)!

The only hope of survival for the PCs is a mad dash to the tower. The city is home to nearly a 1,000 wretched and a fight with them would only result in defeat for the party – as glorious as it might sound.

The PCs will be intercepted on several occasions as they press toward the tower. They will also have to deal with gaps in the elevated road. Leaving the road is a poor choice and will eventually spell disaster for the PCs. They may be able to defeat the first few attacks by the wretched, but eventually, they will be overwhelmed. The race to the tower should be harried and exciting.

Additionally, Skystrike will eventually awake from his slumber and become curious with all the commotion. He will initially crawl to the edge of his lair and look down upon the city. He will be too late to see the PCs

(they have entered the tower). Skystrike will take flight but return to his lair quickly. The dragon has seen the wretched frenzy for no apparent reason before and he dismisses this event. He will return to his lair and return to sleep. The PCs may see the dragon from the interior of the tower. But they will also notice that the dragon cannot see them through the windows (clearstone is a one way window).

Wretched (8) AC 6; HD 1+1; hp 6 each; MV 120; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3 claw / 1d3 claw / 1d2 bite; SA Frenzy; SD None; AL NE; THACO 19

## 2. A Gap in the Road

The elevated road suddenly comes to an abrupt end. A section – nearly 10' wide – has fallen away. The road is elevated 20' above the ruined city below at this point. Another section, again about 10' wide, has fallen away another 100' up the road. To your shock, nothing supports the elevated road for the entire span. It simply hangs in the air. What must have been a tall building has collapsed and leans against the road another 100' beyond the second gap. It appears that numerous smaller roads branched from the main road. All have collapsed leaving jagged edges marking their original location.

**DM's Description:** The PCs can leap across the gap, but must make a strength check to make the leap. If the PC is encumbered or wearing bulky armor (anything greater than chainmail), the PC must add +2 to his die roll. Dwarves, halflings and gnomes also suffer a +2 penalty to their roll. A character that fails his roll has fallen into the gap and will strike the ground below. A falling character will suffer 2d6 damage when they hit the ground. Additionally, a pack of four wretched will close on them in one round and attack. A second group of wretched will arrive one turn later. The second group is double (8) the number of the first. One turn after the second group arrives, a third group will arrive and be double (16) the number of the second group. This will continue until the PCs are either dead or have escaped.

A PC that has fallen may be lifted back up to the road by a rope or magic. Alternatively, the PC may flee to the rubble pile that is 200' up the road (in the direction of the central tower). However, fleeing PCs will be attacked by the wretched, unless the original attackers are all defeated first. Additionally, four wretched will be waiting at the rubble pile to stop the PCs from attaining the road. Any remaining wretched will follow the PCs to the road platform.

After the PCs have crossed or bypassed the gap, they will notice more and more wretched are making their way to the elevated road. They are slow in organizing but small groups are making their way onto the road behind the PCs and will give chase. A group of eight wretched will gain the road 300' behind the PCs and quickly advance. The wretched need not make a strength check to leap over the gaps; they are automatically successful.

If the PCs destroy any of the wretched that pursue on the road, either by missile fire or ranged magic attacks, the remainder of the pursuing wretched will fall back and wait for greater numbers. This will give the PCs more time to advance on the tower. For every turn the PCs are on the road, another group of eight wretched will join the pursuers and chase the PCs.

Wretched (varies) AC 6; HD 1+1; hp 6 each; MV 120; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3 claw / 1d3 claw / 1d2 bite; SA Frenzy; SD None; AL NE; THACO 19

### 3. The Two Towers

One hundred feet ahead on the road, two enormous piles of debris spill over your path on each side. The piles meet forming a 20' high pile of debris at its center and double that on the left and right of the road. Behind you, the scattered group of pursuing animalistic creatures has grown into a throng of chaos bent on your destruction.

**DM's Description:** The PCs must cross the pile of rubble to advance their escape. However, the rubble is very unstable and climbing is not an easy task. For each 10' of movement, a PC must make a dexterity check to avoid falling. A falling PC will suffer 1d2 damage and will roll down the pile to the road below (depending on which side they are on).

Six wretched are hiding on taller sides of the rubble pile. They will emerge and hurl stones at the PCs from secure ledges. The PCs may attempt to climb the piles (making a dexterity check every 10' as noted). PCs climbing over the rubble will suffer a -2 AC penalty.

Wretched (6) AC 6; HD 1+1; hp 6 each; MV 120; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3 claw / 1d3 claw / 1d2 bite; SA Frenzy; SD None; AL NE; THACO 19

### 4. The Gauntlet

You are only 500' from the tower but the pursuing creatures are growing in number and gaining confidence. Ahead there are several huge rubble piles on each side the road. Each pile reaches the height of the road or slightly higher. Smaller piles of rubble and massive stones litter the road before clearing 200' short of the tower. You can see several of the vicious creatures clambering up the rubble piles that flank the road. They all scoop up large rocks to hurl as you make the final dash to the tower.



**DM's Description:** There are three tall piles of rubble on each side of the road. Each pile is occupied by two wretched that will hurl stones at the PCs as they move down the road. However, the PCs can use the debris on the road as partial cover as they run for the tower. The wretched can only see PCs that are clear of the protection of the debris. If the PCs sprint between safe zones (see map), the wretched can throw their stones, but suffer a -4 to hit. If the PCs simply race through the area, the stone-throwing wretched will suffer a -2 to their attack rolls. If the PCs use the debris as cover to attack the wretched, the PCs will gain a +4 to their AC.

It will take one round to sprint and gain cover for each section the PCs cross. This will allow the pursuing wretched on the road to close the distance. At this point, the pursuing wretched will number 40 and they will be exactly five rounds behind the PCs. The DM and players can use the map (below) to track movement and time.

Wretched (12) AC 6; HD 1+1; hp 6 each; MV 120; #AT 3; Dmg 1d3 claw / 1d3 claw / 1d2 bite; SA Frenzy; SD None; AL NE; THACO 19

**The Great Tower**

The wretched have an unnatural fear of the tower and will not enter, even while in a frenzy. They will approach to within 20' of the doors then move off to the sides of the tower to avoid being targeted by missile weapons. After a few hours, most of the wretched will

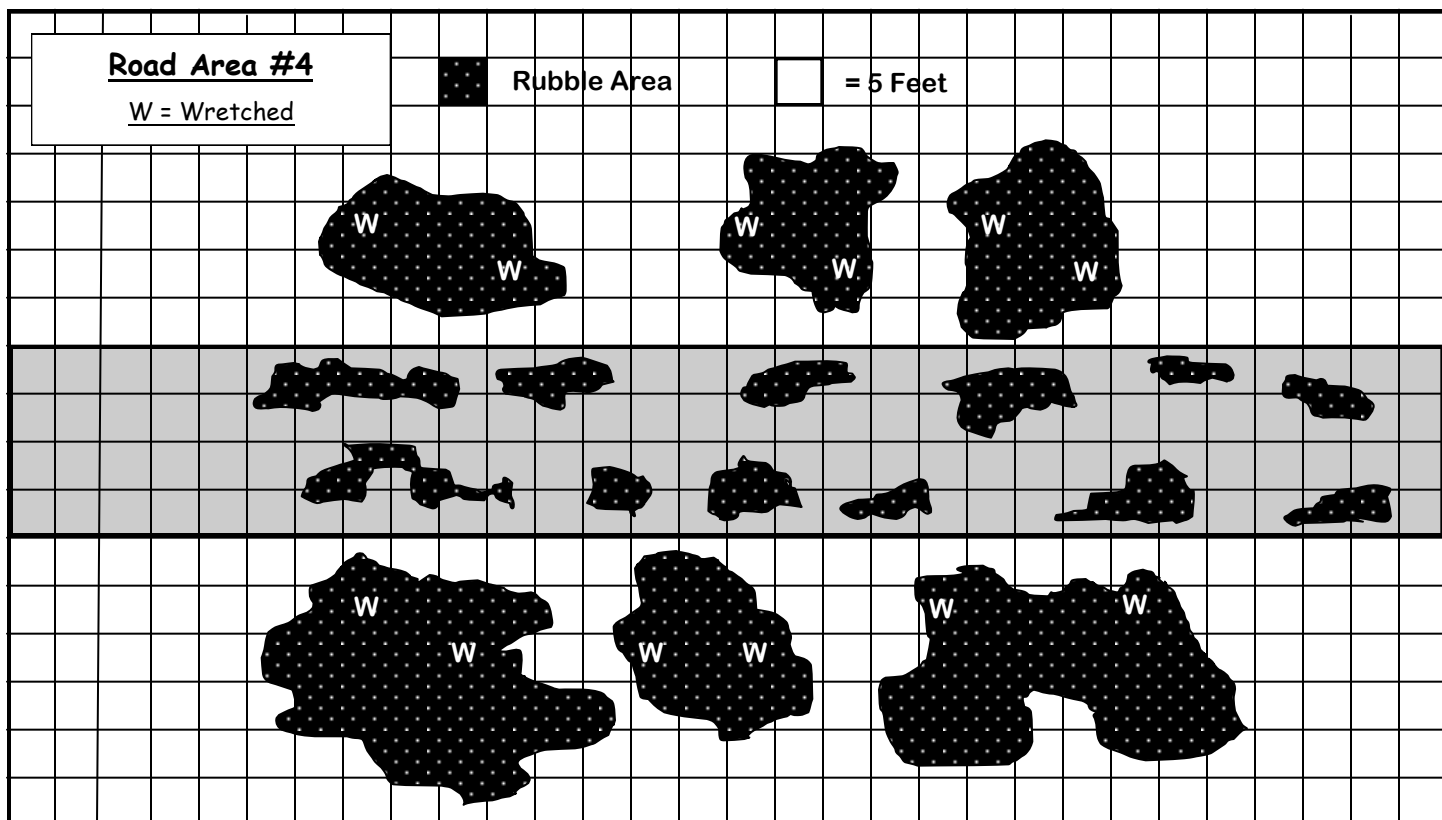
return to their lairs, but a dozen or so will remain near the tower entrance and watch for the PCs to emerge. From inside the tower, the PCs will be able to see hundreds of wretched moving about the city.

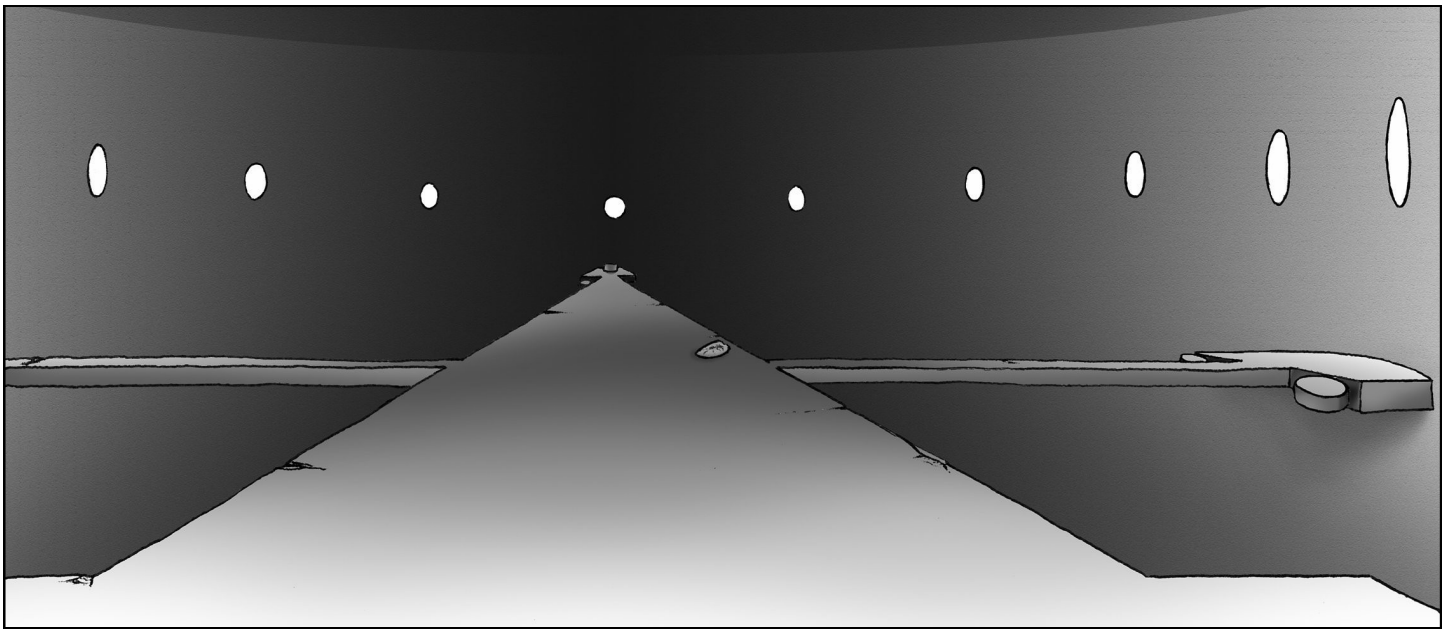
The Great Tower was occupied a millennium ago by wizards that were charged with research. There are no stairs in the tower, and movement between levels is accomplished by use of the levitation stones at the east, west and north compass points of the tower.

The stones are operated by voice control (in any language); a rider must speak the appropriate level number and the stone will slowly rise to that level; however, the rider must wear a ring of control to operate the stone. There are two types of rings that control the stone; one is plain copper and the other is silver.

A copper ring will allow access to the first three levels. A silver ring gives unlimited access even beyond the confines of the tower. Only one rider is required to wear a control ring regardless of how many riders are on the stone. The stones can lift a total weight of 2,000 pounds. The stones remain in place after riders depart.

Additionally, the stones can be moved by simply commanding up, down or stop. The stones can stop at any point inside the tower (copper ring limitations do apply). However, the stones will not descend below the first level of the tower. The stones can only move straight up and down – never sideways. The stones can only move in this fashion if there is ring-wielding rider present on the transport stone.





Each stone has a nearly identical stone set in the floor at each level (see map of the Great Tower). The second stone is slightly lighter in color. These stones are summoning stones. If a rider is at a level where no stone is present, the rider simply stands on the summoning stone and summons the transport stone by speaking the appropriate level. The levitation stone will then move to the designated level.

When the PCs arrive in the tower, all of the levitation stones will be in place on the first level with the exception of two: one levitation stone at the south platform and one stone at the west platform. The missing levitation stone at the south platform has failed and it has fallen into the abyss. The missing levitation stone at the west platform is currently at the fifth level where the Phantom Mage has left it.

The magic in all of the levitation stones is failing. There is a cumulative 10% chance each time a stone is used that it will fail and immediately fall into the abyss. For example, if the PCs use the levitation stone at the south platform to move to level 2, there is a 10% chance the stone will fail and tumble into the abyss. If the PCs successfully ride the stone to level 2, exit and re-enter later to ride the stone to level 3, there is now a 20% chance of failure. The chance of failure will continue until the stone finally fails and falls into the abyss. A stone that does fail will do so when it is exactly halfway to its destination point.

If a levitation stone fails, the PCs will have a chance to jump onto the platform immediately below. Each PC must make a dexterity check to successfully land on the platform. The PC will suffer 1d6 damage per 10' fallen. Use the elevation chart for the Great Tower on page 38 to determine distance. For example, if a stone fails moving

between the first and second level of the tower, the rider must make a successful dexterity check to land on the first level platform. Assuming the character is successful, that character will suffer 2d6 damage from the 20' fall (the height of level one is 40').

If the stone fails at any level higher than level one, the falling PCs may make dexterity check at each level they have exceeded in order to save themselves from falling into the abyss. The dexterity check is made at a -4 penalty for every level beyond the first they have fallen. For example, if a stone fails on its way to level four, the rider must make a normal dexterity check to land on the level three platform. The ceiling height of the third level is only 20' and the PC will suffer 1d6 damage if the dexterity check is successful. However, if the PC fails his dexterity check, he can make another attempt at the second level platform. This check is made with a -4 penalty (add four to the die roll). If the PC is successful, he has landed on the second level platform. The damage from the fall is 5d6 from the 50' he has fallen. Any character that fails to land on the level one platform will fall into the abyss and be lost forever.

Each level of the tower is magically climate controlled. The PCs will notice slight temperature variations between the levels. Most noticeably, they will notice the humidity between level one and level two changes significantly as they move between the floors. The air on level two is extremely dry where as the air on level one is saturated with water vapor.

While there are no visible windows from the exterior of the tower, there are numerous "clearstone" windows throughout the tower. A clearstone window is a solid piece of clear granite and allows light in, however, from the outside, it appears exactly as the exterior wall of the

tower. Therefore, those inside the tower can see out, but outsiders cannot see in. Clearstone is as durable and strong as the stone that forms the tower. During daylight hours, the clearstone windows provide enough light to fully illuminate the interior of the tower.

### 1. The Tower Doors

Lying on the road directly in front of the tower are its entry doors. Two massive slabs of granite are charred and cracked. The doors were clearly damaged by some powerful energy and ripped from their hinges.

**DM's Description:** The doors were sealed when Skystrike discovered the domed city. He was intrigued and concerned that if some creatures lived within the tower, they would be a threat to his new-found lair. The doors would not open, so the dragon attacked them with his breath weapon. It took a full week, but eventually the doors succumbed to his relentless attacks. The combination of the dragon's attack, hundreds of years of age and the degradation of the tower's magical protections yielded and the doors failed. Skystrike was able to get inside, but he could not traverse the upper levels of the tower. He did take flight and inspected the massive caverns below, but found nothing. He was confident that nothing dangerous lived in or beneath the tower and has since ignored it.

The tower is illuminated during the day by the clearstone windows. At night the PCs will require a light source while moving inside the tower. There is no way to seal the entry from the approaching horde of wretched (but of course, they will not enter).

### 2. Entry

**DM's Description:** On entering, the PCs will immediately notice that the interior of the tower is fully illuminated by huge, clear "windows" that line the outer walls. They may recall that they did not see any windows while outside the tower. The windows are clearstone (see above). The air in the tower is cooler than the air in the ruined city. A constant flow of cold, damp air rises from the abyss beneath the tower.

If the PCs move to the edge of entry platform, they can see down into the abyss below – only 60' or as far as their light source will allow. If they drop an object they will not hear it hit bottom. The abyss descends into the earth several thousand feet before ending in a giant cavern filled with water. Any character that falls or jumps into the abyss without a rope or magical means of flying will be lost forever. The platform that forms the floor of the entry area and walkways has no rail or short wall.

The ceiling is set 40' above the entry level floor. The ceiling is nondescript stone. Water from condensation

clings to the stone and drips back down into the abyss or lands on the walkway, making it very slippery. A character that is running has 10% chance of falling. If a character falls while running, there is a 10% chance of falling over the edge of the walkway into the abyss.

### 3. The Blue Scale

Lying in the middle of the platform, a dull, blue disk stands out in stark contrast to the white granite floor. The disk, while not perfectly round, has the look of a fish or snake scale, only a 100 times larger.

**DM's Description:** The scale belongs to Skystrike and he lost it while examining the tower. Because the wretched are deathly afraid of the tower, the scale has remained untouched for the entire four years that the dragon has called the dome city his own. The scale has a value of 50 gp. Skystrike has regrown the missing scale and it is of no consequence to him. The PCs can guess the origins of the scale, but unless they have encountered a blue dragon previously (and had the chance to examine its scales and lived to talk about it), they are not likely to guess where it came from. The scale is 12 inches long and ranges from three inches to six inches wide. It is less than ¼ inch thick.

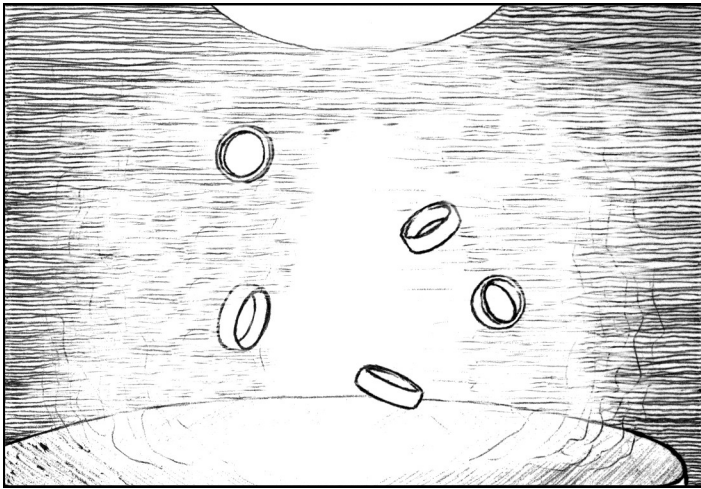
### 4. Deadly Intersection

**DM's Description:** The intersection at the center of the tower has been damaged by Skystrike. The dragon damaged the section from underneath. Only small cracks, that can only be found by close inspection (or find traps attempt by a thief) will reveal the threat. If one or more PCs move across the damaged section (marked on map), there is a 50% chance the section will fail and collapse.

A PC caught in the collapse may make a dexterity check to avoid falling into the abyss. If the dexterity check fails, the PC may make a strength check to grab onto one of the larger sections which will remain floating. If both ability checks fail, the PC will fall into the abyss and can only be saved by magic means (a flying character dives down to save them, etc).

### 5. West Levitation Stone

The walkway ends at a wide platform that forms part of the western outer wall of the tower. The platform is bare stone, but two 10' wide circular formations of gray stone are imbedded in the surface. A 10' wide circular stone hangs suspended over the giant abyss just south of the walkway as it connects to the platform. The stone is dark gray appears to be floating without any means of support. The dark gray stone is the same size as the light gray stone imbedded in the platform.

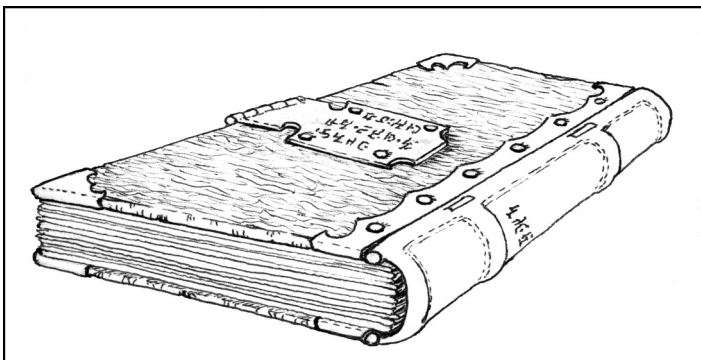


**DM's Description:** The west platform was primarily used by the apprentices that worked in the tower. While the levitation stone can move to all five levels, only the High Wizards had the control rings that allowed for transport above the third level. Apprentice wizards had to be accompanied by their High Wizard to gain access to the upper most levels of the tower.

#### 6. East Levitation Stone

The walkway ends at a wide platform that forms part of the eastern outer wall of the tower. The platform is bare stone, but two 10' wide circular formations of gray stone are imbedded in the surface. Two 10' wide circular stones hang suspended over the giant abyss just south of the walkway as it connects to the platform. The stones are dark gray and appear to be floating without any means of support. The floating stone that is farthest east wobbles and shifts slightly while the floating stone to the west is stationary. The floating stones are the same size as the light gray stone imbedded in the platform.

**DM's Description:** The floating stones can be used to move from level to level throughout the tower. The stone that is unsteady is about to fail and fall into the abyss. The east levitation stone starts at a 50% chance of failure instead of the normal 10% chance of the other levitation stones.



#### 7. North Platform and Altar

The walkway ends at a large platform that forms part of the northern outer wall of the tower. The platform is bare stone, but two 10' wide circular formations of gray stone are imbedded in the surface. A 10' wide circular stone hangs suspended over the giant abyss just south of the walkway as it connects to the platform. The stone is dark gray appears to be floating without any means of support. The dark gray stone is the same size as the light gray stone imbedded in the platform.

Additionally, a large, oval stone rises from the center section of the platform to a height of four feet. Just above the oval, a light gray mist swirls as if confined by the outer line of the oval stone. The mist rises about two feet above the altar then comes to an abrupt end, as if an invisible ceiling holds it in place. Moving gently, as if on a soft breeze, a few silver and copper rings float aimlessly inside the mist.

**DM's Description:** The remaining levitation stone will take the PCs to any level of the tower and beyond. There is a hole in the roof of the tower at level five and the stone can be commanded to move up beyond the limits of the tower (see level 5).

There are no markings on the altar. It is made of smooth, white stone and appears to be in pristine condition. The altar can withstand virtually any physical attack and remain unaffected. Any attacks on the altar will result in a lightning bolt (emitted from the mist) that will strike the offender for 3d6 electrical damage (save vs. spells for half damage).

The mist above the altar is a magical chamber that holds two silver rings and four copper rings. These are Rings of the Great Tower (see **New Magic Items**, page 30). The rings are necessary for the operation of the levitation stones. The PCs cannot simply reach in and grab the rings. Any PC that touches the mist will suffer an electrical blast for 3d6 damage (save vs. spells for half damage). The offending PC will immediately be knocked back five feet from the altar (no save).

Skystrike discovered the altar and took most of the rings. However, he was not affected by the electrical strikes and found it amusing. He decided to leave two silver rings and four copper rings to entice a would-be thief.

A character that is lightning resistant may reach into the mist and take the rings. Another method is to use the blue scale (area #3) to swat a ring when it floats within 12 inches of the outside edge of the mist. The scale will act as insulator and will protect the user from any electrical damage. Note, using a weapon, rope or pole will not protect the user, and the item will not penetrate the mist be-

fore the PC is knocked backward. PCs may fire a missile weapon at a ring in hopes of dislodging it from the mist. The PC must make an attack roll against AC 8. Regardless of the die roll, the missile weapon will be destroyed as it passes through the mist, but a ring will be dislodged. It is possible that a ring could be dislodged in this manner with enough force so that it erupts from the mist and skids or rolls across the platform toward the edge of the abyss...

When a character wears one of the rings, he will instantly understand their purpose and how to operate the levitation stones. The character will not have an indication that the stones are failing.

## Tower Level Two—Library

### 8. Level Two West Platform

This large room is bare of all furnishings. Two holes in the floor are a perfect fit for the levitation stone. There are two identical holes on the ceiling directly above those located on the floor. The ceiling is 40' above floor level. Large, clear windows are set just off the floor on the outer wall. The windows are evenly spaced and 10' tall. A single stone door is set in the east wall. The air on this level is dry and cool.

**DM's Description:** There is nothing of interest inside this room. The PCs do have an excellent view of the shattered city from this level. They can clearly see nearly the entire western section of the city. They will see numerous wretched moving about. In the distance, directly west, they can see an elevated platform road, which has collapsed in several sections, leading to an arch that appears identical to the one they discovered at the oasis and in City Encounter 1.

### 9. Level Two East Platform

This large room is bare of all furnishings. Two holes in the floor are a perfect fit for the levitation stone. There are two identical holes on the ceiling directly above those located on the floor. The ceiling is 40' above floor level. Large, clear windows are set just off the floor on the outer wall. The windows are evenly spaced and 10' tall. A single stone door is set in the west wall. The air on this level is dry and cool.

**DM's Description:** There is nothing of interest inside this room. The PCs do have an excellent view of the shattered city from this level. They can clearly see nearly the entire eastern section of the city. They will see numerous wretched moving about. In the distance, directly east, they can see an elevated platform road, which has collapsed in several sections leading to an arch that appears

identical to the one they discovered at the oasis and in City Encounter 1.

### 10. Level Two North Platform

This large room is bare of all furnishings. Two holes in the floor are a perfect fit for the levitation stone. There are two identical holes on the ceiling directly above those located on the floor. The ceiling is 40' above floor level. Large, clear windows are set just off the floor on the outer wall. The windows are evenly spaced and 10' tall. A single stone door is set in the east wall. The air on this level is dry and cool.

**DM's Description:** There is nothing of interest inside this room. The PCs do have an excellent view of the shattered city from this level. They can clearly see nearly the entire northern section of the city. They will see numerous wretched moving about. In the distance, directly west, they can see an elevated platform road, which has collapsed in several sections leading to an arch that appears identical to the one they discovered at the oasis and in City Encounter 1.

Additionally, the PCs have a clear view of the misty water that falls from a location near the top of the dome. The water falls directly on the road platform that leads north from the tower. The platform has eroded away over the centuries and is completely severed. The mist falls into a large irregularly shaped pool. A narrow stream of water meanders southwest from the pool and disappears into a crevice approximately 200 feet from the pool.

### 11. The Empty Library

This massive room occupies most of the second level of the tower. 10' tall clear windows line the exposed outer wall section to the east. The ceiling soars to 40' and looks unremarkable. The room is filled with rows of 20' tall book shelves. The empty shelves are made of white stone and look untouched by time. A heavy coating of dust covers the flat surfaces. At seemingly random intervals, two foot round, flat stones hover just inches above the floor while others rest directly on the floor.

**DM's Description:** This room once served as the research library of the tower wizards. When the city was abandoned, the library was emptied. However, a single book remains. The PCs can find the book if they make an exhaustive search. For each round spent searching there is a 1% chance per PC (cumulative) of discovering the book. A roll is made for each character that is searching. The PCs must either use the small levitation stones or climb the shelves to search thoroughly.

There are 24 working stones. The stones are all in the stages of failure. For each round in use (a stone may move 10' per round – up, down or sideways), there is a 10% chance of failure, adding 5% cumulative per round of use). A character that is on a falling levitation stone will suffer 1d6 damage per 10' fallen. A character may avoid damage by making a successful dexterity check. A successful dexterity check indicates the PC has grabbed a bookshelf and avoided the fall. The levitation stones on this level cannot leave the library area. A rider must wear either a silver or copper control ring.

Non-climbing PCs may climb the bookshelves with a success rate of 75%. Failure indicates a fall (1d6 damage per 10' fallen with a maximum fall of 20').

If the PCs are successful, they will find a *Libram of Spell Mastery* [lvl 1] (see **New Magic Items** on page 30).

### Tower Level Three—Residences

The majority of the rooms on this level are empty. Interior rooms (meaning they have no windows) will require a light source for illumination. The doors are not locked. The major encounter for this level is in room 24.

#### 12. Platform

Bare of all furnishings, this room contains nothing more than a covering of heavy dust. The ceiling rises 20' over the floor. 10' tall windows line the outer tower wall providing light and an excellent view of the city below. A hole in the floor and ceiling allow easy passage for the levitation stone. The air on this level is warmer than the level below and not so dry.

**DM's Description:** This room is empty. The view is the same as room #8.

#### 13. Platform

Bare of all furnishings, this room contains nothing more than a covering of heavy dust. The ceiling rises 20' over the floor. 10' tall windows line the outer tower wall providing light and an excellent view of the city below. A hole in the floor and ceiling allow easy passage for the levitation stone. The air on this level is warmer than the level below and not so dry.

**DM's Description:** This room is empty. The view is the same as room #8.

#### 14. Platform

Bare of all furnishings, this room contains nothing more than a covering of heavy dust. The ceiling rises 20' over the floor. 10' tall windows line the outer tower wall providing light and an excellent view of the city

below. A hole in the floor and ceiling allow easy passage for the levitation stone. The air on this level is warmer than the level below and not so dry.

**DM's Description:** This room is empty. The view is the same as room #9.

#### 15. Platform

Bare of all furnishings, this room contains nothing more than a covering of heavy dust. The ceiling rises 20' over the floor. 10' tall windows line the outer tower wall providing light and an excellent view of the city below. A hole in the floor and ceiling allow easy passage for the levitation stone. The air on this level is warmer than the level below and not so dry.

**DM's Description:** This room is empty. The view is the same as room #9.

#### 16. Platform

Bare of all furnishings, this room contains nothing more than a covering of heavy dust. The ceiling rises 20' over the floor. 10' tall windows line the outer tower wall providing light and an excellent view of the city below. Two holes in the floor and ceiling allow easy passage for the levitation stones. The air on this level is warmer than the level below and not so dry.

**DM's Description:** This room is empty. The view is the same as room #10.

#### 17. Dining Room

Centered in this room is a massive, round wooden table. Curiously, there are no chairs. The table is covered with dust and a single candle stick sits at its center. The wood has grayed and cracked.

**DM's Description:** This was the dining room that served the tower's inhabitants. Everything was taken but the table. It is massive but on the verge of collapse. Any significant weight placed on the table will result in collapse. If a PC is on the table and it collapses, he will suffer 1d2 damage. The candlestick is gold and worth 50 gp.

#### 18. Empty Bedroom

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM's Description:** The room is empty.

### 19. Empty Bedroom

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM's Description:** The room is empty.

### 20. Empty Bedroom

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM's Description:** The room is empty.

### 21. Empty Bedroom

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM's Description:** The room is empty.

### 22. Kitchen

A large oven is set against the north wall of this room. The oven looks to be made of iron. Tall cabinets with glass covered doors line the south wall. On first glance, the cabinets appear empty. Otherwise, the room is barren but everything is covered with a layer of dust.

**DM's Description:** The oven is unremarkable other than its size. The cabinets are actually magic freezers. They will feel cool to the touch. If one of the glass doors is opened, a harmless blast of cold air will issue forth. The cabinets are empty.

### 23. Empty Bedroom

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM's Description:** The room is empty.

### 24. The Curse

Clearly a residence, this room is lavishly appointed with ornate furniture and wall hangings. There are several table and chair sets, armoires, chests, couches and easy chairs set about the room. A massive bed is set in the center of the room. At its foot are two huge chests. Lying on the bed is a skeletal figure dressed in ornate robes. In life the figure must have been seven feet tall.

**DM's Description:** All the furniture and decorations are in such a state of decay that they will fall apart at the slightest disturbance. The only exception is one of the chests at the foot of the bed and the bed itself. The chest and bed are made of brass and other than some tarnishing, they are solid.

If the PCs enter the room, the skeleton will rise from the bed one round later. The skeleton wears black and purple robes. It wears numerous rings and a large necklace. The skeleton will point to the PCs and its eyes will flash a bright yellow and a curse is issued. In that instant, each PC, NPC, animal, familiar, etc. (referred to as **target** for the rest of this encounter) will be teleported to various locations throughout this level of the tower. To determine the location of each target, have the controlling player roll 1d20 and add 12. The result is the room number. No two targets can occupy the same room. Also, no target may start in rooms 17, 21, 23 or 24. All targets will arrive in the center of the appropriate room.

After the location for all the targets has been determined, each target must make a saving throw versus spell at -6. A natural roll of "20" indicates automatic success regardless of penalty. If a target fails the save, that target is filled with an undeniable desire to attack and kill every living thing in sight. The players may still control their PCs. The target may not stand still, but must go on the "hunt" for life forms to destroy. The target will attack any life form on sight. The target is not berserk and may make any reasonable attack (i.e. spell casters can cast spells, a thief may try and backstab, etc.). Each target may make a saving throw at the beginning of each round after being



teleported. The penalty is reduced by “1” each subsequent round. Therefore, on the round after being teleported, each target suffers a -5 penalty to his save vs. spells. After six rounds, each target will gain a cumulative +1 to the save until the save is made. Note, the teleportation round does not count as an actual round for purposes of the curse as it applies to the saving throw.

When a target has made his save, he is free to operate normally. A dispel magic will also negate the effects of the curse.

Additionally, if a target returns to room #24, he may attempt to destroy the skeleton. The skeleton has an AC 10 and 1 hp. Any hit will destroy it. All targets under the curse will immediately be free of its effects.

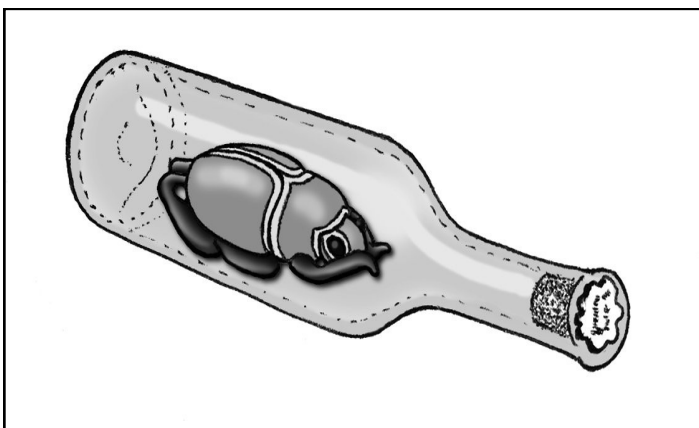
During the period of the curse, all targets act simultaneously. Each player must secretly write down the actions of his target for each round. Because the targets’ actions are simultaneous, each player will only move in 10’ increments until the round is complete; each player moves his target 10’ until they have exhausted their movement rate for the round. Initiative is rolled only during combat. The chart below indicates movement during any round based on varied movement rates. All targets under the curse must move their full movement rate each round.

The skeleton is wearing seven rings: Silver Control Ring, gold ring with emerald 300 gp, gold ring 100 gp, gold ring with ruby 400 gp, silver ring with diamond 700 gp, and a platinum ring 250 gp. The necklace is a necklace of missiles (four charges remaining).

The brass chest is locked and trapped. The trap is a dart trap (1d3 damage) which was poisoned, but time has eroded the poison. Inside the chest the PCs will find ruined clothing and a *cloak of resistance +2*.

## 25. The Tapestry

**DM’s Description:** This room is dark. The clearstone windows are in closed mode. The room is empty with the exception of a large tapestry hanging over part of the south wall. The tapestry is remarkable in that it appears



to be in perfect condition. The PCs will notice that it is fairly thick for a wall hanging. It is actually a large carpet of flying. The carpet depicts a complete illustration of the City of Spire including its five satellite sections. The PCs may recognize that one of the satellite towers looks exactly like the tower they are in. The elevated roads are clearly evident as are numerous sub-structures. For more information on the City of Spire see module C3 **City of Spire**.

The command words for the flying carpet can be uttered in any language and the carpet will respond.

## 26. Empty Room

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM’s Description:** The room is empty.

## 27. Empty Room

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM’s Description:** The room is empty.

## 28. Empty Room

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM’s Description:** The room is empty.

## 29. The Glass Bottle

Lying on the floor of this otherwise empty chamber is a wine bottle of clear glass. The bottle is sealed with a cork stopper and wax. Inside the bottle is an ornate scarab that appears to be made of onyx, gold and silver. The scarab is considerably larger than the bottle’s mouth.

**DM’s Description:** The bottle contains a very dangerous magical trap. The scarab is called a *scarab of possession* (see **New Magic Items**, page 30). If touched the scarab will immediately animate and seek to attach itself to the spine (just below the neck) of the offending creature. The victim must make a saving throw versus spells or become possessed by the scarab. The scarab can be forcefully removed but the victim will suffer 2d6 damage. The victim must continue to make saving throws each round until the scarab is removed or the victim is possessed.

When possessed, the victim will follow the orders that have been planted within the scarab by its master. The victim has no choice but to follow the orders. In this case, the scarab’s orders are for the victim to “escape.”

The victim will do everything in his power to immediately flee from the tower. If the victim actually exits the tower, the scarab will simply fall off. Note, if the victim escapes the tower, he will immediately be attacked by hordes of wretched.

### 30. Empty Room

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM's Description:** The room is empty.

### 31. Empty Room

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM's Description:** The room is empty.

### 32. Empty Room

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM's Description:** The room is empty.

### 33. Empty Room

This room is completely empty of all furnishings. Only a thick layer of dust covers the floor.

**DM's Description:** The room is empty.

## Tower Level Four—Laboratories

This is the laboratory level of the tower where magical experiments of all sorts were performed. The outer walls are evenly spaced with clearstone windows and unless indicated they are in the open setting.

The four center rooms were used for experimentation on each form of elemental. All four rooms hold an elemental, in one form or another. Note that the floor between tower level three and four is 20' thick. This was necessary due to the magical experiments and utility rooms needed on level four.

### 34. Levitation Stone Room

Bare of all furnishings, this room contains nothing more than a covering of heavy dust. The ceiling rises 40' over the floor. Ten foot tall windows line the outer tower wall providing light and an excellent view of the city below. A hole in the floor and ceiling allows easy passage for the levitation stone. The air on this level is cool and dry. However, as you move through the room varying smells assault your nose including pungent smoke, an earthy mustiness, and the air of salt water.

**DM's Description:** This room is empty. The smells emanate from the elemental rooms at the center of this level.

### 35. Levitation Stone Room

Bare of all furnishings, this room contains a heavy layer of dust and a set of footprints leading from the entry door to the vacant levitation stone hole. The ceiling rises 40' over the floor. Ten foot tall windows line the outer tower wall providing light and an excellent view of the city below. A hole in the floor and ceiling allows easy passage for the levitation stone. The air on this level is cool and dry. However, as you move through the room varying smells assault your nose including pungent smoke, an earthy mustiness, and the air of salt water.

**DM's Description:** This room is empty. The smells emanate from the elemental rooms at the center of this level. The Phantom Mage (see room 55) used the levitation stone to move up to the fifth level. The stone has since failed and fallen into the abyss below.

### 36. Levitation Stone Room

Bare of all furnishings, this room contains nothing more than a covering of heavy dust. The ceiling rises 40' over the floor. Ten foot tall windows line the outer tower wall providing light and an excellent view of the city below. A hole in the floor and ceiling allows easy passage for the levitation stone. The air on this level is cool and dry. However, as you move through the room varying smells assault your nose including pungent smoke, an earthy mustiness, and the air of salt water.

**DM's Description:** This room is empty. The smells emanate from the elemental rooms at the center of this level.

### 37. Levitation Stone Room

Bare of all furnishings, this room contains nothing more than a covering of heavy dust. The ceiling rises 40' over the floor. Ten foot tall windows line the outer tower wall providing light and an excellent view of the city below. A hole in the floor and ceiling allows easy passage for the levitation stone. The air on this level is cool and dry. However, as you move through the room varying smells assault your nose including pungent smoke, an earthy mustiness, and the air of salt water.

**DM's Description:** This room is empty. The smells emanate from the elemental rooms at the center of this level.

### 38. Levitation Stone Room

Your attention is immediately drawn to a set of footprints leading from the vacant levitation stone hole on the north side of the room. The footprints lead to the doors to the east.

The ceiling rises 40' over the floor. Ten foot tall windows line the outer tower wall providing light and an excellent view of the city below. A hole in the floor and ceiling allows easy passage for the levitation stone. The air on this level is cool and dry. However, as you move through the room varying smells assault your nose including pungent smoke, an earthy mustiness, and the air of salt water.

**DM's Description:** This room is empty. The smells emanate from the elemental rooms at the center of this level.

The footprints belong to the Phantom Mage who is currently at location 55 on the fifth level. The Phantom Mage stopped on this level momentarily but has moved on using the levitation stone in room 35. The levitation stone in this room has since failed and fallen into the abyss below.

### 39. Hall

**DM's Description:** The 20' wide hall is nondescript in every way. It is also very dark. There is no artificial or natural light in the area.

### 40. Storage Room

The floor of this room is stacked and littered with stone statues of every description. There are humanoids, demi-humans, various animals and even some monstrous shapes. Most have sustained damage and are missing appendages or heads, making some completely unrecognizable. Most appear oddly different than what you have come to know; a goblin looks strangely more bestial and larger than the goblins you have encountered.

**DM's Description:** These statues are actual creatures that have been turned to stone as a method of easy storage. The tower wizards used a medusa (see room 41) to make the conversion. All the statues have equivalents in the current age, but most have softened in appearance. These creatures can be returned to life by using the staff found in room 41. If returned to life, the creature will immediately attack the PCs in berserk fury and will not stop until dead. The creatures in the room include: a human, a dwarf, an elf, a warg, a wolf, a lion, a goblin, an ogre, a giant spider, a mind flayer, and three trolls.

The creatures statistics are generally the same as contemporary monsters with the exception that each has an

additional hit dice, an AC better by a factor of one, and +1 to all damage rolls.

### 41. The Medusa

Lying in the center of this room is an enormous stone sarcophagus. Large enough to hold a giant, the sarcophagus is unmarked. Otherwise, the room is empty.

**DM's Description:** The sarcophagus holds a live medusa. The creature is held in a stasis and has not aged since it entered 1,000 years ago. The cover of the sarcophagus is extremely heavy and bulky. It will require at least three PCs to handle it (regardless of strength).

The medusa will take one round to recover from the stasis, but will attack immediately upon seeing the PCs (and not the tower wizards). The PCs need not make a saving throw versus petrification when they first open the sarcophagus and see the medusa. However, they will require saving throws on any subsequent round spent viewing the medusa.

Inside the sarcophagus, the medusa has the following treasure: 300 gp, 10-50 gp gems, 5-100 gp gems, and a *staff of stone* (see New Magic Items, page 30).

Medusa (1) AC 5; HD 6+1, hp 32; MV 120'; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 + poison; SA poison on successful hit, gave for petrification; SD None; AL NE; THACO 14

### 42. Salt Water Room

The door to this room opens with a burst of cold, damp air. The unmistakable smell of salt water fills the air. Just inside the entry you see that nearly the entire room is a giant pool of water. Only a narrow walkway leads from the door to the center of the room where it ends in a small circular platform. The water is dark and the light from the huge windows fails to penetrate its depths.

**DM's Description:** This room was used to house various marine animals of the salt water variety. The few that remained after the tower was evacuated died and the salt water has completely eroded their remains. The alkalinity and acidity of the water is extremely high. It will not noticeably affect inanimate objects (such as weapons or clothing), but it is corrosive to bare skin.

A PC entering the water will initially feel a slight burning to the skin and eyes. The PC will suffer one point of damage for each round in the water thereafter. Also, his eyesight will be reduced to 50% effectiveness for one day. If the PC stays in the water for more than five rounds, he will immediately lose his eyesight (for one

day). If any magical healing is used, his eyesight will return.

There are a series of pipes that once circulated the water in the pool. They have long since failed. Otherwise, the pool is empty. The pool is 15' deep.

#### 43. Fresh Water Room

The door to this room opens with a burst of cold, damp air. Inside the room you see that it is filled with water. Only a narrow walkway leads to the center of the room where it ends at a small circular platform. A brass pedestal sits at the edge of the platform. A small, brass box lies on the pedestal. The water is clear. At or near the bottom, there are numerous brass-colored pipes forming a rough circle in the pool.

**DM's Description:** This pool served as a fresh water home for various aquatic creatures. The pipes circulate and aerate the water. They are still active. However, the pool is void of any creatures. The box on the pedestal (unlocked) holds two blue marbles, five red marbles and two clear marbles. The marbles are magical and are called *water stones* (see **New Magic Items** on page 30).

The water in the pool is pure and clean. It can be consumed with no ill effects. This pool is 15' deep.

#### 44. Bottle Air Room

Long shelves, stacked four high, run along the interior walls of this room. The shelves are separated by two feet with the top most shelf eight feet from the floor. The shelves are loaded with small, glass jars. Each jar is sealed with a brass lid. The jars appear empty, but each has runes etched into its brass lid.

**DM's Description:** Oddly enough, each jar contains air from various parts of the planet. The jars are completely sealed and the runes on the lid indicate the location from which the air was sampled. If the PCs possess the means to read the runes (read languages spell, etc.), it will not be of much use because the names have no contemporary meaning. Only five have identifiable names: Spire, Traverse, Ascend, Reach and Shard. These are the names of the cities of the ancient wizards. The jars are spaced evenly one foot from each other.

If the PCs handle a jar, they will immediately notice the jar feels oddly heavy. The contents of the jars are under extreme pressure, creating the heavy feel. The jars can be opened if held and the word "open" is spoken in the ancient tongue. Otherwise, the jars will not open unless force is applied. If forced, the jar will explode prior to successful opening. All PCs within 10' of an exploding jar will suffer 1d3 damage from concussion and glass shards.

If a jar explodes within proximity of the jars on the shelves, there is a chance others will explode. To determine how many jars are affected roll 1d10. For each jar in the explosion radius, roll 1d20. If the result is eight (8) or more, the jar is safe. Otherwise the jar will explode with the same effects as noted above. Note, this will require additional saving throws for 1d10 jars within 10' of that jar.

If a jar explodes and the PCs immediately attempt to flee the room, a segment by segment approach must be used to determine which PCs escape and when. Jars will be affected the segment after the proceeding explosion. For example, if the PCs break a jar and it explodes and they are standing near a shelf, the DM rolls 1d10 (resulting in a five). Each PC will suffer 1d3 damage on segment one. On segment two the PCs must announce their intentions. Also, on segment two the five affected jars must make a save (eight or better). Assuming two fail, each PC will suffer 1d3 x2 damage. Each PC can move 1/10<sup>th</sup> of their movement in the direction they determined at the beginning of segment two. Since two jars exploded on segment two, the DM must roll 1d10 twice to determine how many jars are affected by the explosion. This pattern is followed until the PCs either escape or are killed. The jars may continue to explode for several rounds after the PCs exit the room. Note also, that the explosion radius will enlarge as more jars explode.

The jars have no real value and clearly not safe for travel.

#### 45. Hurricane Room

This room is bare of all furnishings. However, the ceiling is completely obscured by a thick cloud-like mist. The cloud moves and undulates slowly. A soft breeze can be felt moving through the room.

**DM's Description:** One round after the first PC enters the room, the door will close. The door cannot be opened by normal or magic means. The clouds will suddenly turn dark and the wind will escalate by 25 mph per round. The escalation will continue for six rounds until the wind reaches 150 mph. Any PCs trapped in the room will be picked up by the vortex and slammed against the walls of the room. The vortex will continue for four rounds after it reaches maximum speed. All PCs trapped in the vortex will suffer 1d6 damage per round (no save).

Etched into the floor at the center of the room is a small five foot diameter circle. The circle can only be found on close inspection. Any PCs inside the circle are protected from the winds. The door will "unlock" after the winds subside. The hurricane system will only activate if the door is opened and someone enters the room.



#### 46. Empty Storage Room

This room is filled with dust but otherwise empty.

**DM's Description:** This room was used for storage, but it is now empty.

#### 47. The Fire Pit

This chamber is dominated by a large fire pit at its center. The 10' wide pit is encircled by blackened stones. The interior of the pit is sunken two feet into the floor. A thick layer of black and gray ash covers the bottom of the pit.

**DM's Description:** This room was used to test the effects of nonmagical fire on various animate and inanimate objects. Typically, the fire pit would ignite after a wizard entered the room. However the flame nozzles that are hidden under the ash are clogged from age and neglect. If the ash is disturbed, or a PC searches around in the ash, the pit will ignite and erupt into searing flame. Any PC caught in the pit when it ignites will suffer 6d6 damage (save for half damage). There is nothing in the pit but ashes.

The fire pit is fueled by a massive tank under the room. The PCs will find a round wall stone that can easily be removed revealing a tube leading down (and into the tank). A dial on the tube can be rotated to shut off the fuel feeding the fire pit. The fire pit will extinguish when the PCs exit the room.

#### 48. The Flame of the South

Suspended in the center of this room a flaming long sword casts a reddish glow. Red and yellow flames surround its blade. The sword floats approximately five feet from the floor. The sword points to the west wall. The east and west walls are charred in dozens of locations. Otherwise, the room is empty.

**DM's Description:** This sword is magical and a distant relative of contemporary flaming swords. It is a *Flame of the South* (see **New Magic Items**, page 30). The sword will continue to flame as the PCs inspect it and the room. There are runes on its blade, but a read magic spell is necessary to decipher them. The runes are simply the sword's name (Ghest). Any PC may simply grab the sword (hopefully by the hilt) and secure it; however, the sword's flame will not extinguish. The sword's scabbard is not in this room and has been lost. Material in room 49 can be fashioned into a scabbard by a skilled blacksmith.

The room is otherwise empty.

**Special note on rooms 49-52.** The stone doors to these rooms are 15' tall and six feet wide. They open easily and have no locks. Also, each room is artificially illuminated by continual light spells cast on ceiling stones.

#### 49. The Fire Elemental

Sitting squarely in the center of this room is a 10' tall glass tube. The tube, which is two feet wide, is enclosed on both ends by iron caps. Inside the tube, leaning against the glass, is a white staff.

**DM's Description:** The tube holds a *frostwood staff* (see **New Magic Items**, page 30). It also houses a dormant fire elemental. The effects of the staff in an enclosed space has withered the elemental to nothing more than a tiny wisp of flame. The elemental is at the top of tube, hidden from sight by the iron cap. Only by circling the tube and looking up into the cap will a PC discern the small flame. The tube is not air tight and a slight chill can be felt if the PCs approach within a few feet.

If the tube is opened, or broken, the fire elemental will escape and attack the party. The fire elemental will immediately grow to full size. This *frostwood staff* has six charges remaining.

Fire Elemental (1) AC 2; HD 8, hp 37; MV 120'; #AT 1; Dmg 3d8; SA None; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; AL N; THACO 12

### 50. The Earth Elemental

Standing slumped in the center of this room is an oddly crafted statue. The statue is approximately 15' tall and appears to be a figure of a man. However, the overall appearance is that of rock and stone. It is as if the thing was constructed from various rocks, dirt and small stones. Protruding through its chest and back is a black shafted spear. Lying around the room are piles of earth and stones of varying sizes and shapes.

**DM's Description:** The figure is an earth elemental that is currently "dead." However, if the spear is removed, the elemental will reform and attack in a frenzied rage. If the elemental is somehow "disassembled" prior to removing the spear from its chest, it will reassemble two rounds after the spear is removed. Note that elementals cannot be harmed by nonmagical weapons.

The spear is magical and has the following properties: **+1 / +3 vs. earth-based creatures** (including earth elementals, stone golems, xorn, etc.). On a roll of a "20" to hit (modified rolls are included), an earth-based creature must make a saving throw vs. death or be slain. However, the spear must remain impaled in the creature or the creature is restored to life at full hit points.

Earth Elemental (1) AC 2; HD 8, hp 35; MV 60'; #AT 1; Dmg 4d8; SA None; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; AL N; THACO 12

### 51. The Water Elemental

This room is completely filled with a heavy mist. Vision is limited to one foot in any direction. A hazy light is emitted from the ceiling or somewhere above your heads.

**DM's Description:** This room has four 15' deep pools set into the floor. There are no handrails or edges to the pools and a PC in the mist will not see them. The pools are filled with clear, cold water. A PC in full armor, or one that cannot swim, will drown unless helped. A drowning PC must make a skill check against constitution each round he is in the water. There is a cumulative -2 penalty per round after the first round. A missed save indicates the PC has suffered 1d6 damage. Once a roll is missed, no further rolls are necessary and the PC suffers an additional 1d6 damage per round until rescued or death occurs.

In the center of the room is a small ornate stand. The stand is of solid silver and decorated with gem encrusted sea shells (1,000 gp value). On the stand is a silver flask; its stopper in place. The item is an *Elemental Flask* (see **New Magic Items** on page 30). If the stopper is removed, the mist will immediately become sucked into the flask. If the stopper is not replaced, a water elemental will emerge from the flask in two rounds. The water elemental will immediately attack the PCs.

The pools are empty of anything but water.

Water Elemental (1) AC 2; HD 8, hp 39; MV 60'; #AT 1; Dmg 5d6; SA None; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; AL N; THACO 12

### 52. The Air Elemental

Upon opening this door you witness a maelstrom inside this room. A powerful, and continuous, blast of wind flows in a circular fashion in the chamber. Small items are caught up in the vortex and they circle the room at an amazing pace. Oddly, in the center of the room a small iron box lies motionless on the floor.

**DM's Description:** The air moving through the room is an air elemental. However, it cannot stop its motion until its eyes are returned. They are inside the box on the floor. The objects in the vortex are mostly mundane items and quite small. The one item of value is a **+2 dagger**. A PC may attempt to cross through the vortex and reach the center of the room where there is no wind. However, moving through the vortex is dangerous and each PC will be struck by 1d4 objects per round spent inside the vortex. The PC may make a dexterity check to avoid being struck by each object. Failure indicates an object has struck the PC and he has suffered 1d4 damage. A PC may attempt to grasp the dagger (dexterity check) while inside the vortex (attempts cannot be made from the door or center safe area).



If a PC opens the iron box, two small, onyx gems will immediately fly out and join the vortex. The vortex will immediately slow and an air elemental will form and attack.

If the PCs remove the box from the room prior to opening the box, the gems will not join the vortex. The gems are valued at 250 gp each.

There is a barely discernable pattern to the spinning objects. A PC that attempts to define a pattern (intelligence check) can safely cross the vortex without sustaining damage. However, that PC must brave the vortex in order to grasp the dagger. The secret of the vortex cannot be explained to a character that fails his intelligence check (although, the character may think he understands the pattern!).

Air Elemental (1) AC 2; HD 8, hp 31; MV 360'; #AT 1; Dmg 2d10; SA None; SD +2 or better weapon to hit; AL N; THACO 12

### Tower Level Five—The Magic Mist

The final level of the tower includes just a single encounter. The PCs will come face to face with the mysterious Phantom Wizard (see module B3 City of Spire; Pacesetter Games & Simulations, Fall 2011). The encounter with the Phantom Wizard will be very brief and only serves to create a sense of urgency to escape the Ascend.

The PCs have two options for escape: the magic carpet from room 25 or by using a levitation stone. Both the stone and carpet will let the PCs reach Skystrike's lair.

The fifth level is illuminated by clearstone walls as well as the open hatch above the southern levitation stone platform.

### 53. East Levitation Stone Platform

Similar to the first level of the tower, this platform is open completely to the massive interior of the tower. A 20' wide, stone walkway leads to the center of the tower. There are no guard rails on the walkway. It appears this platform is at least 150' above the ceiling of the fourth level. Beneath the walkway, a thick white mist billows like a cloud.

A trickle of watery mist falls through an opening in the sloped tower roof directly over the levitation stones. Lying around the levitation stone openings are thick chunks of carved stone. The opening above appears to be section of a hatch that has failed. The opening is no more than a five foot square.

Looking through the opening, you can clearly see the waterfall that originates from the near center of the dome. The vast majority of the water looks to be falling just south of the tower.

**DM's Description:** The stone chunks are part of a hatch that has indeed failed due to prolonged exposure to a portion of water that falls from the dome. Skystrike found the opening but he is too large to enter. Seeing nothing of particular interest, and most of all, no occupants or treasure, he has ignored the tower.

The PCs can use the one remaining levitation stone to reach a point just 50' from the edge of the waterfall and Skystrike's lair. The PCs may also use the *flying carpet* to exit the tower at this point.

### 54. North Levitation Stone Platform

Similar to the first level of the tower, this platform is open to the massive interior of the tower. A 20' wide stone walkway leads to the center of the tower. There are no guard rails on the walkway. It appears this platform is at least 150' above the ceiling of the fourth level. Beneath the walkway, a thick white mist billows like a cloud.

Oddly, the northernmost levitation stone is hovering on this level.

**DM's Description:** The Phantom Mage used the levitation stone to access this level.

### 55. East Levitation Stone Platform

Similar to the first level of the tower, this platform is open to the massive interior of the tower. A 20' wide stone walkway leads to the center of the tower. There are no guard rails on the walkway. It appears this platform is at least 150' above the ceiling of the fourth level. Beneath the walkway, a thick white mist billows like a cloud.

**DM's Description:** There is nothing of interest at this platform.

### 56. The Heart of the Great Tower of Ascend

Swirling beneath the platform in massive billowing clouds, a pure white mist moves without pattern. Occasionally, a flash of what might be lightning speeds through the clouds. However, no thunder accompanies the flashing light.

**DM's Description:** The mist is most benign to the PCs but contains raw magical energy that fuels the tower. Left on its own, the mist could sustain the tower for another 1,000 years before failing completely. At that time, the tower would begin to decay as any normal structure. Also, the levitation stones would all fail as would any other magical effects generated by the tower.

## 57. The Phantom Mage

**DM's Note:** This encounter is specifically designed for use if this module is used as part of the City of Spire module series. The Phantom Mage is a recurring character (as is the City of Ascend!). However, if you do not plan on using the City of Spire series, substitute the Phantom Mage with a reoccurring villain from your own campaign, or simply do not run this encounter at all. In that case, as the PCs approach the center of the tower platform, the tower will begin its recall to Spire. The recall function can be chalked up to the PCs moving through the tower and inadvertently setting the teleportation of Ascend into motion purely by circumstance and poor timing.

Standing on the edge of the platform, at its center, a strange figure dominates the scene. The figure is draped in flowing and tattered black and gray robes. The limbs and head of the figure are wrapped in what appear to be bands of black cloth. Black leather boots and gloves cover its feet and hands. Its hooded head is completely covered and a black cloth covers most of its face. The remaining thin slit where its eyes should be is covered in shadow. A thin silver crown rests on its covered head. Between the folds of its tattered robes you can clearly make out several pouches and a sword with a red pommel.

The figure reaches into a pouch and withdraws what appears to be several gemstones of varying color. Holding the gemstones over the mist, the figure quickly clenches its hand, turns it over and opens its hand again. A fine dust of multicolored gemstones falls into the mist below. Almost immediately, the tower shudders. A soft, dull sound begins to resonate through the tower, building ever so slowly.

As if aggravated by the presence of uninvited guests, the figure turns. It slightly cocks its head as if contemplating.

**DM's Description:** The PCs have witnessed the Phantom Mage as she takes a small step in her grand plan to return to her own time. The Phantom Mage has completed the recall mechanism that will return the City of Ascend to the City of Spire. In this case, the Great Tower and ruined city will teleport to its home location adjacent to the City of Spire. In relation to this adventure this means very little, other than the PCs must escape the confines of the tower or be teleported a thousand miles away with no hope of return. Not too mention the fact that they are currently 200 years in their own past.

The Phantom Mage will telepathically tell each PC that he must leave the city or be lost forever. They have

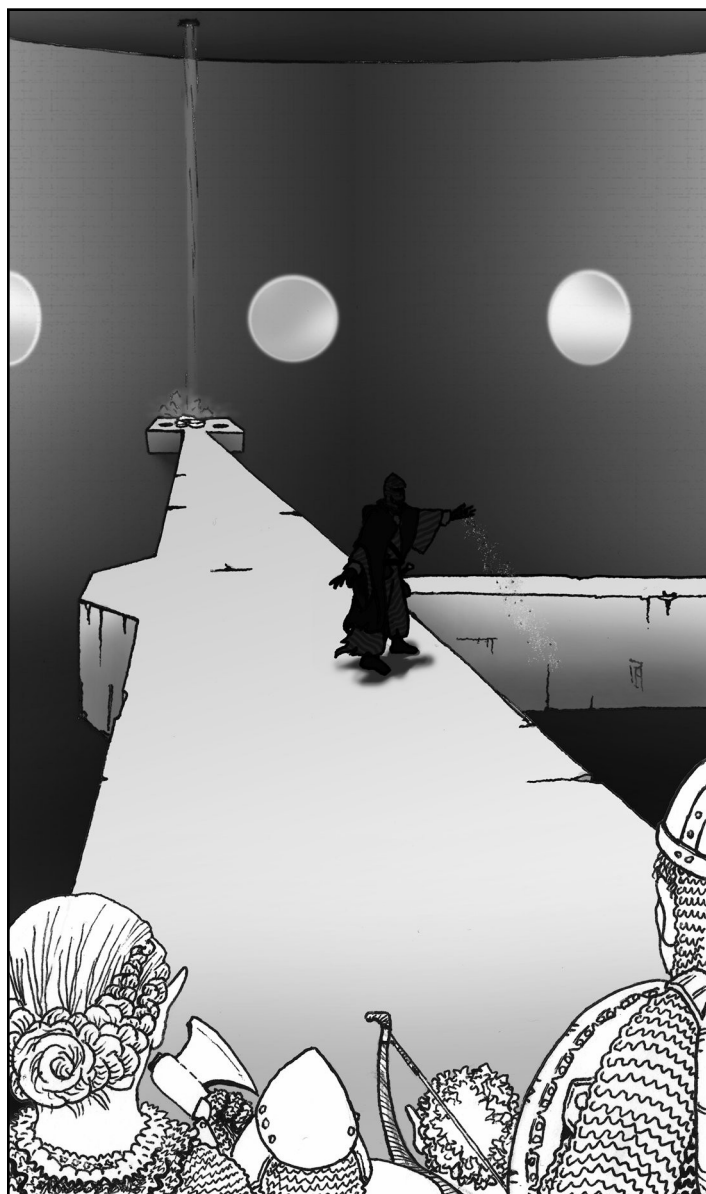
exactly six turns before the city departs. With the message conveyed, the Phantom Mage will vanish, teleporting away in search of the other cities of Spire.

The PCs will understand that the city and tower are going to vanish, but not the dome – it was built after the city arrived in this location and is not connected to the recall function of the city.

Additionally, the PCs can clearly see scores, if not hundreds, of the wretched are emerging from their warrens. They are climbing on the ruins and raised street platforms. As time moves on, the tower vibrates slightly more and the dull sound increases in pitch and volume.

### Escape from Ascend

Immediately upon concluding their encounter with the Phantom Mage, the PCs will realize they are again under the gun of escape from an impending calamity. They may try using the *flying carpet* (from room 25) to





search for escape routes in the city, but will find none. They do not have any of the gemstones necessary to use the transport arches. The only obvious route of escape is to enter the cave where the water fall emerges.

If the PCs do not have the flying carpet (room 25), they can use a levitation stone from the South Levitation Stone Platform to get within 50' of the waterfall. From that point they need to use a rope or some other magical means to reach the cave.

Alternatively, the PCs can find safety in the abyss (assuming they have a way of not falling). When the city and tower teleports, they can climb (fly) out of the abyss. Of course, they will see an empty dome. Again, they will also be 200 years in their own past. The few caves that the wretched used to enter the catacombs below have all collapsed in the tumult.

Skystrike, who is sleeping in his lair, will not be aware of the events until the city actually vanishes or

when disturbed by the PCs intrusion in his lair. He will awaken when the thunderous boom announces the teleportation of the city and tower. He may then encounter the PCs in his cave lair or find them wandering around in the empty dome below.

### Skystrike's Lair

When the PCs eventually make it to the waterfall caves which make up Skystrike's lair, they will find there is only one path to follow. The lair is only two large caves and wide tunnel that exits to the desert above. The caves are not illuminated, although there is some light from the domed area to illuminate the fringe of Area 1.

#### 1. The Waterfall

The waterfall cascades from a rift in the dome that is approximately 60 feet wide and 20 feet tall. The amount of water is small and its source cannot be much more than a small stream. A few stalagmites and stalactites ring the opening at odd intervals.

**DM's Description:** This area is only frequented by Skystrike when he has the urge to instill the wretched with fear. He seldom enters the domed area – he has never had a good feeling about the city and tower, so he basically avoids the area. The PCs will find some bones in the cavern, but little else.

The back of the cavern is approximately 30' lower than Area 2. The PCs must climb the rock wall in order to reach the next cavern and Skystrike's true lair. The timing of this can be precarious if it coincides with the dragon's awaking from the events inside the dome.

#### 2. Skystrike

**DM's Description:** Skystrike's cavern is littered with the bones and caracases of various creatures. Skystrike is normally asleep in the northwest section of the cavern. His horde is in the same location.

A pool of water takes up a section of the cavern to the south before draining away easterly into Area 1 and then over the falls. A steady stream of water falls from a large tunnel in the southern wall of the room. The ceiling height of this chamber is 30' at its center by only 20' at its sides. The tunnel was carved out by the stream and winds sideways and slowly upward before reaching the surface.

Under normal circumstances, the PCs will encounter Skystrike as he is awakening. The dragon will attack the PCs on sight. It will use its breath weapon as an initial attack. However, because the dragon has been caught by surprise, he will fight a defensive battle. His main focus will be to retreat through his escape tunnel and regroup. He will flee through the escape tunnel within the first few

rounds of combat. When he reaches the surface, he will use his breath weapon to fire and blast down the tunnel in hopes of catching the PCs in the narrow confine. Unfortunately, the tunnel will collapse due to the attack. This will end Skystrike's part in this adventure. Skystrike makes another appearance in module **G1 The Blood Cult**.

The PCs will find themselves trapped in the lair and dome. However, salvation can be found in the pool. The PCs will notice that there are reflections of green light inside the pool. Just under the surface, they will discover numerous green gemstones. These gemstones can be used to activate the arch at the east end of the dome (this is the same arch they entered through to start this section of the adventure). There are 41 green gemstones in the pool worth 5 gp each.

Skystrike's horde is in plain sight. The dragon, being fairly young, has not accumulated much wealth. Lying in a disorganized pile are 1,500 sp, 3,000 cp, 1,100 gp, 21 gems - 10 gp each, 8 gems - 50 gp each, three gold rings

worth 75 gp each, a **+1 short sword**, **2 javelins of lightning**, **wand of missiles** (6), and a **staff of striking** (4).

To escape Ascend, the PCs must return to the arch, crush the green gemstones and pass through. They will arrive back at the oasis. Whatever time has passed while the PCs were in Ascend, that same amount of time has passed at the oasis. Therefore, the fire ant swam is complete and the ants have retreated into their subterranean tunnels. The PCs will be surrounded by a scorched scene but the danger has passed.

The only clue regarding the time travel the PCs may discover is that any object they brought back from Ascend will immediately age 200 years. A book will yellow and become very brittle; metal objects will tarnish, etc.

Skystrike, Young Blue Dragon (1) AC 2; HD 10, hp 30; MV 90' / 240'; #AT 3; Dmg 1d6 claw / 1d6 claw / 3d8 bite; SA breath weapon, aura of fear, spells as third level magic user; SD immune to electrical attacks; AL LE; THACO 10

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## New Monsters

### **The Wretched**

Armor Class: 6

Hit Dice: 1+1

Movement: 120

No. of Attacks: 3

Damage: 1d3/1d3/1d2 claw/claw/bite

Number of Appearing: 2-12 (20-200)

Special Attacks: Frenzy

Special Defense: None

Treasure Type:

Intelligence: Very Low

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Experience:

The wretched are a race of humans that have devolved over the course of a thousand years. They typically inhabit underground cities that succumbed to some sort of catastrophe. The wretched are the descendents of the civilization that fell into decay and ruin.

They are loosely organized and behave in an animalistic nature. They do not create anything and survive by hunting and gathering. The wretched typically scour caverns and cave systems in search of food which includes numerous fungi and subterranean creatures. The wretched seldom venture above ground.

Often, the wretched worship some false god or powerful evil being. They are incapable of self rule but they follow orders unquestioningly – making them excellent pawns. They seldom use weapons or tools, but will hurl rocks as a form of missile weapon.

The wretched have no fear in combat and they can enter frenzy at any time. If led by an overseer, the

wretched will follow simple orders (attack, retreat, kill the man in the red cloak, etc). They cannot initiate or coordinate complicated actions, but simple orders will be followed to the letter (i.e. Hide behind the wall and attack when the men pass by).

The wretched generally live in small communal groups. They raise their young as a group, though the juveniles stay with their parents until they reach young adult status. The wretched community will generally be formed with individual family units formed in a circle around a central communal hall or structure. If any individual unit is attacked, the entire community will rise to the defense.

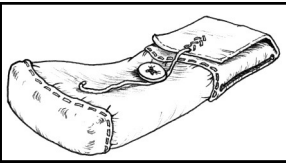
In combat, the wretched fight without much plan or strategy. They generally attempt to overwhelm opponents. They will form ambushes if possible. The wretched will avoid combat against targets that appear equal in numbers. They prefer to attack when they outnumber opponents by two to one. When in combat a wretched can enter a frenzy on any given round. Roll 1d6 and if the result is a "5-6" the wretched has frenzied. Additionally, if a wretched is damaged in combat, it will automatically become frenzied. When frenzied, a wretched gains a temporary 1d6 hit points, +2 to all attack and damage rolls, and suffers a -2 to their AC (AC 6 becomes AC8). A frenzy will last for the duration of the encounter. The wretched seldom use weapons or armor.

The wretched have developed superior sensory skills. They can "see" up to 60' in even pitch dark conditions. If blinded, they can fight with only a -2 penalty to attack rolls. However, if subjected to bright light (per spell or sunlight) they fight with a -1 penalty.

## New Magic Items

### Pouch of Protection

This small pouch appears as any normal belt pouch, but it is typically black in color. The pouch will hold up to 50 coins or



several small objects such as up to four potion bottles, 10 medium-sized gems and the like. Any object inside one of these pouches will be impervious from damage due to external threats. The pouches are completely

fire resistant, cold resistant and lightning resistant. Additionally, the pouches are completely resilient and most attempts to destroy one will meet in failure. Also, any impact on the pouch has no effect on items inside the pouch. Attacks on the possessor that force a saving throw for worn items will only damage or destroy a pouch 5% of the time.

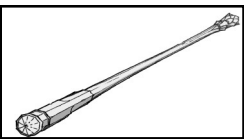
### Scarab of Possession

If touched, the scarab will immediately animate and seek to attach itself to the spine (just below the neck) of the offending creature. The victim must make a saving throw versus spells or become possessed by the scarab. The scarab can be forcefully removed but the victim will suffer 2d6 damage. The victim must continue to make saving throws each round until the scarab is removed or the victim is possessed.

When possessed, the victim will follow the orders that have been planted within the scarab by its master. The victim has no choice but to follow the orders.

### Staff of Stone

Cancels petrification effects or it can animate statues for a limited time. This staff can cancel petrification at a range of 3". Each use requires one charge. In combat, the staff functions as a

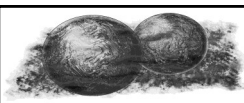


+1 weapon with an additional +3 to damage. Furthermore, the staff can animate any stone statue (stats are 3 HD, AC 4, #AT varies based on statue; Dmg 1d8 per attack, no special attacks or defenses,

MV 6 (flying creatures cannot actually fly). This animate feature requires three charges. A stone staff can be used by clerics, druids, magic users and illusionists only.

### Water Stones

These magical marbles come in three varieties: Blue, Red and Clear. The blue marble when dropped in water will freeze an area equal to 200 square feet. Any creatures inside the area will be immediately fro-



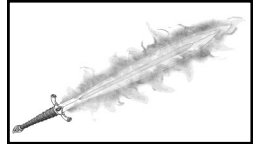
zen, but will return to normal if thawed. The frozen area can only be thawed by a *dispel magic* spell or by means of magical fire. The red marble will heat water in a 200 square feet area. Any creatures inside the area of affect will suffer the same effects as if targeted by a *heat metal* spell. The area will remain heated until negated by a *dispel magic* or if it is targeted by magical cold. A clear marble, unlike the blue and red marbles, does not disappear in water. When immersed in water, the clear marble let all air-breathers breath normally and move as if out of the

water. The marble will affect a 10' cube area. Water breathing creatures are unaffected if they enter the area. The clear marble will function for eight hours after which it will not function for another 30 days.

### Sword of the South

These swords have a blade that is continuously enveloped in magical flame. The flame will never extinguish and will cause combustible material to ignite on touch. The flame will inflict 1d6 damage per

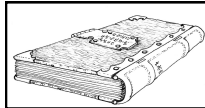
round if in contact with a creature or object. Each sword has a matching scabbard that inhibits the flame while sheathed.



These swords provide its wielder with protection from cold (per spell) while the sword is held. These swords are +2 weapons (hit and damage) and inflict an additional 1d4 magical fire damage on a successful hit roll. They inflict double damage against cold-based creatures and undead. Additionally, the sword can spew forth a powerful jet of flame once per day. The flame jet has a range of 40' and is 10' wide. All creatures caught in the jet suffer 6d6 damage or save for half (spell).

### Libram of Spell Mastery

This arcane book allows its reader to master one spell that is already in his spell book. Each Libram has an assigned level



of spell. When the book is read the reader can choose a single spell of the appropriate level. That spell will forever after function at its maximum potential. Duration, damage, range, number of affected, etc. will always be at its maximum. If the spell allows a target a saving throw, the target of the spell suffers a -4 penalty.

### Ring of the Great Tower

There are two types of this ring; silver and copper. A Ring of the Great tower must be worn in order to operate various functions of the tower including the levitation stones. The copper rings grant their wielder the ability to cast *detect magic* once per week as a fifth level magic user. The silver rings grant the same ability as well granting the ability to cast *legend lore* once per month. These rings can be used by any character class.

### Frostwood Staff



These magical weapons are always white and give off a palpable chill in a five foot radius. The chill is harmless, but can be discomforting to all by the wielder. The wielder of a frostwood gains cold and fire resistance (per spell). The staff is a +2 weapon / +4 vs. fire-based creatures. Additionally, a frostwood can cast the spell *ice storm* (1 charge), *cone of cold* (two charges) or *freezing sphere* (four charges). Spells are cast as a 14<sup>th</sup> level magic user. A frostwood staff is only useable by a magic user or illusionist.

### Ring of Darkness

These magical rings grant the wearer the ability to cast darkness, per spell at fifth level once per day. Additionally, the wearer is unaffected by magical darkness.

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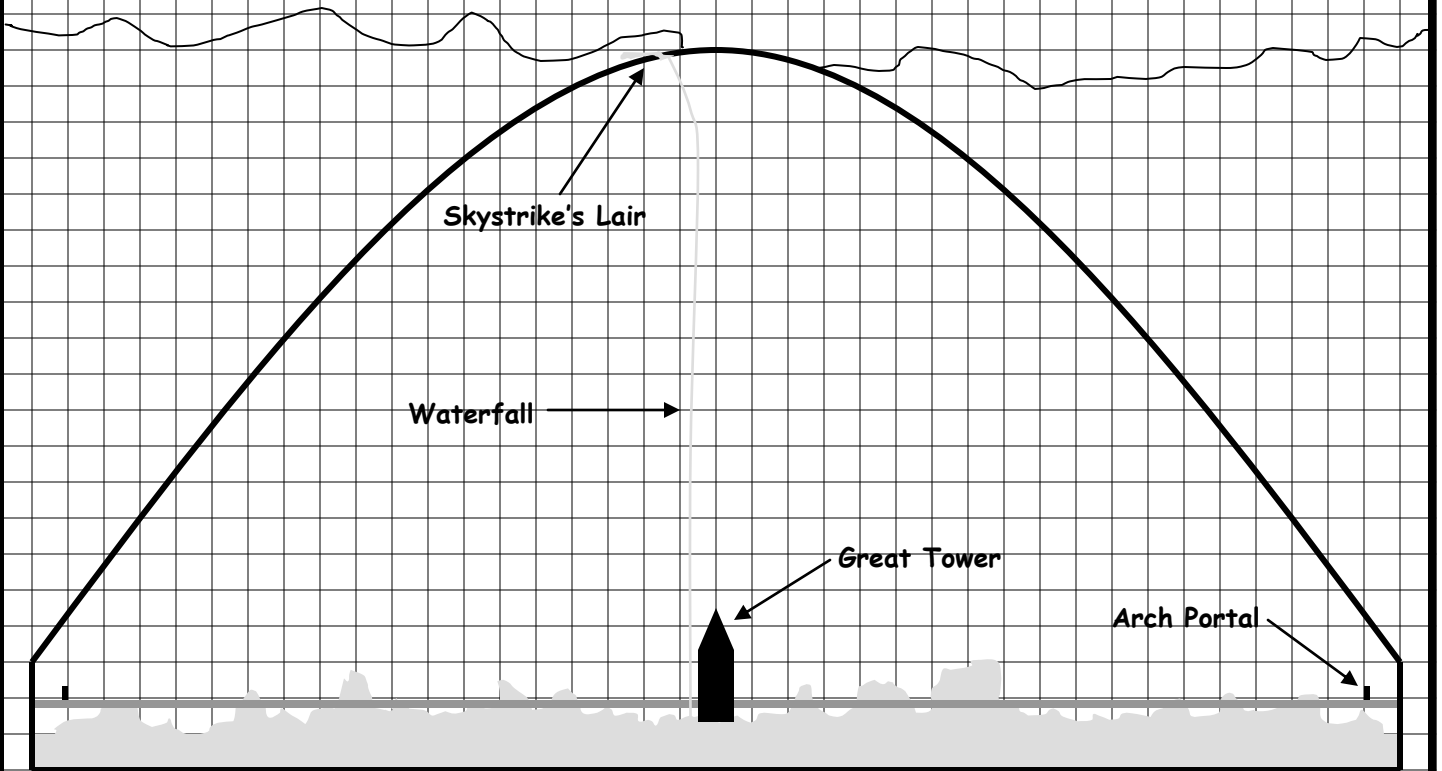
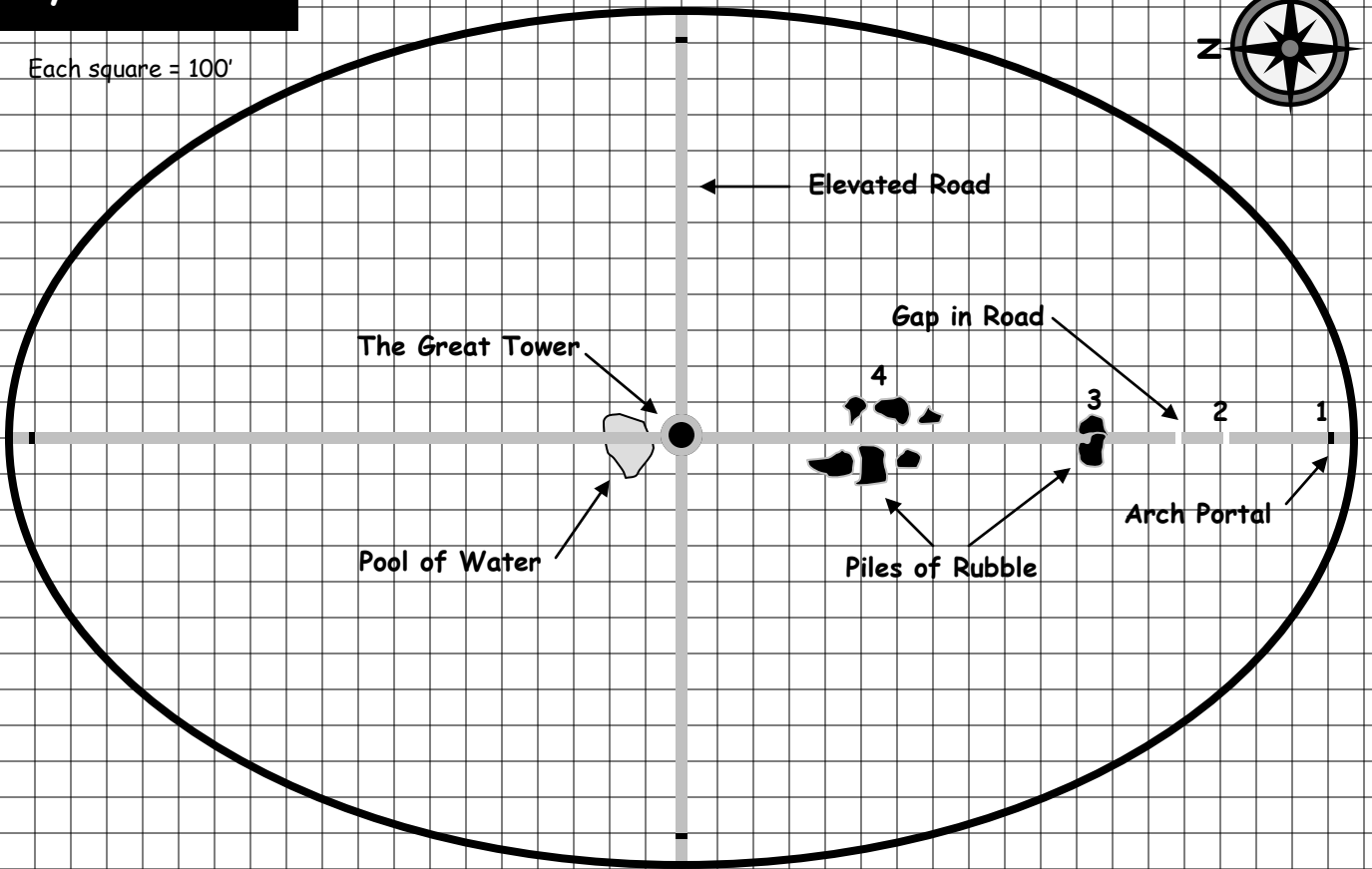
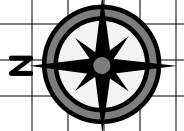
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# City of Ascend

Each square = 100'



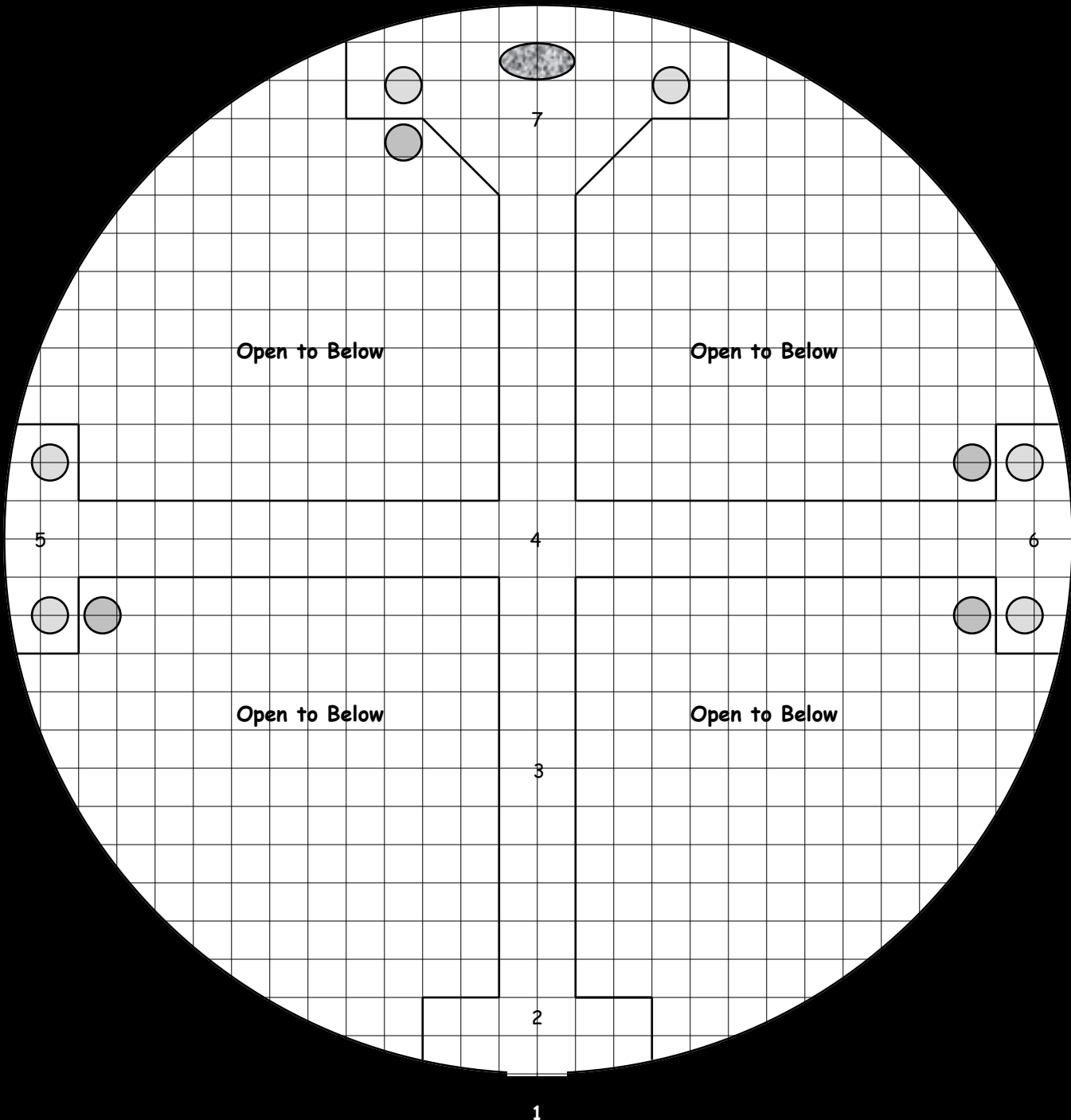
# Great Tower of Ascend

## Level One

- Platform Stone
- Levitation Stone
- Door



Each square = 10'



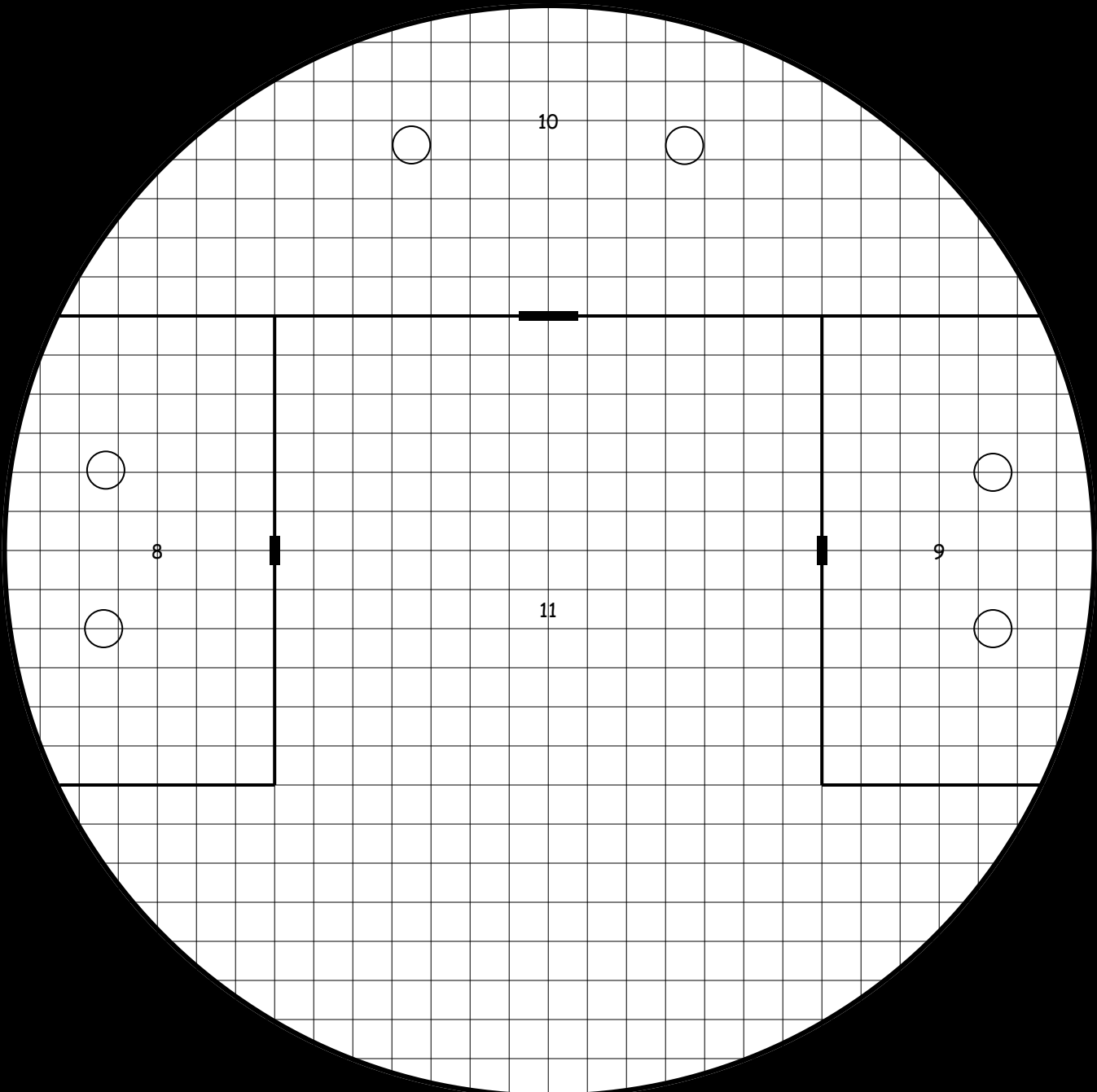
# Great Tower of Ascend

## Level Two

○ Portal to above/below    —■— Door



Each square = 10'



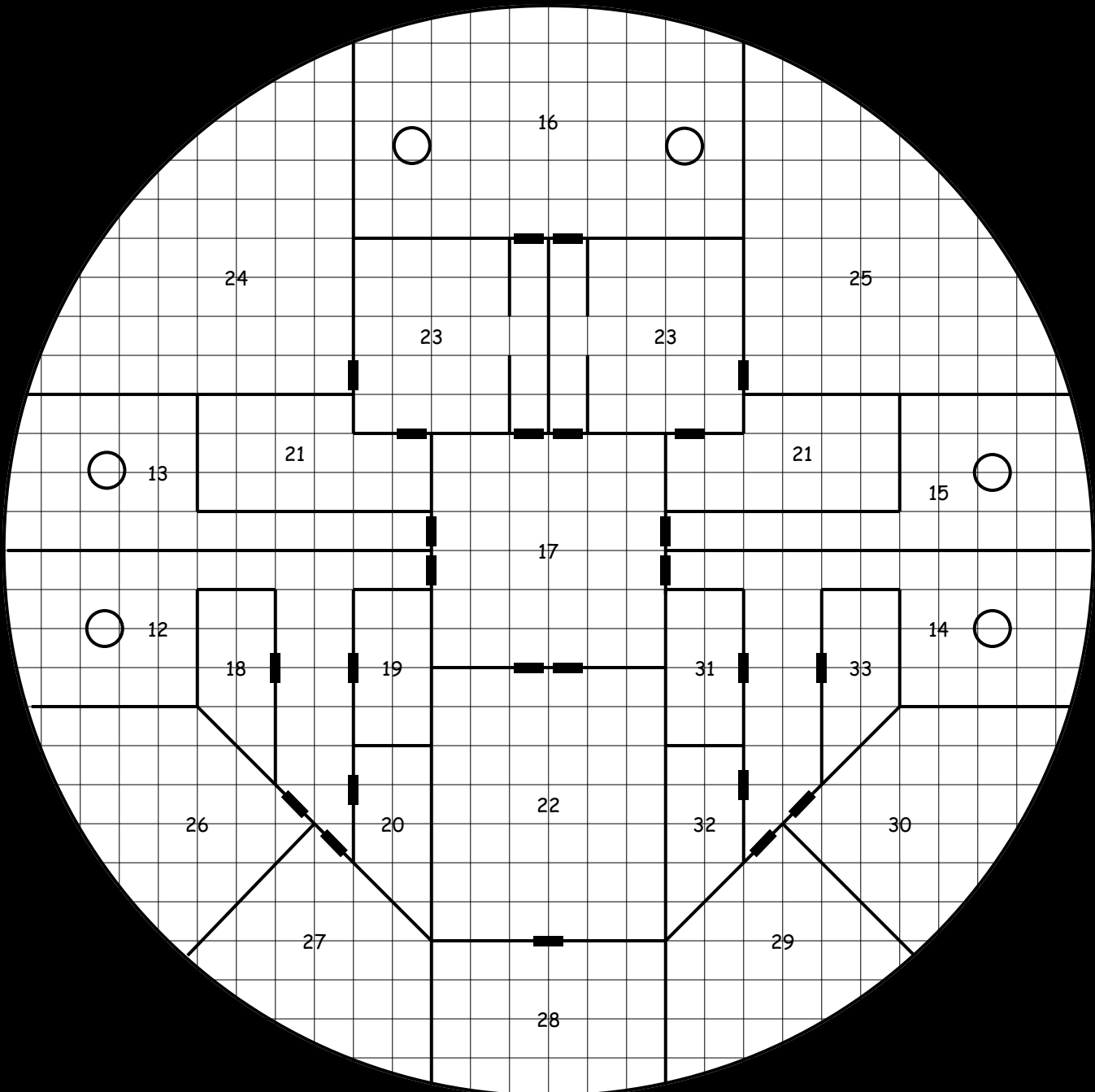
# Great Tower of Ascend

## Level Three

○ Portal to above/below    —■— Door



Each square = 10'



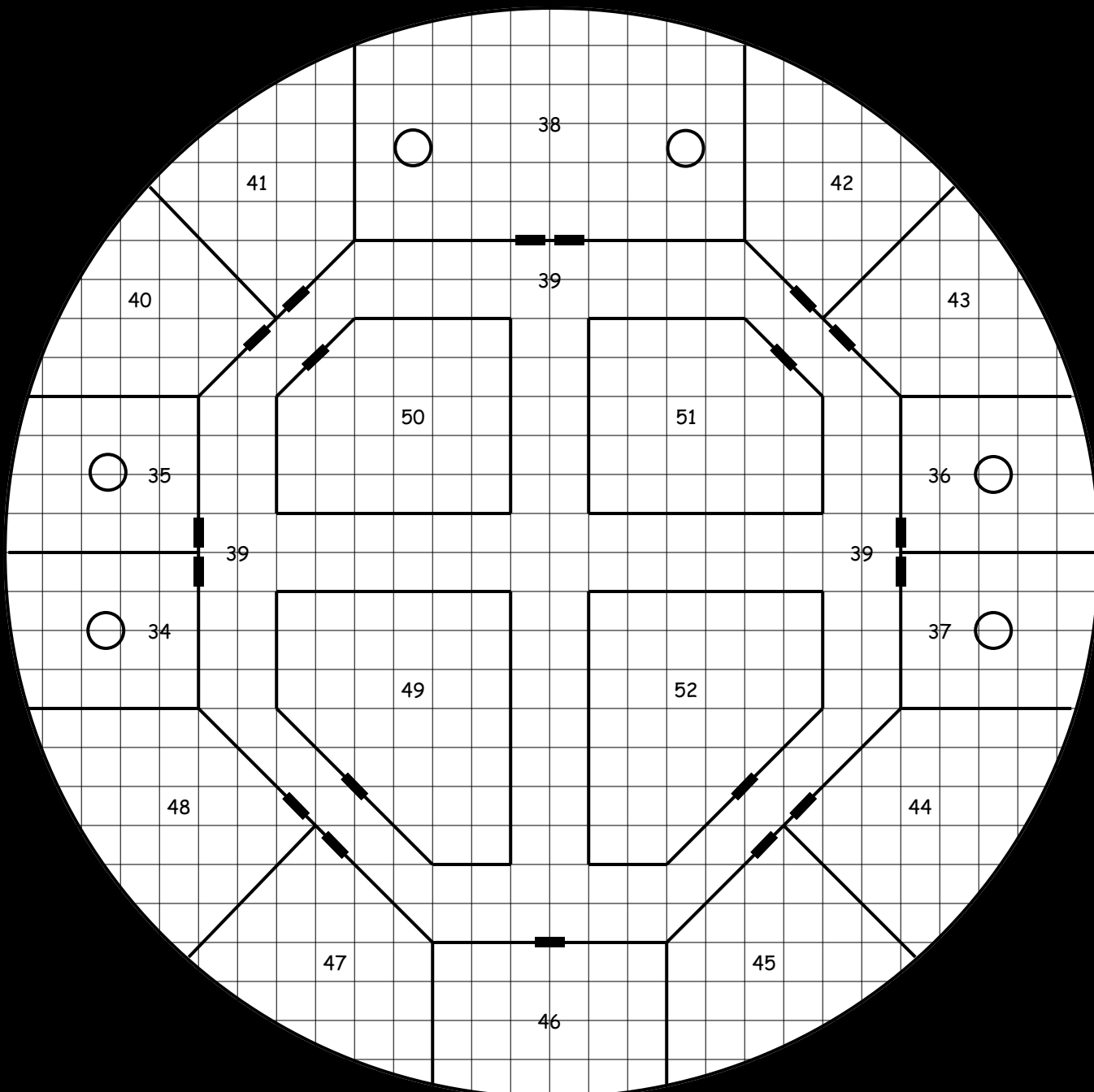
# Great Tower of Ascend

## Level Four

○ Portal to above/below    —■— Door



Each square = 10'



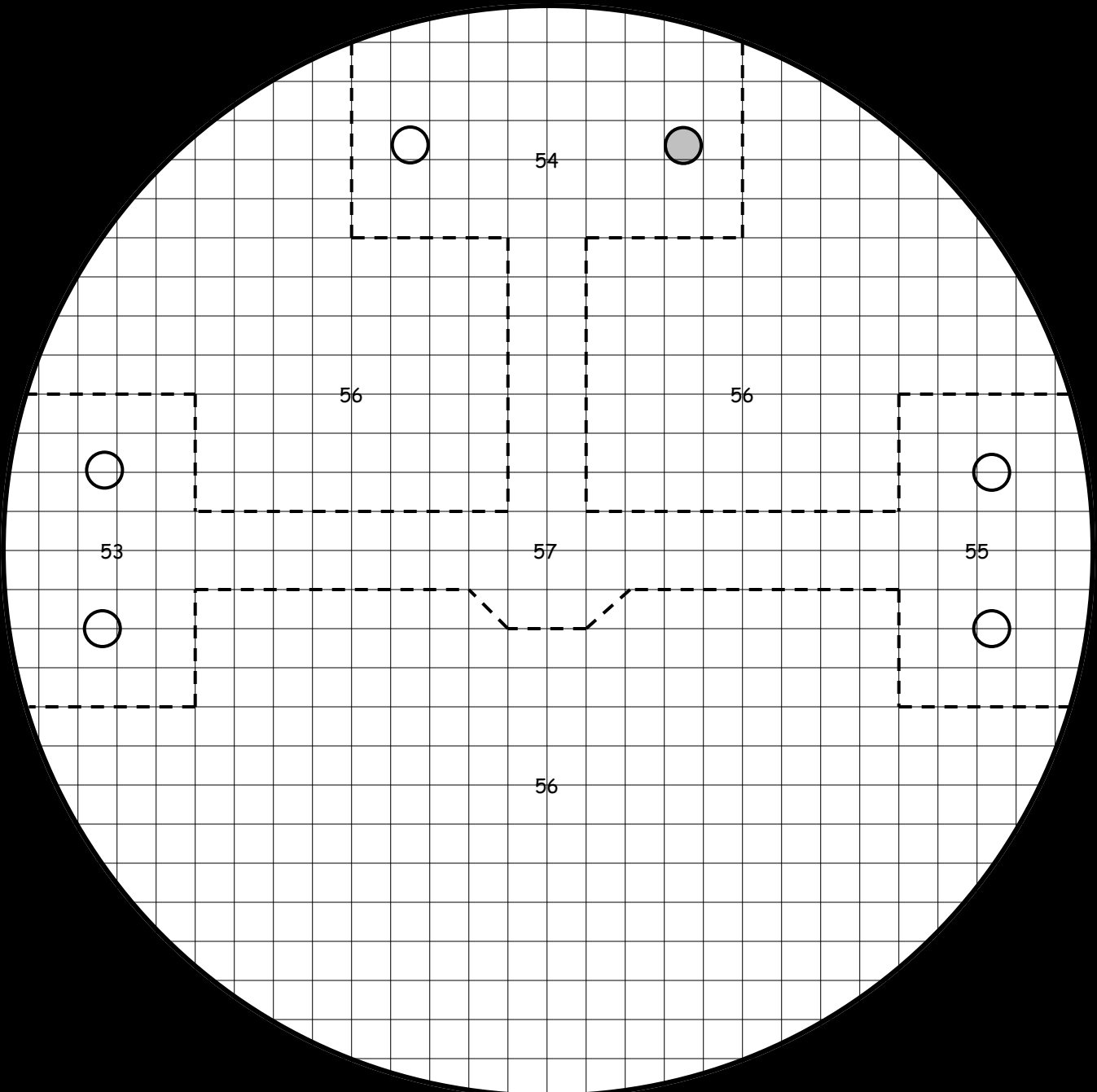
# Great Tower of Ascend

## Level Five

- Portal to above/below
- Door
- Levitation Stone



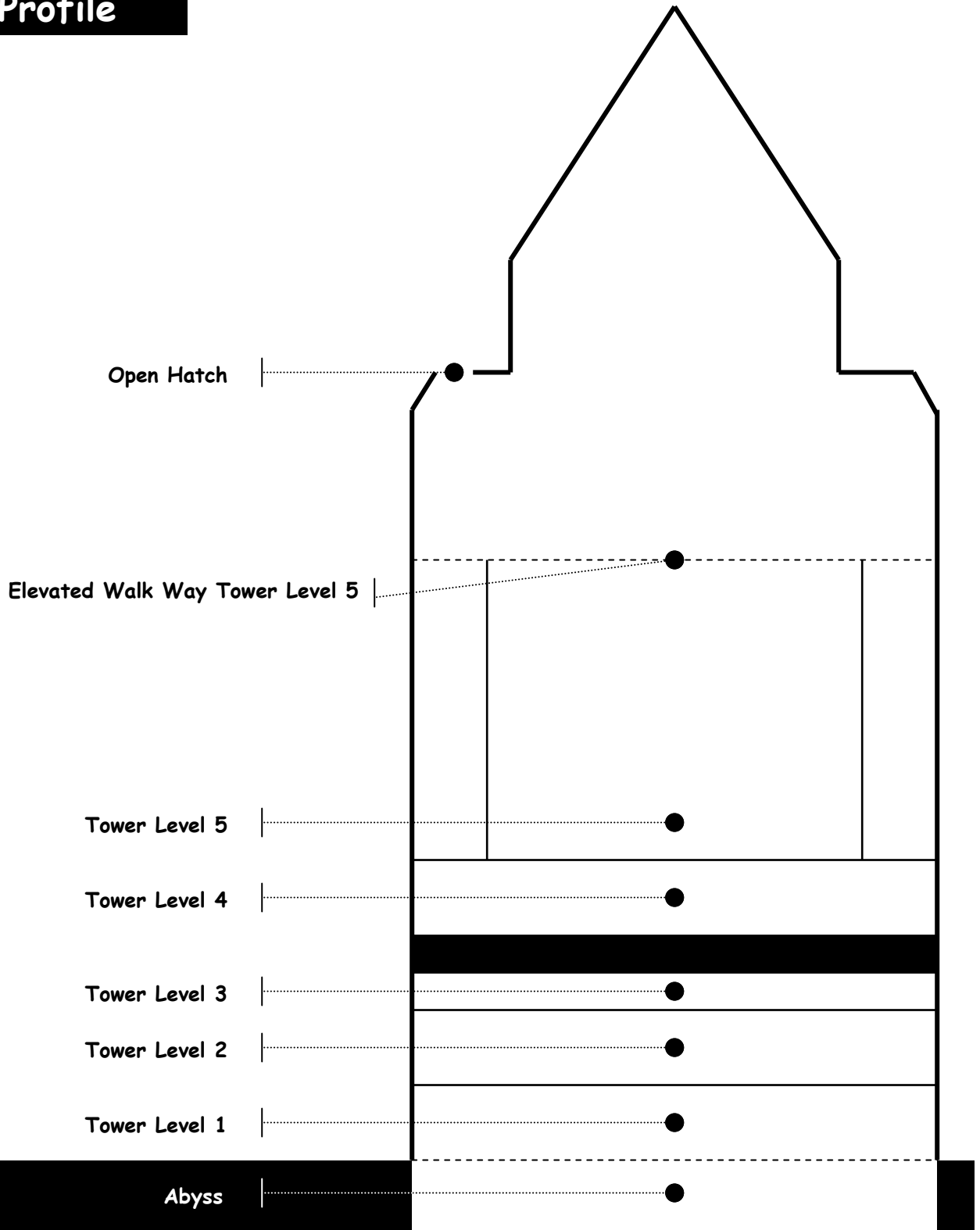
Each square = 10'



# Great Tower of Ascend

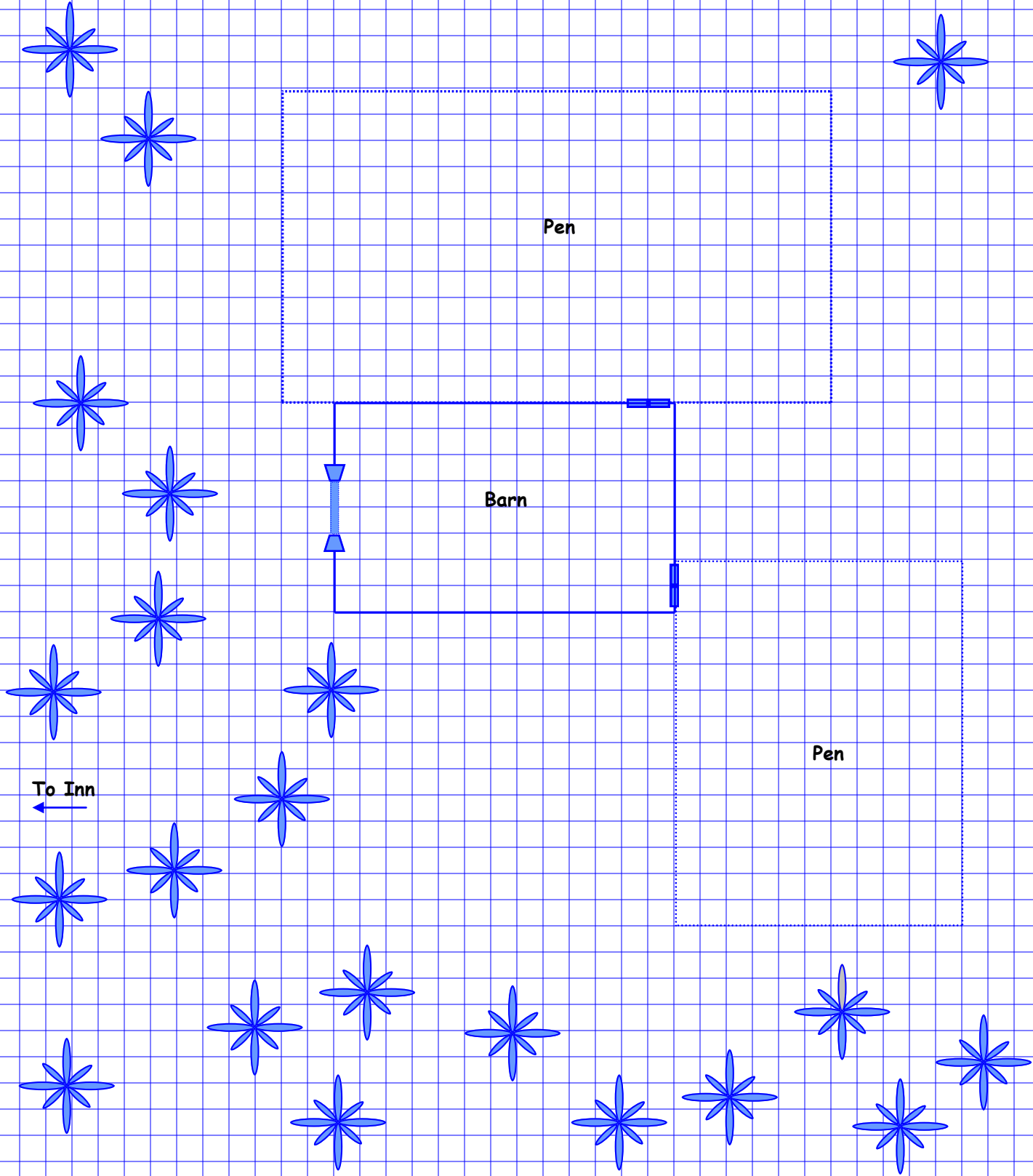
Each square = 20'

## Tower Profile



Door

Each square = 10'



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