

AN ADVENTURE FOR

**'ROBERT E. HOWARD'S  
CONAN: ADVENTURES IN AN AGE UNDREAMED OF'**

BASED ON

**'THE TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT'**  
ADVENTURE BOARDGAME

AN ADVENTURE BASED ON TOWER OF THE ELEPHANT



**THE WINGS OF YAG**



For countless years, the mysterious and bejeweled Tower of the Elephant has loomed over the accursed city of Zamora. Despite its beauty, it is wreathed in unsavory rumors and fearful gossip, more so than any other structure, notable in a city known for its depravity. Raised in a single night in an act of the most powerful sorcery, the Tower of the Elephant is a gleaming symbol of the power its sorcerous master Yara holds over the city and all who dwell within.

Despite the apparent dangers rumored to be inside, thieves covet the tower for its obvious wealth, its shimmering exterior giving promise of untold further riches inside. Many bold souls have tried, and their fates are spoken of with dread. Tonight, though, a small band of daring thieves attempts to take from him Yara's most potent possession, the so-called Heart of the Elephant, supposedly the secret of his immense power.

What secrets do they find inside, and can any of them survive the attempt?

**"There is a fabulous fortune here, Taurus," he whispered; but the Nemedian answered impatiently, "Come on! If we secure the Heart, these and all other things shall be ours."**

— "The Tower of the Elephant"

**GAMEMASTER'S INTRODUCTION**

"The Wings of Yag" is based on the classic Robert E. Howard Conan story "The Tower of the Elephant", in which Conan the Cimmerian dares to loot a mysterious sorcerer's tower and encounters incredible danger, alien and elegiac horror, and sorcerous vengeance.

Developed in tandem with the **Conan: The Tower of the Elephant** adventure boardgame, this adventure offers the opportunity for roleplaying enthusiasts to explore the tower as if in the sandaled feet of Conan himself, or as heroes of their own making. It does not assume that the events from Howard's story are fixed in stone, and instead puts the player characters at the center of the action, letting them be the protagonists in this tale of supernatural weirdness and action.

As the players may already be more than familiar with the original story and its resolution, many elements of this adventure are original or altered significantly to allow for surprises and unexpected dangers, rather than depicting a walkthrough of the story's fixed path.

The **Conan** corebook is required for use of this adventure, and the *Conan the Thief* sourcebook is similar essential, providing additional insight into the accursed city of Zamora, the Tower of the Elephant, and its fearsome and cursed inhabitants. Obviously, the **Conan: The Tower of the Elephant** boardgame is also a useful accountment, and its contents may be used to abstract the interiors of the tower once it is breached. Familiarity with the Howard story is assumed and a re-read is highly recommended to help with evocation of mood as well as details for the adventure.

This adventure is suitable for a group of up to five player characters of beginning-to-moderate experience. If dealing with more, or more experienced, player characters, recommendations are made as to how to increase the danger to challenge them suitably. It is also recommended that the player characters be thieves, sell-swords, rogues, or those willing to steal for the promise of wealth, whether to enrich their own pockets solely or on the behalf of another. Those of a more noble or benevolent aspect are likely to find the events of this scenario unworthy of their attention.

For a smaller group or even a single player, the gamemaster may even allow one player to take on the role of Conan himself, from his thieving days as depicted on page 100 of *Conan the Thief*. Suitable companions from the *Conan the Thief* sourcebook might include Nestor the Gunderman (page 87) or Shevatas the Thief (page 89), or perhaps even Valeria of the Red Brotherhood (corebook, page 355). Other characters may also be suitable to round out such a small party, including many of the characters provided by the Kickstarter backers and presented in many of the **Conan** sourcebooks.



# City of ZAMORA



- |   |                 |   |                       |
|---|-----------------|---|-----------------------|
| 1 | Market district | 6 | Old Town              |
| 2 | The Maul        | 7 | Tower of the Elephant |
| 3 | Inner district  | 8 | North Gate            |
| 4 | Temple district | 9 | South Gate            |
| 5 | Palace district |   |                       |

## CHAPTER ONE

# THE MAUL

In the dark heart of the accursed city of Zamora, few venture into the western district informally known as “the Maul”, where thievery and worse is a way of life. All manner of debauchery and revelry are found there, and its reputation is as unsavory as it is fearsome. Though the district itself is small, its torch-lit avenues are full of shadows, dangerous enough that only the bravest and most desperate walk within it. The city wardens give it a wide berth by night, and decent folk have no business there.

In a small unnamed tavern on a dead-end off Crookback Street, the player characters are there for reasons of their own—perhaps looking for work or between adventures. Though overall most would prefer that their conversations be private, the place resounds with the din of merriment, a crowd of ruffians and lowlifes as uncouth and diverse as any assembled under any roof.

If more information is needed to portray the flavor and tone of Zamora, the gamemaster should consult pages 212–217 of the *Conan* corebook, and 23–28 of *Conan the Thief*. If desired, the gamemaster can use the Tavern board from the *Conan: The Tower of the Elephant* adventure boardgame to represent this environment.

In one of these dens merriment thundered to the low smoke-stained roof, where rascals gathered in every stage of rags and tatters—furtive cut-purses, leering kidnappers, quick-fingered thieves, swaggering braves with their wenches, strident-voiced women clad in tawdry finery. Native rogues were the dominant element—dark-skinned, dark-eyed Zamorians, with daggers at their girdles and guile in their hearts. But there were wolves of half a dozen outland nations there as well.

— “The Tower of the Elephant”

themselves and describe how they fit in — or stand out — amidst this rough and ready group.

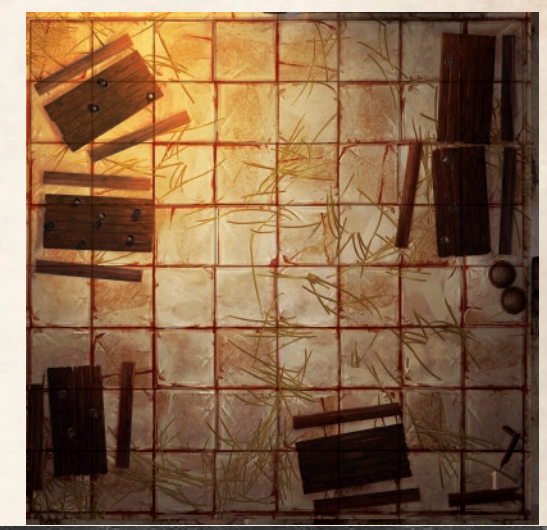
After the player characters have established themselves, the gamemaster should have one of them catch the eye of a loud and particularly emphatic Kothian, his back to the bar, regaling anyone within earshot of his conquests in the subtle art of kidnapping. His ample cheeks flush with drunkenness, his voice bolstered by bravado, the braggart pauses in his description of his favored type of victim, thinking twice about revealing his trade secrets. He throws caution to the wind, finding few interested parties, and announces loudly that he’s looking for a few brave rogues willing to risk all alongside him: for he knows of the way into the mysterious, jewel-encrusted Tower of the Elephant.

At this, a few heads turn in his direction, and several people in the tavern look around nervously, and one moves their fingers, drawing a sign in the air to ward off ill-luck. The man’s attention turns to the player characters, conventionally standing (or seated) nearby, and he sizes them up, leaning in conspiratorially.

“I have need of some worthy souls who would dare to become rich beyond imagination. Are you those few? Or are you cowards like the rest of these gutter-born scum?” At this, he waves his tankard back, indicating the rest of the room. A bit of ale foam sloshes past the brim onto the sleeve of a tall Kushite, who glares down at him. He apologizes and continues.

“I’m Vetrans of Koth. Perhaps you’ve heard of me?”

If the player characters decide to ignore this Kothian churl, skip ahead to **You Dropped This** (page 7).



Amidst the crowd of native Zamorians there are a few Corinthians and Brythunians, and some from further afield: a Shemite counterfeiter, an Ophirian bounty hunter eyeing the crowd for his prey, a one-eyed Argossean mercenary in her bronze and linen harness, and a swaggering Zingaran bravo seeking to impress someone at the bar. The gamemaster should encourage the player characters to introduce

# THE PROPOSAL

If any of the player characters care to even listen to him, Vetranis has Renown 1 and is somewhat known in and thereabouts Zamora. Any Zamorian characters with a connection to the criminal underworld may know of him or even have met him before (at the player’s discretion), and if desired, an Average (D1) Thievery or Lore test identifies the man and his reputation.

If he is known to the player characters, they recognize that bluster aside, Vetranis is a seasoned kidnapper and competent criminal, specializing in capturing slaves to discerning clients. In the past he has been able to keep ahead of the law by using proxies, hiring middlemen to keep his hands clean, and he himself rarely does the actual selling of the slaves. If necessary, use the writeup of the guild thief on page 78 of *Conan the Thief* to represent Vetranis.

If the player characters are dismissive, he grows angry with them, all-the-more so if they do not take him seriously. He looks them up and down and says he misspoke, and, deridingly, claims that that he thought them a better and more competent sort of criminal. “Back to your miserable and meaningless lives,” he shrugs them off. In this case, go to **You Dropped This** (page 7).

If the player characters engage Vetranis, he signals to the barkeep and orders a round of ale for them. Once he has their attention, he takes another drink, belches, and continues.

“Harken! I am a... simple trader... who has come into a piece of information I would make some use of. Some time ago, I spoke with a certain slaver out of Stygia — his name is unimportant, so do not ask! — who sold slaves to the master of the Elephant Tower, who I also will not name. The Stygian delivered some of his wares to the tower’s steward there, as usual. He was forced to be blindfolded for this delivery when entering and exiting the tower through its grounds, so that he could not betray its secrets. He only saw a single room inside where he exchanged the slaves to the tower’s master.”

“However, the slaves were not blindfolded, as their fate was likely to serve there to the ends of their days. One of these slaves, though, was fortunate enough to be unappealing enough to be rejected by the steward there, and thus the Stygian was sent back with that unwanted slave, out of the Tower’s grounds.”

“Realizing what opportunity this careless oversight had provided, the Stygian then exacted a complete and detailed description of what the slave had seen. His methods were... thorough...” Vetranis grimaces at this, shaking his head. “So though there is no more information to be had from that unfortunate wretch, I now have in my possession the sole copy of that selfsame map.”

“Though there are guards, a clever group of thieves knowing where are guards, what traps await, and what wealth is kept inside... the opportunities are obvious. And what’s at stake? You have no doubt heard of the treasures the tower holds, including the famed Elephant’s Heart, supposedly the greatest of all jewels. While a common thief might live well off what gems they could prise from its walls... stealing the Elephant’s Heart? Now that’s how a legendary thief might be born, certainly one wealthy enough to retire in a castle on the coast of Shem!”

“Harken! I offer you a simple deal. Take the map off my hands in return for half of what you earn in the tower. Think quickly, for I have another buyer quite interested. But I would rather deal with you lot, as I am impatient to be done with this matter.”

A successful Average (D1) Insight reveals Vetranis is telling the truth. A 1-point Obtain Information Momentum spend, though, confirms that Vetranis is clearly too cowardly to go it himself. He’s a kidnapper, not a thief, and his expertise is in capturing those weaker than he and selling them into slavery or worse, not infiltrating guarded estates. More than 1 point of Momentum spent, and the player characters may get out of him that his other buyer is a foreign thief of considerable repute. He boasts that this is none other than Taurus of Nemedi. (If the player characters know who Taurus is, see his description on pages 90–91 of *Conan the Thief*.)

Vetranis can be haggled with, an opposed Persuade vs Persuade test, but cannot be bargained down to taking less than an equal share as any player character. In truth, the risk is entirely theirs and he has expended quite little in this venture, having stolen the map from the slaver. But to take any less would show a loss of face, and he is a proud man.

# UNWELCOME VISITORS

At this point, the tone in the background babble of conversations and merriment changes and hushes as an unlikely sight presents itself — a group of Stygian mercenaries has entered the tavern as a group, hands on weapon hilts and defiant against the crowd of ne’er-do-wells surrounding them. They look around as if searching for someone, and as if on cue, a tall Kushite standing near the door points through the crowd in Vetranis’ direction.

Fortunately, due to the number of people in the tavern, it is not entirely obvious who he is with, so the player characters are not immediately identified.

The Stygian mercenaries begin to push through the crowd, but are rebuffed, as their presence is not a welcome one in this part of the Maul. They are not city guards — who would never dare enter the place — and hold no legal authority, but such is the attitude of the place that the Maul protects its own, and these strong-arms are definitely not part of its informal fraternity of miscreants and scoundrels.

It should be obvious that these men are in the employ of Vetranis’ unnamed Stygian slaver and are very much eager to retrieve that stolen piece of property — the map of the Tower of the Elephant. Likely, this will end up with Vetranis in chains as well, a fate he is eager to avoid.

Vetranis gulps, wipes his mouth again and slams his half-empty cup down. If the player characters have agreed to his terms, he thrusts a bloodstained piece of folded papyrus into their hands and tells them “I will meet you when the deed is done. Seek me in the Old Town, near the East Gate, with my share. I’ve used that spot before... no one will notice us.”

He attempts to escape the mercenaries, right as one of the Stygians is unfortunately struck alongside the helmeted skull with a wooden drinking-jack and splashed with its contents. The hawk-faced Stygian strikes a fierce blow with a stout fist, crushing the nose of the first person he sees. At this, the simmering tension within the place erupts in mayhem.

# A NIGHT ON THE TOWN

At this point, the gamemaster should determine whether Vetranis gets away, and ask the player characters what part they wish to have in the ensuing tavern brawl.

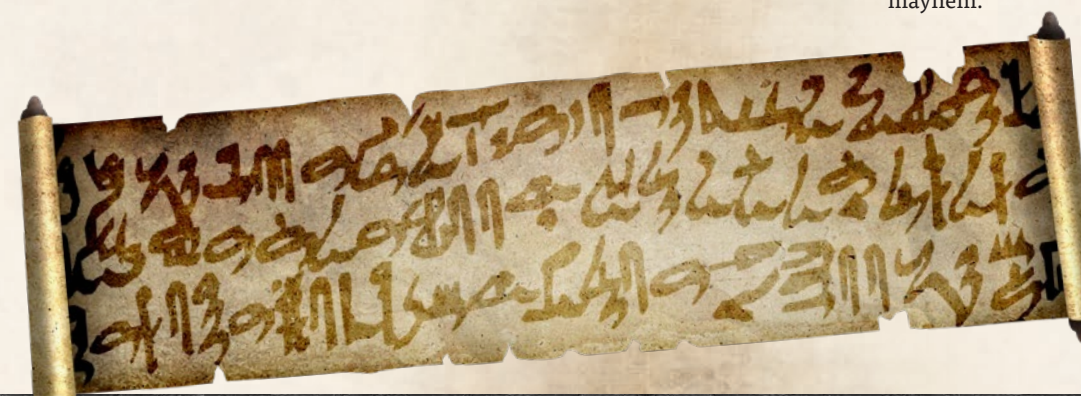
- Vetranis is equivalent to a guild thief as described on page 78 of *Conan the Thief*. He would like nothing more to escape, but odds are against him. Unless there is a compelling reason for him to escape, the Stygians capture him as he tries to push his way out the door. The gamemaster is encouraged to spend Doom to make this happen.
- The tavern crowd is a veritable rogues’ gallery, and should the gamemaster desire, patrons might be the bandit or thug (*Conan corebook*, pages 312 and 321) or the back alley killer, guild thief, or street thug (*Conan the Thief*, pages 78–80).
- The Stygians, though slavers, are best represented as guards (*Conan corebook*, page 317) with one of their number a guard captain. There are as many Stygians as there are player characters. At the gamemaster’s discretion there are an additional number outside to bolster their ranks within the tavern, or they can remain outside to snag a would-be escaping Kothian kidnapper, if need be.

Any player characters attempting to run interference for Vetranis should attempt Daunting (D3) tests of either Melee (if fighting), Athletics (if simply pushing past), or some other skill as appropriate depending on the ruse used. This is a struggle (see pages 98 – 99 of the **Conan corebook**) against an evenly matched force, the tumult of the tavern brawl and all its participants abstracted into a single Difficulty.

No serious damage is taken if the test fails, but Vetranis is taken as prisoner. If he manages to get free, he tries to separate himself from the player characters as quickly as possible. They do not realize it now, but they will not see him alive again.

The gamemaster is encouraged to deal with this brawl with whatever detail desired. Ultimately, though, it is merely flavor and does not serve the plot of the adventure to immerse them into a boisterous fracas with no apparent personal stakes or glory to be gained.

If the player characters stick around, eventually the tavern brawl ends on its own, the participants exhausted and bored once the initial impetus — the Stygians — are removed from the premises.



# THE GARDENS



## YOU DROPPED THIS

In the (distressingly dull) case that the player characters do not choose to deal with Vetranis, and instead opt for a pleasant evening ignoring the opportunity for wealth, adventure, and fame, the scene plays out very much as described above, with the Kothian being pushed aside as another loud drunk in a tavern full of them.

Instead of a conspiratorial meeting with the player characters, the Kothian ends up speaking to none other than Taurus of Nemedra, who has prepared for the theft and is now on hand to take the map from Vetranis. However, they are interrupted by the arrival of the Stygian mercenaries, however. Taurus bolts and Vetranis does one of the following two things, depending on the circumstances:

- He panics and shoves the folded, bloodstained sheet of papyrus into the hands of one of the player

characters, telling them to hold it for him, to meet him at the East Gate in the Old Town on the morrow

- The map is conspicuously dropped at the feet of one of the player characters, jostled out of Vetranis' hands as he pushes through them on his way to try to get out the door without notice.

If he was involved in any fashion, the master thief Taurus escapes and makes a beeline for the Elephant Tower, abandoning his hoped-for plan of entering with more knowledge of what dangers he would face inside.

Vetranis, meanwhile, is captured by the Stygian mercenaries and brought to the slaver for an interview. The remainder of his life is both short and filled with agony, as the Stygian shows him as much mercy as he did the slave who provided the information on the map

At the end of this scene the player characters should have the map of the interior of the grounds of the Tower of the Elephant or the knowledge that someone was trying to sell a map to the grounds and that there is considerable wealth to be had... if haste is to guide them. There is little that remains but to make their way to the Tower of the Elephant and claim the wealth inside, and the attendant glory awaiting those so bold as to dare its secrets.

If for some reason the players balk at having their characters take part in this dangerous scheme, they may wish to reconsider seeking other pursuits best not chronicled with the **Conan** roleplaying game. Perhaps careers as merchants, household servants, or within the lower tiers of city bureaucracy...



### THE MAP

"Vetranis' map is made of a single sheet of folded papyrus, inscribed in ink with a strong and steady hand. It depicts the concentric rings of the outer and inner guard wall and the tower itself, with sketch notes provided to annotate several cryptic symbols. A few discrete smears and fingerprints of dried blood indicate that it was likely scribed by someone also in the process of extracting the information it conveys.

Possession of the map is not essential to braving the dangers of the Tower of the Elephant, but if it is referred to in the course of such an intrusion, the gamemaster may allow it to allow a player character following its advice to re-roll a single failed d20. The second result, whether successful or not, is final and must be used.

If the player characters (or their players) wish to prepare beforehand, they may do so, but the hour is late and there is no real opportunity for procurement of gear other than what they already possess or be able to lay their hands on in a hurry. The gamemaster is encouraged to rush this along by mentioning the other thief, and the potential that the dreaded master of the Tower of the Elephant may be alerted to the existence of a map charting a path through his tower's defenses and alter them in response.

True to the map's directions, the player characters find their way to the area surrounding the Elephant Tower, a

central part of the city that blends with the temple district, the difference between them likely indistinguishable to foreign eyes. Everyone knows where Yara's tower is, as it is both a local landmark and starkly obvious from almost any point in the city, its gemmed walls glimmering in day- and moonlight alike.

As noted prior, Zamora is described in more detail on pages 26–27 of *Conan the Thief* if additional information is required. It is also described eloquently in the original Howard tale.

### COMMON KNOWLEDGE

Though even the most casual visitor to accursed Zamora knows that the gleaming tower in the city's cenalled the Elephant Tower, called also Tower of the Elephant, and that its primary inhabitant is a supposedly immortal sorcerer-priest named Yara, feared by even the Zamorian king.

The player characters could conceivably know more. On a successful Average (D1) Lore test they may know the following, with additional details provided beyond the first per point of Momentum, and for any Zamorian player character this test is Simple (D0):

- The Tower of the Elephant has stood for three hundred years, built in a single night in a shocking and terrifying display of sorcery.
- Yara is said to possess a bright magic gem called the Heart of the Elephant — the secret source of his power. He once used it to turn a hostile prince into a withered black lump, then an insect, which he ground under his heel. It is said that this gem gives the tower its name, though no one knows why it is called the Heart of the Elephant.
- Human guards also watch the place, but they quarter within its walls and never venture forth. It is unknown how supplies and food are delivered, for the outer wall is without an obvious gate.
- Yara is a high priest, but of what god is not known.
- Yara rarely seen outside his tower, and always for ill. He is feared far beyond the confines of the city.
- Mysterious human and inhuman screams have been heard from inside the walled garden surrounding the tower.
- Yara supposedly came from the East, where he learned the horrifying arts of dire sorcery handed down from ancient Atlantis from before the Cataclysm.
- His guards are said to have been mutilated, their tongues removed, so that they may not speak
- Yara is no single man but many, his supposed immortality a ruse, the name donned by many over the centuries.
- If multiple player characters attempt these rolls and achieve successes, the gamemaster is encouraged to spread them between them. It is up to the gamemaster to determine the veracity of these rumors, to keep the player characters guessing and uncertain.

## THE STREETS ARE NOT EMPTY

Should the gamemaster wish to complicate the player characters' visit to the Elephant Tower, the streets of the temple district are largely deserted at night but are not wholly bereft of any living souls. The temples there suffer little risk from thievery, for such is the reputation of the strange and terrible gods enshrined therein that thieves avoid them. However, it is not wholly abandoned to trust, and from time to time guard patrols move through the area, perhaps on rounds or even responding to calls for one reason or another.

Maneuvering through the city and trying to do so without attracting notice is easy in a largely empty environment at night and is only an Easy (Do) test of Stealth. If this roll fails, there is no immediate penalty or repercussion, save that the player characters inadvertently make some sort of noise, which may cause them concern.

### The Watch

With a Complication from this roll, the gamemaster may wish to have the player characters hear or even encounter a guard patrol. Sometimes it happens that guards are just in the wrong place at the wrong time and this is one of those occasions. Alternately, this could be a single guardsman walking through, capable of summoning others as a Doom spend. If the player characters dither and spend overlong making plans about how to proceed, it is highly recommended to have at least one or two guards wander by: their presence is ultimately to add pressure.

If so, use the statistics for guards (**Conan** corebook, page 317) and have there be at least half as many as there are player characters (round down). There is no reason a larger patrol would be in the area, much less a guard captain. If challenged or threatened, they attempt to flee back to their nearest watch-station, near one of the main courtyards several blocks away.

### Accosted by Thugs

Alternately, the player characters may have drawn the attention of a group of thugs, perhaps even following them from the Maul. These rowdies are charged with courage born out of strong drink, and might recklessly accost the player characters, seeking either whatever valuables they possess or just spoiling for a fight. Page 321 of the **Conan** corebook contains a writeup of these louts, and the gamemaster should feel free to throw a number of them at the player characters equal to their number plus one per point of Doom spent.

*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. A high wall enclosed this garden, and outside the wall was a lower level, likewise enclosed by a wall. No lights shone forth; there seemed to be no windows in the tower—at least not above the level of the inner wall. Only the gems high above sparkled frostily in the starlight.*

— “The Tower of the Elephant”

## OUTSIDE THE TOWER

Once the player characters have reached the Tower of the Elephant, they see that it is surrounded by an apparently seamless wall around the walled garden, inside which is another wall, with the tower itself at that inner garden's center. The tower is supposedly self-sufficient, but in truth there is a means of entering and exiting. Vetrans' map (see page 7) shows a secret entrance, concealed with a cunning mechanical door off a side alley that allows entry to the outer garden.

Listening at the wall for any signs of movement inside is an Average (D1) Observation test. The gamemaster can decide to invoke a guard patrol inside the wall (see Yara's Guards, page 12) or have the inner garden be temporarily unguarded.

Opening the mechanism to unlock the secret door is considerably difficult, requiring a series of the polished stones in the wall to be pushed in a particular order, known only to a few and not described on the map. A Daunting (D3) Observation test is required to even find the door and notice which of the wall's stones are part of the locking mechanism, and an equally Daunting (D3) Thievery test to maneuver them in the correct order to open the door.

If successful, a carved section of the wall releases slightly and retracts, allowing it to be pushed open. Once it is open, the complex sliding mechanism of the lock is clearly visible, carved in stone and well-oiled to move smoothly, the door itself a huge carved single piece carved to look like many stones and balanced perfectly so that it may be opened and closed with minimal effort. It closes with a gentle click behind them.

A Complication jams the door's mechanism beyond the ability to open it from the outside, so an alternate route must be found.

If the secret door cannot be opened, there is always the direct path. The exterior wall is three yards high, the stones fitted carefully enough together that they afford no purchase for fingers, though a blade might be slipped between them to facilitate a climb. The wall is thick, its top at least two feet thick, enough to lie or sit atop easily.

- Leaping and drawing oneself atop or over this wall is an Average (D1) Acrobatics test.
- Using a dagger or climbing tools lowers the Difficulty by one step, as does assistance from another either on the ground or atop the wall.
- Pulling someone up to atop the wall without assistance is an Average (D1) Athletics test.
- Failure simply means the player character cannot scramble up the wall and must try again.
- A Complication means a fall and almost definitely drawing the attention of the tower's guards. See page 112 of the **Conan** corebook for more information on this mishap, and Yara's Guards on page 12 if they are so alerted.

Once past the wall and outer garden, the true danger awaits...

## THE OUTER GARDEN

This ring-like garden encircling the inner wall and tower is roughly fifteen yards wide, decorated with trimmed shrubbery, trees, grassy swards, cobbled paths, and even fountains. It shows considerable care and attention and is jarringly out of place with Yara's reputation. The sound from the surrounding district, fairly quiet this time of night, fades to outright silence inside the garden, conveying the impression that the world itself is eerily empty, the stark moonlight casting pools of darkness beneath all the trees and bushes.

Wandering around, one might encounter small pavilions, marble benches, artful statuary depicting all manner of people in costumes strange and exotic, animals from far afield, and even small ponds in which gold, silver, and red-scaled fish flash beneath the still surface. Player characters exploring the garden might think they had arrived instead into one of the pleasure palaces of the Turanians or the seraglios of the near-East.

## THE CRIMSON MENACE

Despite its relative beauty, the garden itself is not altogether harmless, and Yara has planted things here that are far more deadly than might be imagined. The sorcerer has bred many unwholesome plants with sinister life, and they have flourished here. The guards know how to avoid them, but they are unmarked on Vetrans' map and the player characters may stumble into them.

If available, the gamemaster may wish to populate the outer garden with any of the arboreal menaces described in Chapter 5: The Green Death of Horrors of the Hyborian Age. Presented here is one of these such monstrous growths: the red creeper, described on pages 60–61 of that work. In summary, it is a crimson-colored creeping vine that feeds on human blood and tissue, capable of unnatural movement on its own volition. If it manages to ensnare a victim, the red creeper burrows into any available orifice, subduing them and vampirically draining them of their life-force and vital fluids until they are eventually overcome.



## THE WINGS OF YAG

### RED CREEPER

(TOUGHENED)

#### ATTRIBUTES

Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
10	7	-----	-----
Agility	Brawn		Coordination
7	11 (1)		6

#### Field of Expertise

Combat	1	Movement	----
Fortitude	2	Senses	1
Knowledge	----	Social	----

#### STRESS AND SOAK

- **Stress:** Vigor 12 Resolve \_\_\_\_
- **Soak:** Armor \_\_\_\_, Courage \_\_\_\_

#### ATTACKS

- **Lashing Thorny Tendrils (M):** Reach 3, 5[CD], Grappling, Stun

#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Anticoagulant:** When it has successfully grappled a victim, its anticoagulant sap gives it Fearsome 1 and Vicious 1 on all further attacks against that character.
- **Concealed Plant 2:** Spotting the red creeper requires a Challenging (D2) Observation test. If undetected, it automatically ambushes any characters within Reach, acting before them in a combat round.
- **Inhuman Brawn 1**
- **Soporific Sap:** When it has successfully grappled a victim, it injects the victim with a sedative sap that causes 2[CD] Fatigue.

#### DOOM SPEND

- **Many-tendrilled:** For each Doom spent, the creeper may make one additional attack when it makes a Standard Action close combat attack. Each attack must be targeted at a different enemy. The creeper cannot use the Swift Strike Momentum spend.

## THE DEAD MAN

It is only a matter of a few moments before they see an obvious and incongruous sight, the figure of a man in the armor of a Zamorian royal guard lying on the ground near the bushes, crumpled and clearly dead. No attempt has been made to hide his body, and any passing guards are almost certain to notice their fallen comrade. His short stabbing spear and shield lay nearby, dropped apparently without being used.

A cursory examination of the body reveals he has been strangled, his eyes still wide-open in fear, face reddened with asphyxiation, and scratches where he inadvertently clawed his own flesh while trying to extricate himself from whatever strangling cord or iron fists ended his days. His flesh is still warm to the touch. In life, he was one of Yara's guard, but now he is the first casualty of the evening.

## YARA'S GUARDS

The tower has many mortal guardians as well as inhuman ones, mercenaries paid in hard coin to guard the sorcerer from the unwelcome attention of outsiders, particularly thieves who would attempt to sack the tower of its apparent fortune. They are nonetheless mere men and rely primarily on their master's reputation, rarely being forced to deal with trespassers. Owing to a long-held tradition between the king of Zamora and Yara, the tower guards are clad in the livery and crested helms of Zamorian royal guard.

Use the writeup of guards from page 317 of the **Conan** corebook, modified as follows:

- Their armor and weaponry are silvered and jeweled and worth five times normal value.
- They are armed with spear and shield and do not use arbalests.
- They are also equipped with shortswords (Reach 2, 5[CD], 1H, Parrying)
- Increase Soak to 3 (Chain and Helmet)
- Each guard carries a small bone whistle hung from a cord about their neck, useful for signalling others.
- It is up to the gamemaster to determine whether the rumor about them being muted is true (it is certainly in character for Yara to have done this). Otherwise, they are capable of bellowing for help or shrieking in pain if killed messily.

- There are at least two guards at any given time in the outer garden and at least a dozen more inside the tower, including one guard captain (see also page 317, **Conan** corebook).

Two guards patrol the garden singly, walking in opposite directions and encircling it entirely, over and again, while on their shifts. They change their shifts at midnight and take only brief breaks to drink, eat, and rest. Under normal circumstances, the player characters encounter only one guard at a time. However, on a Complication from a roll made whilst in the garden, the player characters arrive at one of the brief periods where both guards are within sight of one another and can act as one.

If attacked, either guard signals for the other with their whistle, and if outnumbered or losing, breaks and runs for the gate to the inner wall, where they knock and are admitted by their fellows from the inner guard station.

## THE BULL IN THE BRUSH

The player characters have no way of knowing it, but this murder is the work of their rival in this endeavor, Taurus of Nemedi, a so-called "prince of thieves". Taurus is just a bit ahead of them, having only recently completed this grim bit of business and continuing onward towards his intended goal, the Elephant's Heart.

Taurus is described fully on pages 90–91 of *Conan the Thief* and in the Howard story, though his basic attributes are presented here for convenience. Depending on how things went back at the tavern in the Maul, they may recognize him.



## THE WINGS OF YAG

TAURUS OF NEMEDIA			
(NEMESIS)			
ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
12	10	12	11
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
14	11	10	
Field of Expertise			
Combat	1	Movement	5
Fortitude	1	Senses	3
Knowledge	3	Social	2
STRESS AND SOAK			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Stress:</b> Vigor 12, Resolve 12</li> <li>■ <b>Soak:</b> Armor 1 (Extra Bulk), Courage 1</li> </ul>			
ATTACKS			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Dagger (M):</b> Reach 1, 5[CD], 1H, Hidden, Parrying, Thrown, Unforgiving 1</li> <li>■ <b>Choke (M):</b> Reach 1, 4[CD], 2H, Improvised, Grappling, Stun, Vicious 1</li> <li>■ <b>Rope and Grapple (R):</b> Range L, 1[CD], 1H, Grappling</li> <li>■ <b>Legendary Reputation (T):</b> Range C, 5[CD] mental, Stun</li> </ul>			
SPECIAL ABILITIES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>More Agile Than He Looks:</b> Any attack which Taurus could conceivably dodge is made at one step of Difficulty level higher. He seems immovable and slow. He is not.</li> </ul>			
DOOM SPEND			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <b>Pressing His Luck:</b> Taurus has no special Doom spends as such, but he can spend Doom at 2 for 1. Any Doom spent by the gamemaster by Taurus counts as double. Like all thieves, though, one day his luck will run out.</li> </ul>			

Taurus is also well-equipped for this mission, carrying a grapnel attached to a rope made of woven human hair (lowering the Difficulty of Athletics tests by one step while climbing), as well as a small wax-sealed tube containing a massive quantity of black lotus poison in powdered form, enough to flood an area equal to Close Range with poison gas of 8[CD], Persistent 1, Piercing 3 (see page 166 of the *Conan* corebook, for more information).

A successful struggle of Observation against Taurus' Movement (TN 19) reveals the man creeping along through the shadows and through the foliage, making his way

inexorably towards the inner wall. If he is not detected, he notices the player characters and whispers to them, telling them to take cover and expressing some dissatisfaction that others have come to contest his prize. He assesses the player characters quickly, and unless any have Renown 2+, he is unimpressed. Taurus' own Renown is 5, making him perhaps the most famous person the player characters have ever met.



## THE MORE THE MERRIER

As there are (likely) more player characters than he alone, Taurus immediately recognizes that his best path forward is to ally himself with them. He has no desire to fight a small group of armed strangers, despite his competence, but if threatened he bristles in an angry, whispered response, threatening to raise an alarm if the player characters refuse to cooperate. His tactic is more of grudging admiration, claiming to be impressed by their daring, comparing it to his own.

If pressed as to why he left the body of the guardsman in plain sight, Taurus explains that hiding the body would have invited further searching and likely revealed him, while the discovery in plain sight would buy him time while reinforcements were summoned.

Taurus has been planning this theft for a while and has prepared for it. The map from Vetransis was a useful source of up-to-date information but not essential, and Vetransis' capture made him act immediately. He has prepared several implements to assist him through the various challenges in the outer and inner garden, having spied on the tower from the vantage a nearby tall building and bribed various officials within the king's court to divine what secrets he could from them. As such, he knows more about the threats in the outer and inner garden but knows nothing about what is inside the tower.

Taurus offers to split the loot with the player characters. He admits that he is really in this to claim the fabled Elephant's Heart, mostly for the fame the theft will bring him, more than any value the item has. If threatened or haggled with, he relents, saying he will be content with the other riches Yara no doubt possesses, but demands the first choice of treasures, "after the Heart, of course."

The Nemedian thief is all-too-happy to see the map. If given access, he quickly memorizes its contents, gaining the same benefits it confers (see page 7). Taurus also stresses the need for haste, and if the player characters spend too much time talking, another guard arrives around and must be dealt with.

## THE INNER GARDEN

The wall separating the outer from the inner garden is identical to the outer one and can be overcome in the same fashion. However, there are two significant differences.

The first is that the gate separating the two is clearly visible, appearing as an elegant metal gate flanked with

slender columns, two stone sphinxes, and a slight cover above. On the inside of the gate is usually posted a single guard whose duty it is to admit the outer guards in during their shift change, and to see to it that no one who has breached the outermost wall enters. This guard is identical to the others, as described on page 9 and about his neck he also has a bone whistle as well as a key to the gate.

If desired, the gamemaster can use the Garden board from the *Conan: The Tower of the Elephant* adventure boardgame to represent this environment.

A flag-stoned trail leads from this guard station to an ornate door at the base of the tower, currently closed. If he is not dealt with immediately, he races for the door to the tower, summoning at least six more of his fellows, all of whom fight to the death to defend Yara's lair. At the gamemaster's discretion, they can summon up to another half-dozen more of their ilk, arriving in 1[CD] subsequent combat rounds.

The second major difference between the inner and outer gardens is that instead of human guards, the inner expanse is patrolled by a small pride of lions, a half-dozen in number. They are equivalent to saber-toothed tigers as described on page 332 of the *Conan* corebook, but have been surgically altered by Yara so that they are unable to growl or roar. They are conditioned to refrain from attacking Yara's and to move with unnatural silence, even for great cats, and any Observation tests to hear them are at one additional step of Difficulty. They hunt together and roam the inner garden as they will, the deadliest of all Yara's wardens. A successful Dire (D4) Animal Handling test is required to calm the creatures and pass without being attacked. If desired, the gamemaster may separate individuals from the pride at a cost of 1 Doom per lion, to utilize them for a later surprise attack.

The map shows the location of the gate and indicates some sort of guard animals, with no further details: the slave did not see them clearly enough to identify them as lions and thought them a pack of dogs.

If given the chance, Taurus uses his black lotus powder tube, unsealing it and blowing it on one end, releasing the powder in a fog on the other side of the wall, slaying all the lions present in the area. As this is the gamemaster pitting a non-player character against a group of monsters, no roll is required or Doom need be spent to achieve this success. If somehow the player characters attempt to fight the lions, this will be a long and drawn-out battle, likely to alert the guards despite the relative quiet of the lions themselves.

Like the outer garden, the inner garden is an idyllic place, more belying a noble's estate than an evil sorcerer's grounds. Another minor difference is a small, covered pavilion with a ramp leading underground in a relatively curving path. From the many pawprints in the ground nearby, it is clear that it leads to an underground lair for the lions. Taurus can confirm this, if need be.

Venturing down this way puts the player characters along a low corridor with a sloping floor. They must crouch to proceed it winds downward to somewhere beneath the tower. The smell of lion spoor should be a strong giveaway that this is an unwise path to take, and the increasing number of bones on the ground as one goes deeper and darker beneath the earth should rattle even the hardiest of heroes. The tunnel emerges into a deep, steep-walled lion pit. The walls are twenty feet high and slick, and anyone in it is at the mercy of the guards above, who feed the lions by throwing meat down to them, letting them drink from the ponds in the outdoor garden.

Unless the player characters brought a light source with them, this will be a harrowing experience. Should they follow this route, the gamemaster is fully encouraged to use one or more additional lions in a sudden attack from the darkness. Due to the pitch black and the lions' familiarity with the environment, any attack the lions make is at +1d20 for the first round, and they are at one additional step of Difficulty to be detected.

However pleasant the interior garden may be, or how quickly they have dealt with the lions and the guard, the player characters — either sensibly or spurred on by Taurus — should not tarry here either.

## STRANGE LUCK

*With a detached feeling he watched, as a man might watch a play; immersed in a feeling of overpowering unreality, the Cimmerian was no longer sure of his own identity; he only knew that he was looking upon the external evidences of the unseen play of vast Outer forces, beyond his understanding.*

— “The Tower of the Elephant”

As depicted in the Howard story, the alien being Yag-kosha's torment is a cosmic tragedy of monstrous proportions, an untold cruelty wrecked upon a wise and powerful being.

Conan's own actions and perceptions in the story seem curiously guided by forces beyond his control, and certain events transpire that imply more than simple good fortune or chance are at play.

At the gamemaster's discretion, this can be simulated by spending Doom and voluntarily shifting the events of a test by a level of success equal to the amount of Doom spent, essentially purchasing Momentum on behalf of the players.

Just as Taurus was able to perform the near-impossible feat of hurling a grappling hook vertically more than 150 feet into the air and have it snag on the first throw — surprising even him — the player characters might find their efforts curiously effective in unnerving ways, such as a near-miss suddenly becoming a hit, or a last-minute reprieve when a test is failed. Care should be taken to characterize these as slightly unnatural or improbable outcomes.

This might begin in subtle ways and then intensify as one enters the tower itself, such as they become enmeshed deeper and more inextricably in Yag-kosha's destiny and his web of sorcerous retribution, no matter how it may play out.



# INSIDE THE ELEPHANT'S TOWER

The player characters now have a choice to take about how to proceed into the tower. Unless their assault on the tower has gone catastrophically wrong, they are undetected by this point and may pick their strategy to enter. They can brave the dangers head-on by going through the front door or they can follow the path Conan took in Howard's story, climbing the rope with Taurus.

See the appropriate section, following, for each option.

## THE FRONT DOOR

As noted, there is an ornate door at the base of the tower leading inside. It is not normally locked and can be easily opened. Inside are the mysteries of the tower. The ground floor door opens into a small hall and a relatively large chamber, an entry foyer where Yara and his guards receive outsiders, never letting them penetrate the further recesses of the tower. Here the directions on the map, such that it is, cease.

If this is their plan, Taurus bids the player characters good luck, and proceeds with his own intent to assault the tower from above, trusting in his own abilities to obtain the

See *The Dangers of the Elephant's Tower* (page 19) for directions on how to proceed.

## SCALING THE TOWER

Taurus, warned about the presence of guards in the lowermost floor, has prepared to bypass them entirely by scaling the tower itself, having brought a specially prepared rope made of human hair soaked in the juice of the upastree for additional strength. Despite its relative flimsiness, it will hold three times his weight at a time and should allow for at least two other player characters to scale the tower at the same time. This is Taurus' preferred method, as he is certain that even if Yara becomes aware of the intrusion into his domain, the sorcerer will be expecting any trespassers to come from below, rather than above. This advantage might save their lives.

If this path is taken, the player characters watch as Taurus performs the miraculous feat of hurling a metal grapnel upwards over 150 feet straight up, where it hooks

onto the ledge of the jeweled rim of the tower, letting him pull it taut. Taurus himself seems slightly unnerved at his success. See *Strange Luck*, page 15, for a potential explanation for this incredible occurrence.

Climbing the silvery, smooth sides of the tower with Taurus's rope can be done two at a time simultaneously with Taurus — he insists on going first — then three at a time after. This requires a successful Challenging (D2) Athletics test per 50' of the tower's height to be scaled, a total of three successes required to reach the rim. If Momentum is earned on the first test, it may be spent on the subsequent spans. Failing the test simply stalls the climber, while a Complication means they fall. See page 112 of the *Conan* corebook for the dangers of falling.

Given the tower's height, falling while making the latter phases of the ascent is not recommended. Players are encouraged to spend Fortune or incur Doom to increase their chances of successfully scaling the tower. Similarly, the gamemaster is recommended to make this climb as memorable as possible, describing each white-knuckled moment of it as the player characters dangle from a frighteningly thin cable suspended far above the earth.

Player characters with exceptional climbing abilities might attempt the climb unaided, with requirements similar to the above but as an Epic (D5) test, with the same penalties for failure.

Conan paused a moment on the very edge, fascinated by the great frosty jewels whose gleams dazzled his eyes—diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, turquoises, moonstones, set thick as stars in the shimmering silver. At a distance their different gleams had seemed to merge into a pulsing white glare; but now, at close range, they shimmered with a million rainbow tints and lights, hypnotizing him with their scintillations.

— “The Tower of the Elephant”

The uppermost floor of the tower is a patio encircling it entirely, with a single floor and a golden door leading inward. The door is covered with a scaled pattern and set with many gems. Once over the jeweled rim, the player characters can rest for a moment, steeling themselves before entering the tower itself. What awaits them inside?



## OPPORTUNISTIC THEFT

Yara's tower represents incalculable wealth, more than anything the player characters may have ever encountered in their careers, and much of the time they are relatively unwatched. After three centuries of exerting his power and influence over the city of Zamora, Yara has accumulated a vast amount of wealth beyond the imaginings of most kings or queens. The very walls of the tower are sheathed in enough gold and gems to fill a treasure vault, and the insides are filled with arcane tomes, alchemical labs, magical artifacts, and simple objects of worth enough to sink a stout merchant vessel. They may even start at the very lip of the tower's roof itself, scraping gems out of their settings.

Unlike Conan, who sought only the Heart of the Elephant, player characters are liable to prise any gem off the walls they can, pick up every single copper coin they lay eyes upon, and open and empty every chest, drawer, and chest of drawers until they are staggering under the weight of their haul.

This meticulous scavenging and penny-picking can slow gameplay to a crawl and is the antithesis of heroic sword-and-sorcery adventure, and the gamemaster should use every tool they have to emphasize the peril inherent in the tower, made all-the-more dangerous by overburdening oneself with clinking bags of gems and coins, or unwieldy amounts of bric-a-brac.

To hopefully minimize this impact upon the flow of the action, the gamemaster should abstract this behavior as a series of rolls. Every ten minutes spent poring through Yara's possessions in search of treasure merits one Simple (D0) Thievery roll. Each point of Momentum may be spent on a roll of 1[CD] per searcher, the result equalling the amount of portable Gold in treasure collected.

However, each period spent making noise scraping and shuffling around also provides the gamemaster with 1 Doom to be used as desired. This Doom is earned at a rate of 1 per round of searching, no matter how many searchers, and should be used to keep the focus on perilous adventure rather than slavishly hoarding wealth.

To spice up the potential haul, however, additional guidance might be gleaned from pages 101–110 of Nameless Cults (particularly the Looting the Temple sidebar), the rules for treasure hoards on pages 104–112 of Ancient Ruins & Cursed Cities, or even some artifact as puissant as those described on pages 11–16 of The Book of Skelos. The player characters might find some item within Yara's hoard equal in value as the Elephant's Heart, but even more problematic!

## THE FATE OF TAURUS

If the gamemaster chooses to (loosely) follow the events of the original story, Taurus is nowhere to be found when the player characters arrive atop the tower. The door leading into the tower is ajar, however.

If the gamemaster chooses to make **Encounter 1: The Treasure Room** (see page 19) the first room the player characters explore, upon opening the door they are subjected to the horrible sight of Taurus standing still, trembling slightly, his eyes wide and staring. The burly thief collapses outward, clutching at his throat, then sprawls face down upon the patio. Taurus shudders, clawing at the ground, choking, and dies, leaving the golden door open behind him. Inside, glittering gems from within shining in the moonlight.

An examination of the body and a successful Challenging (D2) Observation test reveals three small holes punctured into his neck, black-edged and stinking of rotting flesh. Another Challenging (D2) Healing test identifies the wounds as some sort of envenomed sting or bite.



## WITHIN THE TOWER

While Conan encounters only Yag-kosha, Yara, and a cadre of dead guards on his own incursion into the Tower of the Elephant, there is no reason that the gamemaster needs to limit the potential inhabitants to those few.

Yara has many guards, and likely has mortal servants to tend to his needs. As Vetrans the Kothian kidnapper boasted, Yara has recently purchased some slaves, and these might be encountered, whether sleeping in servant quarters or exploring to find the source of any commotion the player characters create.

The gamemaster should use Doom liberally to spring guards, surprised slaves, or other threats onto the player characters. Many options present themselves:

- Perhaps a slave seeming to be relieved that rescue is at hand might turn on the player characters, alerting the guards to their presence.
- A chained noble, caught in a gilded cage, might be willing to bargain for their freedom.
- Another thief, having overheard the conversation in the Maul, has followed the player characters into the Tower. An ally or rival of Taurus, perhaps? See the guild thief on page 78 of *Conan the Thief* for an example of such a character.
- Yara is described as a priest. As such, perhaps he has a small group of loyal cultists, sworn to his service (**Conan** corebook, page 313).
- Perhaps Yara has a variety of sorcerous servants, hideous half-men transformed by his sorcery into something else (see the degenerate in the **Conan** corebook, page 315).
- It might just be that the tall, lean slave clad in a loin-cloth turns out to be Yara himself, having shed his fine robes as a tactic to conceal his identity.
- A giant serpent (**Conan** corebook, pages 329–330, **Conan** corebook), rearing up and initially peering around a corner, causing player characters to mistake it for an elephant's trunk!

Finally, one further creature might be encountered, the mutated and monstrous form of Taurus of Nemedias, transformed by the sorcerously tainted spider venom and turned into a many-legged, venomous horror. After the player characters left the rooftop, dark blasphemous life spawned anew within the Nemedian's corpse. Legs sprouted from

his putrefying flesh, and now he lives as half-man, half living spider. It stalks the tower searching for those who betrayed it, in this case the player characters themselves. Given the chance, it ambushes them, dropping down from one of the high ceilings and striking from surprise. It relies on its great strength.



TAURUS THE SPIDER			
(NEMESIS)			
ATTRIBUTES			
Awareness	Intelligence	Personality	Willpower
12	7	7	12
Agility	Brawn	Coordination	
12	13	14	
Field of Expertise			
Combat	2	Movement	5
Fortitude	3	Senses	3
Knowledge	–	Social	–

STRESS AND SOAK	
■ <b>Stress:</b> Vigor 16, Resolve 15	
■ <b>Soak:</b> Armor 2 (Horror), Courage 2 (Horror)	

ATTACKS	
■ <b>Piercing Limbs (M):</b> Reach 3, 6[CD], Grappling, Knockdown, Piercing 1	
■ <b>Venom Spit (R):</b> Range C, 5[CD], Fearsome 2, Persistent 1	
■ <b>Horrific Presence (T):</b> Range C, 5[CD] mental, Area	

SPECIAL ABILITIES	
■ <b>Doom Herald</b>	
■ <b>Fear 2</b>	
■ <b>Night Vision</b>	
■ <b>Spider Climb:</b> He can reduce the Difficulty of any Movement test by two steps and can move up walls and across ceilings, despite his human bulk.	
■ <b>Unliving</b>	



## THE FACE OF THE ENEMY

Yara, as depicted in Howard’s tale, remains curiously remote throughout the entirety of the story, appearing only as Conan arrives in his chambers to enact Yag-kosha’s vengeance.

The gamemaster may wish to make Yara a more active participant in these events, making his eventual downfall more potent. He is extremely powerful and has use of any spell the gamemaster desires, giving him a considerable range of options in this fashion. Draw from those in the corebook, *The Book of Skelos*, or other sources, if desired.

Yara is described full on pages 91–92 of *Conan the Thief*. The sorcerer has not survived centuries and held mastery over a fallen god by behaving rashly, however, and thus the gamemaster is encouraged to avoid a simple throwdown or face-to-face clash. To this end, Yara might intervene earlier in the adventure through one of the following tactics:

- Yara’s awareness is such that when not in a lotus-induced stupor, he becomes immediately aware that the player characters are in his tower and appears to them via a projected voice, floating face in the air, or even a phantasmal form.
- Made aware of the invaders within his sanctum, Yara actively sends sorceries against the player characters.
- Yara might direct physical threats—more soldiers, lions, great spiders, or other summonings after the player characters. Perhaps monstrous plants or insidious shadowy demons?

Yara might even appear to the player characters, claiming that the monstrous elephant-alien Yag-kosha has broken free and is stalking the tower’s floors, threatening to destroy all in his path. He pleads for their assistance, offering them much to aid him. See Rogues in the Tower (page 20) for more information on this variant.

## THE DANGERS OF THE ELEPHANT’S TOWER

Here, the gamemaster is encouraged to utilize the following series of encounters as desired, based on the flow of floor-to-floor exploration and action. The tower itself is large, its 150-foot height containing many levels, passages, and rooms within, far more secrets than could ever be explored in a single adventure. A narrow, silvery staircase (see Encounter 2: The Silver Stairs, page 19) winds down its center. There are no interior windows at all within the tower.

Inside the Tower of the Elephant is the accumulation of centuries of living without limit: containing Yara’s laboratories, workrooms, holding cells for his sorcerous experiments, his libraries, sitting rooms, a kitchen, baths, storerooms, quarters for slaves and for guards, a lion pit in the basement, and eventually the chamber in which Yag-kosha the Yaggite is enslaved.

Finally, there are Yara’s own personal chambers, in which the sorcerer spends much of his time in a drugged state, his mind atavistically exploring the outermost reaches of time and space, seeking the forgotten and forbidden wisdom of the ages.

Cataloging them each and describing their contents would be an exercise as futile as it would be dreary to relate to the players, and thus the gamemaster is encouraged to emphasize the dramatic flow of the adventure and present encounters as appropriate, keeping them off-guard and emphasizing that this is no mere walkthrough of the events in Howard’s original story.

As with the **Conan: The Tower of the Elephant** adventure boardgame, the interior of the tower is abstracted into a series of encounters, one for each of the rooms, matching those from the boardgame but varied in order. They are presented here in the approximate order of the Howard story, but a gamemaster desiring variety can shuffle the game boards if desired and use them to determine the starting order, or can roll 1d20 on the following table:

ROLL	ENCOUNTER
1-4	Encounter 1: The Treasure Room (page 19)
5-8	Encounter 2: The Silver Stairs (page 19)
9-12	Encounter 3: Yag-kosha’s Chamber (page 21)
13-16	Encounter 4: Yara’s Chamber (page 21)
17-20	Encounter 5: The Guards Chamber (page 22)

## THE WINGS OF YAG

The gamemaster is encouraged to treat each of these as a highlight amidst the many chambers and levels within the tower, fleshing its interior out and expanding it as desired. Other encounters, also, might be introduced by the gamemaster, along the lines of the dramatic environments described on pages 272–274 of the Conan corebook.

- Mechanical traps such as sliding doors to cut the group into smaller groups, causing them to go around or seek an alternate route.
- Weird hypnotic traps made of green fire stones from the ancient green stone cities south and east of the Hyborian lands.
- Yara's sorcerous laboratories, filled with his weird experiments, including tanks filled with new and twisted forms of life of the gamemaster's choice.

### ENCOUNTER 1: THE TREASURE ROOM

This uppermost room is where Yara keeps much of his treasure, consisting of chests stacked willy-nilly, some of their contents spilled. The walls are set with white jewels that catch the meager light and reflect it brightly. The ceiling is covered with a large eight-sided pattern set with four red gems in its center, burning brightly and casting a lurid crimson light across the interior. Another door inside leads to the silvery staircase that winds down the entire height of the tower (see Encounter 2: The Silver Stairs, page 19). If desired, the gamemaster can use the Treasure Room board from the **Conan: The Tower of the Elephant** adventure boardgame to represent this environment.

*There were no chairs or tables in the chamber, only three or four silken couches, embroidered with gold and worked in strange serpentine designs, and several silver-bound mahogany chests. Some were sealed with heavy golden locks; others lay open, their carven lids thrown back, revealing heaps of jewels in a careless riot of splendor to the Cimmerian's astounded eyes.*

— "The Tower of the Elephant"

Hiding amongst the shadows in the ceiling is a giant spider, grown to gross and unnatural size by Yara's sorcery and placed here as a guardian. Its body nearly the size of a pig, its legs are each the height of a tall man. Spotting it requires a successful Observation test, a struggle against its Movement Field of Expertise.

The spider is equivalent to the Toughened giant spider described on page 330 of the **Conan** corebook (or alternately, the Toughened spider horror on page 94 of *Conan the Thief*). It is intelligent and seeks to disarm any intruders, attempting to ensnare their blades in its sticky webbing by using the Disarm Momentum spend (page 118, **Conan** corebook).

Within the room are chests, pieces of furniture, etc. that might be utilized as improvised weapons. At the gamemaster's discretion, there may be more spiders at the cost of 2 Doom apiece, working in tandem to ensnare and eventually slay any who trespass into their chamber.

### ENCOUNTER 2: THE SILVER STAIRS

Spanning the entire height of the Tower of the Elephant is a narrow, silvery staircase, spiraling within its very center. Along it on each floor are landings which offer access to different chambers, doors made out of precious metals, studded with gems, slabs of stone such as malachite or even crystal, or valuable woods such as mahogany. The overall impression is that no expense was spared making this tower, and the concentration of wealth it represents is staggering to any who think of such things. If desired, the gamemaster can use the Silver Stairs board from the **Conan: The Tower of the Elephant** adventure boardgame to represent this environment.

The tower is slender, and only a few rooms are on each floor. Doors are locked or unlocked, at the gamemaster's discretion. If the player characters are making noise, they inevitably draw the attention of one or more of the tower's denizens. Most likely, they encounter a small group of guards, coming up from the lowest floors to investigate. See page 9 for more on these watchmen.



## ROGUES IN THE TOWER

In the Howard story "Rogues in the House", Conan encounters Nabonidus, at a moment of weakness, the Red Priest having been attacked and usurped by his trained man-ape Thak. If the players themselves are familiar with the story this adventure is based on, the gamemaster may wish to surprise them with an unexpected element.

Using that story as inspiration, the gamemaster may introduce Yara earlier into the adventure, perhaps appearing to them in a moment of weakness, hiding and desperate. He claims that the demon Yag-kosha has broken his confines and reclaimed the magical jewel, the Elephant's Heart, that once controlled him. Now the terrifying, god-like Yaggite is ready to bring terror down upon the world, summoning his brethren from their slumbers in the distant East and from across the vale of stars to this world, where they might claim the thrones of the Earth as their own and wreck vengeance upon all of humankind.

Now, Yara pleads with them, both for his own good and that of all humankind. He asks the player characters to assist him and stop the demon-elephant to prevent this terrible future. Yara offers them all the riches of his tower, claiming that if Yag-kosha defeats them, all material wealth is meaningless in the horrific age to come.

If so, is he sincere? Or is he merely toying with the player characters, using his exposure to learn their weaknesses and turn the tables upon them? The adventure presents three options here for the gamemaster to pick from:

- **Yara is lying**, pretending to be at a disadvantage when he is all the while toying with the player characters. If the player characters try to go kill Yag-kosha, Yara betrays them as the broken Yag-kosha weeps, unable to act.
- **Yara is partly lying**, in that Yag-kosha has broken free and is trying to escape but does not wish anything other than to escape his mortal confines, which unfortunately is tied to Yara's jewel. The Yaggite has no ability to summon his brethren and merely wishes Yara dead and an end to his misery.
- **Yara is telling the truth**, and like Thak from "Rogues in the House", Yag-kosha has turned the tale on his master and broken his bonds. The Yaggite is in fact free and is stalking the tower looking for Yara, to enact a particularly horrible vengeance.

How this plays out depends on what option the gamemaster picked, and what the player characters do with the information they have, and trust. It can end with the same ritual involving the ritual of the Blood and the Jewel, using the Heart of the Elephant as portrayed from the Howard story. As a variant, perhaps the player characters must find the Heart of the Elephant from where Yara has hidden it (a trapped hiding-hole within the tower) while they fight off the sorcerer's minions.

It might be also that they find the jewel called the Heart of the Elephant and return it to Yag-kosha, who then clutches it, healing himself, and roars that vengeance against humankind will be his.



## THE WINGS OF YAG

### ENCOUNTER 3: YAG-KOSHA'S CHAMBER

Behind an ivory door set with red stones wafts the thick, pungent scent of incense. The door is unlocked, and within is a large chamber beneath a high, domed ceiling paneled with gold. Its walls are of green jade, the floor ivory, covered with exotic rugs. Within the center of the room is a golden censer with incense smoldering within it, and behind it upon a raised dais is a marble couch upon which sits a creature out of nightmare, the Yaggite named Yag-kosha, after whom the tower takes its name. If desired, the gamemaster can use the Yag-kosha's Chamber board from the **Conan: The Tower of the Elephant** adventure boardgame to represent this environment. denizens. Most likely, they encounter a small group of guards, coming up from the lowest floors to investigate. See page 9 for more on these watchmen.

*...the image had the body of a man, naked, and green in color; but the head was one of nightmare and madness. Too large for the human body, it had no attributes of humanity.*

*Conan stared at the wide flaring ears, the curling proboscis, on either side of which stood white tusks tipped with round golden balls.*

— “The Tower of the Elephant”

Here the gamemaster should decide how they want this to play out, whether the player characters will enact the events from the story or whether they will forge their own path. It is highly recommended to re-read the original Howard tale, paraphrasing where necessary, to best evoke the flavor of this cosmic tragedy, no matter how it evolves.

Depending on what has transpired earlier, Yag-kosha is either sleeping if undisturbed, or it is awake and awaiting the player characters. The supposedly last Yaggite is described on pages 95–96 of *Conan the Thief*. If they approach it peaceably, it tells them its tale, a miserable history beginning within the stars from whence it spawned, its arrival on Earth in the antediluvian epoch of Atlantis and Valusia, and its life in the distant east where it and its brethren were worshipped as gods, teaching sorcery to humankind. Yara's treachery is described, and the indignities enacted upon Yag-kosha. The once godlike creature, fallen to a tragic fate, rests in their hands.

On one side of the chamber sits a great gold and ivory altar, and upon it is a red jewel the size of a human fist: the Heart of the Elephant, placed within sight of the one it

controls. This mighty gem is detailed on page 96 of *Conan the Thief* in Yag-kosha's description.

Given the choice, Yag-kosha asks the player characters to enact its vengeance upon Yara, by cutting from its breast its living heart and delivering it to Yara, letting it drip upon the Heart, and delivering it downwards within the tower to Yara, and completing the great ritual spell cast upon it. If they choose to obey and take part in this great and terrible ritual, each player character immediately gains 1 Fortune point.

### ENCOUNTER 4: YARA'S CHAMBER

On a floor below that of Yag-kosha (not necessarily the one immediately below) is the chamber of Yara, taking up the entirety of a floor. Behind a door of black ebony set with a silver skull is a sumptuous suite appointed all in ebony wood and jet... all its décor similarly black. If desired, the gamemaster can use the Yara's Chamber board from the *Conan: The Tower of the Elephant* adventure boardgame to represent this environment.

Upon a black silken couch behind an ebony table, if he is unaware of the player characters' approach, reclines the master of the Tower of the Elephant, Yara (see *Conan the Thief*, pages 91–92).

Though the original Howard story had Yara almost placid in the face of his doom, the gamemaster may wish to make the encounter considerably more engaging and thrust the player characters into combat with a wily, incredibly resourceful sorcerer-priest within his very innermost lair, likely trapped and warded against any intrusions. It may be that he regularly fends against those would take his life and the player characters are little different than such interlopers.

As such, Yara as an active foe is a force to be reckoned with. If played right, the gamemaster likely has a reserve of Doom on hand to fuel this encounter, making it particularly memorable. It is highly recommended to add to Yara the Dread Creature 5 special ability (*Conan corebook*, page 308)

The gamemaster is encouraged to utilize the hazards presented on page 274 in the *Conan corebook* as examples of the sorts of booby-traps and stratagems the priest may have on hand, readied for his defense, and he might also have at hand a variety of alchemical torments and petty enchantments such as burning salts, brimstone, or lotus gas (*Conan corebook*, pages 163–166). Spells he might favor are Dismember, Enslave, or Haunt the Mind (*Conan corebook*,

pages 177–178, 182–183). Additional spells or magic assets might be drawn from *The Book of Skelos*, *Nameless Cults*, or any other *Conan* sourcebook, as appropriate.

Should Yara be subdued and the sorcery of the Blood and the Jewel be enacted, the blood-soaked Heart of the Elephant placed before him, the player characters are present to see a most remarkable sight: the sorcerer shrinking and being absorbed into the jewel, to be pursued by the figure of Yag-kosha, its wings restored and vengeance within its grasp.

The Heart of the Elephant vanishes, leaving the player characters potentially alone within the tower. Those with a philosophical outlook might wonder at the fate of a tower made of sorcery given that its maker and master are now gone.

What will the player characters do next?

### ENCOUNTER 5: THE GUARDS CHAMBER

At the very base of the tower is the guards chamber, where the soldiers who man Yara's tower are fed and quartered. The floor is of lapis lazuli and arrayed around the walls are cots for each man. Within the center of the room are places where dice-games were once wagered. Alcoves hold personal effects and weapons and featured in the room's center is a well-appointed dining table, wine vessels arrayed upon it. If desired, the gamemaster can use the Guards Chamber board from the *Conan: The Tower of the Elephant* adventure boardgame to represent this environment.

If the events of this adventure transpired as in Howard's story, all the remaining guards are dead sitting around it, their bodies slumped over or strewn to the side as if cast away like mere kerchiefs, for such they are in the scale of grand tale of cosmic revenge.

A side door opens onto further and less ornate stair into a plain stone cellar, the center of which is a large pit with steep sides nearly fifteen feet deep. An open gate is set into in one side of the pen, above it being a stout metal gate attached to a winch, its chain affixed to an iron hook set into the stone. This is the pen where the lions that patrol the ground are kept, food thrown down to them. It smells of lion spoor and musk, and nothing of value is in this place.

### LEAVING THE CHAMBER

In true dramatic fashion, after or immediately before the player characters leave the Tower of the Elephant, the last vestige of Yag-kosha's magic comes undone, and the building begins to shudder. If the player characters are lingering overmuch attempting to loot the place of every scrap of gold and sliver of gemstone, the gamemaster is encouraged to have this begin to occur to chase them out.

The Tower of the Elephant, raised three centuries ago in one day by Yaggite sorcery, takes less than a minute to collapse entirely. Anyone inside is simply killed outright, so great is the impact of all the debris and any player characters foolishly tarrying within or nearby should suffer 1[CD] damage per point of Doom remaining in the gamemaster's Doom pool, spread over the entire area.



## THE VULTURE'S REPAST

The collapse of the tower creates an enormous pile of loot in the form of jewels, priceless items and artifacts, books, dishes, and other sorcerous accoutrements, including the corpses of any slain in the course of the adventure. If any of the player characters seek to scavenge through this colossal pile of rubble, allow them as many rolls on the Opportunistic Scavenging table (page 17) as they have time to make: each roll takes ten minutes.

The Zamorian town guard arrive onto the scene, braving the dangers and helping boost themselves over the wall within 1[CD] times ten minutes (if the [CD] result is 0, guards arrive immediately). Once there, they attempt to halt any looting before the rabble of Zamora, alerted to the collapse of the tower by the thunderous crash and its subsequent disappearance, surge over the walls to claim any scrap of value to be found therein. If threatened, they summon reinforcements until a number sufficient to deter even the most ardent of rubble-pickers. Rather than slay or arrest the player characters, they let them carry what they can out of the tower grounds, but do not allow readmittance.

### VETRANIS' FINAL REWARD

If for some reason — perhaps adherence to some code of honor — the player characters choose to honor the arrangement struck with Vetranis the Kothian, they should make their way to the East Gate of the Old Town, a walk of no great distance eastward along any of several of the main roads running through the Zamora's inner district, which the Tower stood at the center of.

The Old Town is a slum on the east side of Zamora, a small district razed by raiders and warring armies, eventually left to stagnate. It is the only section of the city not encompassed by the outside wall, but the rubble and ruin are enough to deter any clear passage. Many unfortunate souls dwell here, usually in large clusters of poor families or clinging together in groups for safety. It is eerily quiet here, the lurking menace of poverty and despair keeping the destitute silent to avoid detection lest they suffer some worse fate than has already befallen them. This area is described more fully in *Conan the Thief* on page 27.

Just to the southeast of the ruined district is the East Gate. Once a proud entrance to the city, beckoning to Turanian and even Hyrkanian trader caravans, as well as more local

traders from Yezud or Shadizar, the gate itself was sealed many years ago and is functional no longer. No guards are posted there, and its hinges and sliding bar have long since rusted shut. In the shadows of the tall gate, however, the near-naked body of a man is slumped, as if cast off by fortune and forgotten. His skin shows signs of many burns, cuts, and his eyes are wide and staring at an uncaring sky. Two vultures pick at his flesh, squawking if driven away.

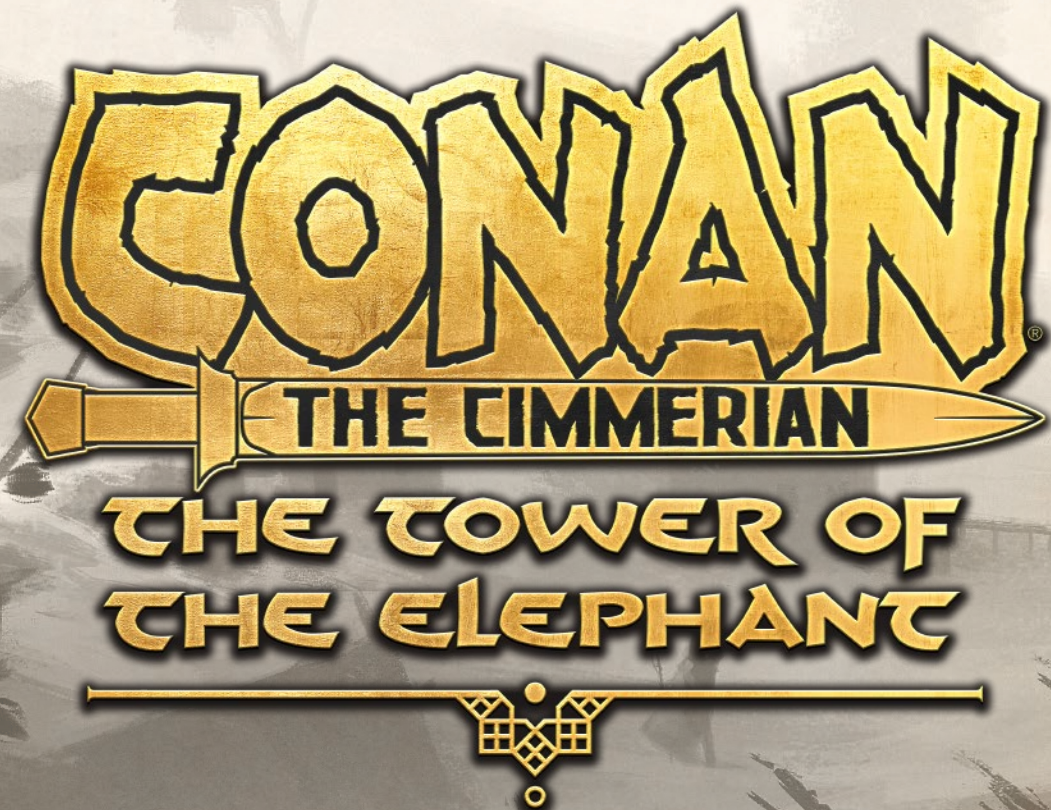
This is what remains of Vetranis the Kothian, a rogue and kidnapper of no substantial worth. The Stygians tortured the information about the map out of him and then, when the Tower of the Elephant fell, they abandoned him as a warning to any of his allies. Such is the grim road of those who trade in human flesh, inevitably to incur the wrath of those crueler than they.

### EXPERIENCE & REWARDS

The player characters have escaped the dangers of the Tower of the Elephant with whatever jewels, treasure, and items of value they were able to carry out before its collapse. If they had an arrangement to share their proceeds with Vetranis, that deal ended with his life. He had no kinfolk, left no grieving widow or children, and no one will miss him. They can keep the money, though Yara was allied with many who — though they feared him — may have reason to enact revenge on his slayers.

If by some miracle, Yara has escaped the destruction of his tower, the player character may have earned an incredibly powerful enemy who will patiently restore himself to a position of power and influence before enacting his revenge upon them. Yara might even take on the role of a recurring villain, working behind the scenes and under a different guise while inflicting miseries upon the player characters.

If the player characters' part in Yara's downfall was publicly known, each earns +1 point of Renown, as word of their exploit spreads throughout the city and beyond accursed Zamora's walls. Depending on the length of the session, each player character should earn between 200–300 experience points for completion of the adventure. Bonus experience based on individual players' roleplaying and overall contributions to the enjoyment of all may also be awarded, an amount ranging from 50–100 points at most.



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