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4 PCS OF
4TH—5TH
LEVEL

The Returners' Tower

A 5E WARLOCK MIDGARD ADVENTURE
BY JON SAWATSKY

THE RETURNERS' TOWER

I will light a beacon bright enough to reach the very edge of our world.
Every creature will see our greatest hope—the return of the elves.

Background

Tarrini, a small border town between Valera and Triolo, has been a reluctant addition to the Valeran territories. A resentment toward the Valeran rulership simmers, and a fully equipped military garrison is stationed there indefinitely. Several ruined elven towers persist in the hills around the town, and it is there, in one such tower, that the Returners lurk and plot.

Yenithia the Gilded, an elven **banshee** and a prominent leader of the Returners, has drawn a promising young recruit named Ralio to her cause. If he agrees to reclaim one of the old towers near Tarrini and build a great beacon to guide the elves home, she has promised the young man great power when the elves return. The banshee's claim that the elves will return is a lie, of course, told to convince naive disciples, such as Ralio. In truth, the beacon is a weapon that Yenithia plans to use against the garrison of Valeran soldiers in hopes of stoking the tensions at the border.

The arcs of electrical energy are visible from Tarrini, and the town grows concerned. While investigating the tower, the characters find it guarded by traps and Returner cultists; crackling gremlins lair in the upper chambers, having made a mutually beneficial arrangement with Ralio. The doubting recruit might be reasoned with at the top-most level, where the dreadful weapon is nearly complete. The characters will have little time however, as the banshee soon arrives to test her new invention.

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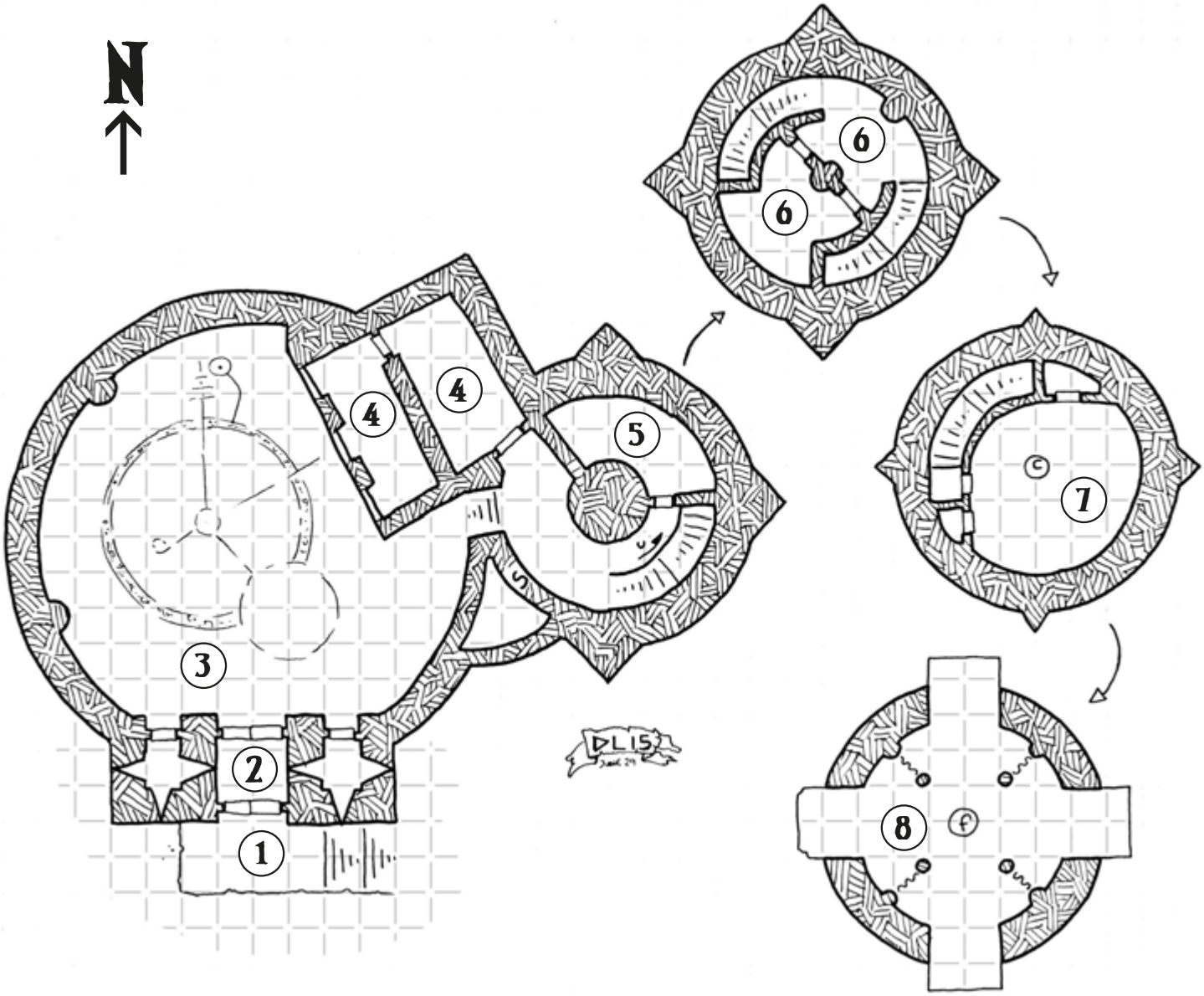

Sharp Hooks and Enticing Stories

- Travelling through the region, the party hears rumors of a haunted tower near Tarrini. Arriving in town, they discover the place is rife with Returner cultists encouraging the locals to rebel. The Valeran army captain and mayor of the town hire the party (300 gp) to investigate the tower under suspicion of it being a Returner stronghold.
- The characters are hired (3 x 100 gp gemstones) by a Valeran noble to investigate Returner activity in Tarrini. On the outskirts of town, the party is ambushed by cultists who wield magically electrified blades (+2 lightning damage). That night, lightning flashes in the sky though no storm can be seen—its origin is the elven tower.

THE RETURNERS

The Returners are a cult devoted to the return of the elves. See the *Midgard Worldbook* for details.

YENITHIA THE GILDED

As a banshee, Yenithia appears as a golden spectral elf whose face transitions from lifeless horror to beautiful elven woman. She carries a ghostly staff whose form changes with her face, alternating between shattered-looking glass and natural wood. Pretending to be a leader of the Returners cult, she is really devoted to the project of building her weapon, and she is obsessed with rekindling war in the region so that she can watch the people suffer.

RALIO, THE BEACON'S BUILDER

Ralio (**cult fanatic**) was a promising Returner recruit tasked with building the beacon according to Yenithia's design. He has done his job well, but he has only just realized the true purpose of his work. He suffers now at the top of the tower, aware of what he has built but unwilling to set aside the fantasy of recalling the elves to the region.

The Beacon

The beacon is a large metal orb set upon four metal stands. Each stand is enchanted with lightning magic, and the orb acts as a focus. Any creature trained in its use (3 days of downtime) can use an action to cast *lightning bolt* (at 9th level) with a range of five miles. The beacon requires 30 minutes to recharge. A trained creature may also use an action to have the beacon emit bright light in a columnar shape reaching a mile into the air. The light lasts for one hour, and the beacon must recharge before being used again.

On a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check, a small button is located on the side of one of the stands releases the energy from the beacon thus rendering it unusable for 30 minutes.

The beacon (AC 18, 40 hp) is dangerous to those wishing to destroy it. Any creature attacking the beacon takes 14 (3d8) lightning damage and is stunned until the end its next turn.

Area Descriptions

Set in the hills along the border between Valera and Triolo, the ancient elven lookout tower seems to have undergone recent repairs and shows other signs of use.

1. THE ENTRY STAIRS

The Returners have set a trap at the top of the stairs that lead to the entry landing. On a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check, a charged stone trap is spotted. It triggers if any creature of small or larger size passes over it. When triggered, the stone sends an electrical blast upward, and all creatures within 10 feet of the triggering creature must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 18 (4d8) lightning damage on a failed save or half as much on a successful one. On a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Archana) check combined with a DC 15 Dexterity check (can be two different characters in the party), the trap is disarmed. Otherwise, the blast alerts the cultists in area 3 and two of them rush into the guard spires on either side of the main entrance.

2. MAIN ENTRANCE

Only the inner doors are locked (DC 15 Dexterity with thieves' tools to pick, DC 18 Strength to kick open). The exterior doors swing freely and are slightly unhinged. If the party sprang the trap in area 1, the two snipers (**spies**) from area 3 shoot at them as they enter the corridor. The arrow slits in the stone walls offer three quarters cover.

3. LIVING QUARTERS

A small cadre of Returner cultists have made their home on the main floor of the tower. The cultists consist of two snipers (**spies**) who flee partially up the stairs and fire at intruders and one **veteran** who guards the bottom of the stairs. The floor here is marked with arcane symbols. A DC 14 Intelligence (Arcana) check suggests the symbols are related to evocation magic, specifically the generation of electrical fields. Water, rations, bedrolls, and other basic living supplies are scattered throughout this room.

4. STORES

These two connected chambers are used by the cult to store equipment. Several large metal devices used in the construction of the beacon sit discarded on the floor. They are blackened by scorch marks. A successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) reveals a wooden chest containing 175 gp and four common/uncommon potions that is hidden under debris deeper in the chamber. The chest is trapped with a poison needle. It requires a successful DC 16 Wisdom (Perception) to spot, and a successful DC 15 Dexterity with thieves' tools to disarm. The needle pierces any creature that attempts to open the chest. The creature must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, or take 2 piercing and 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save.

5. BARRED LARDER

The door to this room is blocked by debris on the other side. The Returners have not gained access to this room. On a successful DC 18 Strength check, the door (AC 14, 30 hp) can be forced open. Inside are the desiccated foodstuffs stored by the tower's former inhabitants. If searched, a flask of expensive spirits (25 gp value) is found.

6. BUZZING LAIR

This entire floor is occupied by a colony of twelve **azza gremlins** (*Tome of Beasts*, p. 28) drawn to the tower by the beacon's construction. Ralio has an arrangement with the gremlins, feeding them lightning in exchange for safe passage. The gremlins are neither evil nor are they guardians of the tower though they demand payment from the party to pass through their lair. For payment, they accept lightning or thunder-based spells cast upon them or items related to lighting or thunder.

7. RALIO'S QUARTERS

Ralio has established his living quarters on this floor. A large worktable contains a lit bullseye lantern and dozens of parchments detailing his construction of the beacon. Once collected, the parchments can be sold for up to 500 gp to the right type of buyer. Characters who spend a short rest reading the parchments discover the emergency shutdown mechanism as described in "The Beacon" section. They also discover that Ralio is concerned that his device is not just a beacon but also a weapon.

8. ARCING TOP

At the top of the tower, Ralio stands beside his humming contraption. He looks at the party when they arrive at the top of the stairs; his face is conflicted. A character who succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Insight) check can determine that Ralio suffers from psychological distress. He stands threateningly beside the ominously buzzing beacon, and he pleads with the party to leave before *she* arrives (referencing Yenithia). A character who succeeds on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check convinces Ralio to step away from the beacon; additionally, he will not join Yenithia when she and two **shadows** teleport to the tower's top. If the party fails to persuade Ralio, he joins his patron in combat but fights half-heartedly, only casting cantrips. Yenithia cannot operate the beacon, and she is enraged by the party's presence.

Conclusion

Even defeated, the Returner cult's beacon remains intact. Decommissioning and destroying this device is no simple matter and what the party does with Ralio's parchments can have lasting effects. The Valeran military may take an interest in the weapon, which could create an imbalance of power in the region.

Azza Gremlin

These tiny, hairless, rail-thin creatures crackle with static electricity. Arcs of lightning snap between their long ears.

Lightning Lovers. Azza gremlins live among storm clouds, lightning-based machinery, and other places with an abundance of lightning.

Magnetic Flight. Although wingless, their light bodies are perfectly attuned to electromagnetic fields, giving them buoyancy and flight. They love playing in thunderstorms and riding lightning bolts between the clouds or between clouds and the ground. They feed off lightning and love to see its effects on other creatures.

Work with Spellcasters. Although they aren't much more than hazardous pests by themselves, more malicious creatures and spellcasters that use lightning as a weapon work with azza gremlins to amplify their own destructiveness.

Azza gremlins stand 12 to 18 inches tall and weigh approximately 8 lb.

AZZA GREMLIN

Small fey, neutral

Armor Class 14

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 10 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (–3)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	10 (+0)

Damage Immunities lightning, thunder

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Common, Primordial

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Contagious Lightning. A creature that touches the azza gremlin or hits it with a melee attack using a metal weapon receives a discharge of lightning. The creature must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or attract lightning for 1 minute. For the duration, attacks that cause lightning damage have advantage against this creature, the creature has disadvantage on saving throws against lightning damage and lightning effects, and if the creature takes lightning damage, it is paralyzed until the end of its next turn. An affected creature repeats the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Actions

Lightning Jolt. Melee or *Ranged Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 30 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) lightning damage, and the target is affected by Contagious Lightning.

Reactions

Ride the Bolt. The azza gremlin can travel instantly along any bolt of lightning. When it is within 5 feet of a lightning effect, the azza can teleport to any unoccupied space inside or within 5 feet of that lightning effect.

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