

WIZARD'S TOWER

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[This adventure can be used in either of two ways:

One option is that the wizard has died some years ago, and the tower has slowly moldered in the intervening time, largely untouched by the locals who still fear the presence of the once powerful overlord whose tyranny plagued this area for so long. The adventurers may find the tower to be largely uninhabited, although some new creatures may have settled into some of the spaces inside, offering new and unexpected perils for those who venture to explore inside. In this case, the story of the wizard's activities and of how the tower was populated will serve to indicate how the place had been previously used.

Perhaps villagers from a nearby settlement will seek a group of adventurers who will go into the tower to confirm that the wizard is dead, so that they can go about with their lives with less fear, or they may wish to have a relic or some other item recovered from the tower which the wizard had taken from them in order to strengthen his own position and to help keep them in line.

The other option is that the wizard is still alive and active, and his dominion over the area is current. If this is the case, then the adventurers may have been contacted for a mission to recover an important item from the wizard's control or even to confront the wizard himself to break his hold over the townsfolk and peasants in this land.]

The wizard's tower has been a feature on the land for longer than anyone alive can remember, and even the elders of the oldest inhabitants spoke of the wizard and his tower being the center of the wizard's dominion over the land. The tower is a menacing jumble of spires and rock that look like melted rock, rather than anything natural or anything built by men.

Several craggy, sharp slits can be seen in the sides of the tower, which serve as windows to admit light and air into the rooms inside, but they are too narrow for a person to be able to fit through. Some of the edges within those slits are razor sharp pieces of obsidian which are fused to the tower rock and which make passage through those spaces a painful and perilous prospect for any foolish enough to try.

Much of the time, the wizard stays isolated in his tower, with little interaction with the peasants whose lives he controls, save for when he sends out his Shrikes to collect taxes and tributes. And, once every 7 years there is a Selection. One of the towns in the land is selected (no one knows by what means) and all the girls who were alive at the time of the last Selection (so at least 7 years old) are required to come to the town's square. There, the wizard evaluates them and selects one who he takes with him, and she is never seen again.

The taken girl's youth is used by the wizard to maintain and extend his own life. First they serve as chambermaids to his concubines, then, they themselves are promoted to become concubines themselves, and then, as they age, the wizard teaches them magic to be able to carry out his ongoing control of his realm. In the process, each of these girls becomes a Shrike, a wraith-like being with almost no memory of her former life.

Shrikes are cruel and enjoy inflicting pain on those peasants who cannot meet the obligations required of them at the collection times. They are very (over 8') tall and have extremely long-claws on their hands. They typically are clad in heavy, cowed robes which hide their beaked faces and barbed, poisonous tails.

