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Tower of the Elephant

Contributed by: [Thulsa](#) (✉), based on the story by Robert E. Howard. If you download and run this adventure, please write me a mail and tell me what you think about it!



"The shimmering shaft of the tower rose frostily in the stars. In the sunlight it shone so dazzlingly that few could bear its glare, and men said it was built of silver. It was round, a slim perfect cylinder, a hundred and fifty feet in height, and its rim glittered in the starlight with the great jewels which crusted it. The tower stood among the waving exotic trees of a garden raised high above the general level of the city." -- Robert E. Howard: "The Tower of the Elephant"



Introduction

The Tower of the Elephant is a low-level adventure based on Robert E. Howard's short story by the same name. It is suitable for 2-4 characters of levels 4-7, preferably a mix of fighters and thieves, although a magic-user could be useful. The adventure should be playable even for those players who have read the original story; part of the challenge is to find Yag-Kosha and the Heart of the Elephant before the PCs stumble into Yara, the wizard of the Tower.

Note: Although it is not absolutely necessary, it obviously helps if the DM has read "The Tower of the Elephant" story by Robert E. Howard, prior to running this adventure.

[The maps](#) for the adventure are on a separate page.

Summary

In the temple district of Arenjun, Zamora's notorious City of Thieves, stands a glittering tower said to house a fabulous jewel called the Heart of the Elephant. The city's thieves avoid the tower and the jewel, fearing its master, the sorcerer Yara, who is said to be 300 years old.

The PCs, being brave or foolish (or both), have no such hesitations. They set out to steal the jewel from the wizard. Inside the tower, the PCs learn why the jewel is called the Heart of the Elephant and how it turns out to be their key to destroying Yara.

The PCs should have little trouble getting directions to the Tower. At the same time, they hear rumors of Yara's dark powers, his incredible age, and how his power is drawn from the magical jewel. No unwanted visitor has ever returned from the tower.



Rumor Table

Characters with at least 7 ranks in the Gather Information skill are able to pick up 1d3 rumors from the following table if they spend some time seeking out information. This should make for some fine roleplaying -- be sure to play up everyone's great fear of the evil Yara.

Die Description Roll

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | The wizard of the Elephant's Tower, is over 300 years old. (True) |
| 2 | The Elephant's Tower was built in a single night using magic. (True) |
| 3 | Undead guardians stalk the gardens of the Tower. (False) |
| 4 | Yara came to Zamora from Khitai, where he lived in a great jade palace with a hundred servants. (Partly true) |
| 5 | Even the king of Zamora fears Yara's power. The king drinks heavily to dampen his fears. (True) |
| 6 | The wizard has one known weakness: He can only die if he is slain with a silver dagger blessed by a priest of Ishtar. (False) |
| 7 | Yara once killed a foreign prince by turning him into a spider, and then |

crushing the spider under his heel. (True)

8 Re-roll (or DM's invention).

The Tower, Outer Gardens

The Tower itself is surrounded by two circular walls. Starlight or sunlight is reflected in a great jeweled dome. It is said that Yara built the tower in just one night, using powerful magic.

Each story is about 25 feet tall (including the stone in floor and ceiling; inner height is about 18 feet), and there are six stories, although this is not apparent from the outside. There are cleverly constructed doors and windows, but they are closed and not visible from the outside. The occupants of the tower breathe air that comes from above.

Scaling the Tower: The walls of the tower are smooth and cannot be scaled without rope and grappling hook. A ranged attack roll against AC 22 is required to throw and fasten a grappling hook to the balcony. Climbing up to the dome balcony then requires several climbing checks against DC 15. The PCs must make three climbing checks; at 50, 100 and 150 feet, respectively. Failing a check means that the character drops down and suffers normal falling damage (1d6 per 10 feet, Reflex save for half). PCs scaling the tower end up on the tower balcony (see area 5-2).

Entering the Tower from the ground: Of course, the PCs might also choose to enter the tower from the ground. They have to fight, neutralize or sneak past the gate guards and the guards on the lower floors. If the guards manage to sound the alarm, Yara is alerted and responds in force, after preparing himself with protective spells.

Human guards patrol the outer garden day and night. Every ten minutes, there is a 1 in 4 chance that the guardians come across the PCs. They do not bother with questions before they attack, although at least one guard attempts to retreat to the tower to warn Yara of the intruders.

The guards are equipped with silvered corselets, jeweled sword-hilts and plumed helmets. There are 24 guards within the tower.

Tower Guardians, War2 (2d4 -- 24 total): CR 2; SZ Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d8+2 (11 hp); Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, +1 small steel shield); Atk Longsword +4 melee; Dmg Longsword 1d8+4; Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; SA n/a; SQ n/a; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 12.

The Tower, Inner Gardens

During the day, lions are kept in caves beneath the tower garden. Human guards patrol the inner garden from sunrise to sunset, after which the lions (see below) are released from their cages.

Should the tower come under attack during the day, the guards attempt to warn Yara, and the wizard responds to intruders in force (by first releasing the dire lions in the garden, and then attacking with spells -- levitating above the party if they are outdoors, trapping them within a *wall of force* if they are indoors).

During the night, there are no human guards in the Inner Gardens, but instead a far more insidious threat; a pack of dire lions. Yara has enchanted these lions with a permanent *silence* spell, making them completely silent. They attempt to move silently and attack with surprise. Spellcasters who come too close find it difficult (impossible) to cast spells with verbal components.

Dire Animal, Lion (1d3 -- 5 total): CR 5; Large Animal; HD 8d8+24; hp 60; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 15 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural); Atk 2 claws +12 melee

(1d6+7), bite +7 melee (1d8+3); Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Pounce, improved grab, rake 1d6+3; SQ Scent; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 25, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10. *Skills and Feats*: Hide +5*, Jump +10, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Spot +4.

Taurus, the Prince of Thieves: If the PCs are in the inner gardens at night, they encounter Taurus, the Nemedian Prince of Thieves, on a roll of 1-2 on 1d6. Taurus knows much about of the tower's background history (he knows 1d4+2 rumors from the rumors table). The master thief is initially distrustful towards the party. He won't simply stand aside and let the PCs steal all the treasures of the tower for themselves, but neither will he join a party unless he feels he is properly compensated. If the party offends or threatens him, he leaves, but if sufficiently provoked, he might wait for the right moment to sneak attack and use his black lotus dust against the offenders.

Taurus, the Nemedian Prince of Thieves: See the complete statistics [here](#).

The Tower, Dungeon Level

0-1. Stairway

The stairs down from the entrance hall (area 1-1) lead into this chamber.

0-2. Hall

This great hall is the living chambers of Yara's guardsmen. A large wooden table stands upon a floor of lapis-lazuli; upon the table are half-empty wine goblets and food plates, as well as dice and a few coins (2d10 sp).

Unless the alarm has been roused, there are 2d4 guards in this room (and unless it is night, they are wearing armor and keep weapons within arm's reach).

0-3. Barracks

Sixteen beds are arrayed along the walls of this room (all guards never sleep at the same time). Under the beds are small chests and bags containing personal items such as combs, mirrors, a few coins (1d8+2 gp) and a 5% chance per chest examined to find something of greater value (roll on a random nonmagical treasure table in the DMG).

0-4. Toilet

The guards' latrine stinks of stagnant urine and dirt. The sturdy door is kept closed most of the time.

0-5. Armory

Several weapon racks are stacked with melee and ranged weapons, including 12 daggers, 10 longswords, 2 battle-axes, 4 halberds, 7 shortbows and 80 arrows. A masterwork battle-axe with a silvered handle can also be found.

0-5A. Cells

These cells serve a dual purpose. In addition to keeping his prisoners here, Yara uses some cells as cages for the dire lions which patrol the gardens at night. If attacked in the dungeon during the day, the guards attempt to free the dire lions.

The prison cells currently contain nothing but empty chains and a few skeletal remains with cracked, yellowed bones (but see below). The DM might wish to place NPC prisoners in the cells to be used as seeds for further adventures.

For each cell examined, there is a 1 in 8 chance that the PCs encounter a violet fungus. It attacks without provocation. It is a recent inhabitant of the dungeon; not even the guards know about it yet.

Violet Fungus: CR 3; Medium-Size Plant; HD 2d8+6; hp 15; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 10 ft.; AC 13 (-1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk 4 tentacles +3 melee (1d6+2 and poison); Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./"10 ft. (with tentacle); SA -; SQ Plant; SV Fort +6, Ref -1; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 11, Cha 9.

0-6. Forbidden Vault

Yara has forbidden his guards to enter this room. The double bronze doors (2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28, Open Lock DC 25) are green with age, covered with cobwebs, and feature strange designs and carvings of demonic spiders.

Inside the dark and unlit chamber, covered in more cobwebs, is a strange idol, 9 feet tall, representing a man of eastern appearance. It appears to be of a greyish stone, but if the stone is damaged (5 hp or more), it is revealed that the idol is actually made of gold but encased in stone. The origin, history and true value of the statue is unknown (and is left up to the DM to decide).

If anyone lingers in this vault, they are attacked by a pair of undead who appear to be the shades of Khitan warriors, judging by their ancient armor and weapons.

Spectres (2): CR 7; Medium-Size Undead (Incorporeal); HD 7d12; hp 63; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft., fly 80 ft. (good); AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 deflection); Atk Incorporeal touch +6 melee (1d8 and energy drain); SA Energy drain, create spawn; SQ Undead, incorporeal, +2 turn resistance, unnatural aura, sunlight powerlessness; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +7; Str -, Dex 16, Con -, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15. *Skills and Feats:* Hide +13, Intimidate +12, Intuit Direction +10, Listen +13, Search +10, Spot +13; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative.

The Tower, Lower Levels

1-1. Grand Entrance Hall

The main doors to the tower are 9 feet tall and made of bronze (2 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 60; Break DC 28, Open Lock DC 25). Three guards are always stationed outside the doors. In the event of an attack, two remain to fight intruders while the third attempts to escape to warn Yara.

Inside the entrance hall, the western set of stairs lead down to the dungeon level (area 0-1). The eastern set of stairs lead up to the first floor (level 2-1). Rich tapestries adorn the walls, but the room is dominated by a black stone statue of a giant spider which stands on a low dais to the north. The statue is non-magical.

2-1. Stairway

The western set of stairs lead to the grand entrance hall (area 1-1); the eastern stairs lead up to area 3-1.

2-2. Empty Room

This chamber is empty.

2-3. Yag-Kosha's Prison

This is the prison of Yag-Kosha, the elephant-being of Yag (see the statistics for details of his appearance). In his current state he is mangled, blinded and broken. On a gold and ivory altar beside the creature is a huge crimson crystal, the Heart of the Elephant (worth 10,000 gp or more).

Several outcomes of the party's encounter with Yag-Kosha are possible. If the party approaches the elephant-being with respect, allowing Yag-Kosha to "identify" them with his proboscis, and he feels they can be trusted (using *detect thoughts* to find out whether they intend to simply steal his gem and leave, for example), the elephant-being begs the party to kill him. This will empower the "sorcery of the Blood and the Jewel" (a *trap the soul* spell), allowing the PCs to attempt to imprison Yara in the gem.

On the other hand, if the PCs attacks the elephant-being or behave disrespectfully, Yag-Kosha ignores them (killing him simply ends his misery, but if slain in combat he will obviously not help the party by enchanting the Heart).

Yag-Kosha, the elephant-being of Yag: See the complete statistics [here](#).

Note:Yag-Kosha's stats differ from those presented in the bestiary; he is blind, weak from torture (41 hp), and has long since lost the ability to fly, since his wings withered when his race first came to earth. As such his CR should be reduced by 4 if it becomes relevant.

2-4. Map Room

This room contains several large maps of Zamora, Shem and Turan, including maps of major cities, caravan routes and oases. A few maps contain the suspected locations of lost cities, tombs and treasure hoards.

2-5. Trapped Chamber

The door to this chamber is trapped with a poisonous needle trap. The chamber itself contains little of value.

Poison Needle Trap: CR 4; +8 ranged (1 plus deathblade poison, Fortitude save DC 20 or 1d6/2d6 points of temporary Con damage); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 20).

2-6. Empty Room

This small chamber is empty.

3-1. Yara's Study



The archetypical wizard's study, this room has a white marble floor and is furnished with rich silvered tapestries (320 gp), two wooden divans with silken cushions (50 gp), and a large ivory table (200 gp). In a secret compartment in the eastern wall (Search DC 25) are two small wooden boxes. Both are trapped (see below). The first box contains a scroll of *bestow curse* and *magic jar*. The second box contains a bronze circlet, set with an amber in the form of a spider, inscribed with ancient Zamoran letters (500 gp).

Poison Needle Trap: CR 2; no attack roll necessary (1 hp, plus greenblood poison: 1 Con/1d2 Con; Fortitude save (DC 13) negates; Reflex save (DC 25) avoids needle; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 20).

3-2. Library

Yara's library contains a medium-sized collection of sorcerous tomes, among them titles such as *The Seven Curses of Khrosha*, *The Book of the Spider-God*, and *The Invocations of Zath*. The books mentioned each have 1d3 random spells within their pages, as well as much interesting information regarding the spider-cult of Yezud and their god, Zath.

The Tower, Upper Levels

4-1. Stairway

The western set of stairs lead down to area 3-1; the eastern stairs lead up to area 5-1.

4-2. Failed Experiment

Yara used this room to attempt the construction of a flesh golem. He was only partly successful; his rituals have produced a hideous amalgam of dead body parts with a small spark of unintelligent life. The creature is in effect equivalent to a juju-zombie. The wizard has no control over the creature, so he has locked it away in this room (2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 18; Open Lock DC 20); the flesh golem-zombie attacks anyone entering the room.

Juju-zombie: CR 4; SZ Medium-size undead; HD 3d12+3 (21 hp); Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural); Atk Slam +5 melee; Dmg Slam 1d6+4 melee; Face/Reach 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; SA none; SQ Damage reduction 10/+1, undead, weapon immunities, fire resistance, immunities, turn resistance +4, darkvision 60 ft.; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 13, Con -, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 1; *Skills and feats:* Climb +8, Listen +3, Ride +6, Spot +3; Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Toughness.

4-3. Yara's Chambers

Unless roused by the alarm, Yara, the wizard of the Elephant's Tower is here, slumbering in evil dreams induced by the black lotus. Since the door to his chamber is locked (2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 18; Open Lock DC 20), however, he probably wakes up and prepares himself to face any intruders should someone attempt to breach the doors. The doors are *arcane locked* at 10th level of ability (+10 to Break DC)

Yara, the wizard of the Elephant's Tower: See the complete statistics [here](#).

The outer door is of ebony, with a silver grinning skull in the center.

The chamber itself is lavishly furnished with rich Iranistani carpets (100 gp), silken tapestries from Khitai depicting demons and devils (200 gp), and gold-decorated

wooden chairs and divans (140 gp).

Note: If the PCs have successfully negotiated with and/or freed Yag-Kosha from his terrestrial prison, Yara becomes the target of a *trap the soul* spell cast by Yag-Kosha. This means that if a character has the gem prepared by Yag-Kosha (easily worth 10,000 gp), and can get within short range of Yara, he can complete the spell by speaking its final word as a standard action (SR and Will save applies, but if Yara's name is spoken, SR is ignored and the Will save DC increases by 2). If Yara fails the save he is captured inside the gem. If the wizard makes the save the PCs are in for trouble!



5-1. Trapped Treasure Chamber

Massive double doors of iron-reinforced wood prevent entry to this room (2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 18; Open Lock DC 20). The doors are *arcane locked* at 10th level of ability (+10 to Break DC). Inside is a great chamber filled with wealth; Iranistani carpets (400 gp), fine silks from far-off Khitai (700 gp), and several chests containing Kothian silver coins (4,000 sp) and gold from the mines of Ophir (700 gp). One chest contains two *potions of cure moderate wounds* and one *potion of heroism*.

A giant spider guards this treasure room. Initially, it hides in the ceiling, and jumps down on unwary intruders (Spot vs. Hide checks).

A set of stairs lead up to the top floor (area 6-1); another set of stairs lead down (area 4-1).

Monstrous Spider, Large: CR 2; Large Vermin; HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft. (40 ft., climb 20 ft.); AC 14 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +2 natural); Atk Bite +4 melee (1d8+3 and poison); Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft.; SA Poison, web; SQ Vermin; SV Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 12, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2. *Skills and Feats:* Climb +14, Hide +6, Jump +2*, Spot +7*; -.



5-2. Outer Terrace

Attempts to scale the tower, if successful, are likely to end up on this terrace which juts out 20 feet from the main tower walls.

6-1. Hallway

The stairs lead down to area 5-1.

6-2. Storage

The room contains various supplies, such as candles, chains, chalk, ink and paper, oils and powders, wax, spare clothes and so on. A thorough search (Search DC 25) reveals a silvered dagger (100 gp) and 1d3 thunderstones.

6-3. Observatory

Several large windows in this chamber provide a great view of Zamora's night sky, allowing Yara to study the movement of the planets and the stars. Through magically enhanced telescopes he has been trying to discover the green planet Yag (which according to Yag-Kosha circles on the outer rim of space), but he has so far been unsuccessful.

6-4. Laboratory

This is a complete alchemist's lab, as described in the PHB.

6-5. Shrine to the Spider God

Yara is a worshipper of Zath, the spider-god of Yezud. This chamber contains an evil shrine to that god. A black, three-pronged pedestal stands in the middle of the room, surrounded on all four sides by curtains of filmy, finely-spun cobweb. This web affects those attempting to pass through it (without first speaking a command word, "ia! zathar!") as a double-strength *web* spell (double the penalties for being entangled).

Atop the pedestal is a silver amulet set with a yellow amber stone. Inside the amber is a tiny black spider. For a priest of the spider-god, the amulet functions as a *necklace of prayer beads* with the *bead of karma* special bead. For a non-follower of Zath, wearing the amulet has the same effect as that of a *periapt of foul rotting*. Yara cannot use it himself and keeps it for future bargaining with a priest of Yezud.

If the amulet is removed from the pedestal, a swarm of tiny spiders jump at the offender from within a hidden hollow in the pedestal.

Monstrous Spider, Tiny (2d6): CR ¼; Tiny Vermin; HD ½ d8; hp 2; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., climb 10 ft.; AC 15 (+2 size, +3 Dex); Atk Bite +5 melee (1d3-4 and poison); Face/Reach: 2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft./0 ft.; SA Poison, web; SQ Vermin; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 3, Dex 17, Con 10, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2. *Skills and Feats:* Climb +8, Hide +18, Jump -4*, Spot +7*; Weapon Finesse (bite).

6-6. Storage

Similar to area 6-2, this room contains supplies of little value.

Conclusion

Yara is a powerful wizard and could possibly kill the PCs whether they have Yag-Kosha's enchanted heart or not. The outcome of the adventure depends on the PCs' tactics, luck and timing.

At the DM's option, the Yara's tower might collapse if the wizard is killed, since it was built using sorcery. The ruins might also become cursed (or haunted by strange monsters) to prevent player characters (and others -- after all, Arenjun is the City of Thieves) from plundering the gem-set outer walls.



