LAMIAS, TIGERS, AND WERES, OH MY!

by KM Kovalcik

Creature: *Lamia* | **Level:** *5* | **CWs:** *Death, mind control, animals fighting*

SYNOPSIS

The town of Athelney has recently been overrun with baby displacer beasts… wearing bows? To make matters worse, several have notes daring adventurers to come to the Spellburned tower, promising riches… or death. Some foolhardy teenagers have already tried, only to come back raving about a beautiful woman with the body of a lion!

The party must investigate the Tower, where a lamia, a weretiger and a lich live, along with several breeding pairs of displacer beasts and saber toothed tigers. The lamia and the weretiger test the party in combat, and only let them up the secret door should they prove themselves powerful enough to defeat the lich.

ADVENTURE HOOK

The map's third floor is there for flavor, but may need to be drawn should characters choose to focus on fighting and combat.

A small, tiger-striped displacer beast cub approaches the party with a note around its neck. The cub is looking for companionship and food. If attacked, three displacer beasts come to save the cub. The note says:

Are you strong? Courageous? Do you seek treasure? Knowledge? A challenge?

The Spellburned tower is in need of heroes! Fortune and fame awaits you... if you survive!

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The displacer beasts and tigers are all owned by a lamia and weretiger pair. Gretzel, their daughter, had always been obsessed with darkness, but tried to become a lich after finding a strange book at the top of Spellburned tower. Instead, she has become a vengeful banshee.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- **Jacklyn Hyde: Weretiger** lover of Morga Fae. She believes that if she's given a second chance with her daughter, Gretzel, this time she'll raise her right.
- **Morga Fae: Lamia** lover of Jacklyn Hyde. She believes her daughter, Gretzel, has made her choice, and can only have peace in true death.
- **Gretzel: Banshee**, the once-human witch daughter of Morga and Jacklyn. After failing to become a lich, she is now stuck at the top of the tower, ranting about the beauty of undeath.
- **The Cats:** While they may be **displacer beasts** and **saber-toothed tigers**, Jacklyn and Morga do spoil them. They all wear bows, bells, and respond to names like "Blinky," "Thumbelina," "Snowball," or "Pokey."
- **Unnamed Students:** These intelligent ladies take care of the beasts and the tower in exchange for education. If the characters choose to interact with them, they are bookish and shy. They ask the party to leave them to their studies, and if questioned will only give brief answers about their jobs or the tower.
- **Unnamed Male Guardians:** These men had either tried to steal from or kill Morga Fae, and now wear red tabards with the words "Thief!" in bold. They are under the control of Morga Fae until she is bored of them, or until someone plans to take them to justice.

CHAPTER 1 – THE SPELLBURNED TOWER

The Spellburned Tower was once the home of Krofaris, a human wizard, and his students. Krofaris had tried to turn himself into a lich, but failed. The tower burst into flames, killing everyone and destroying all but his black, leatherbound spellbook. The tower has remained empty, until now.

If the party has kept the kitten, it tries to run away when it gets close to the tower unless if the characters succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check.

A. FRONT DOORS

The entrance to the tower has large, wooden doors carved with symbols representing the schools of necromancy, transmutation, and evocation. Although transmutation and evocation are untouched, the symbols of necromancy are deeply scratched, as if a beast had tried to rip them off the doors.

Guarding the front doors are three bandit captains. Sneaking up on them is rather easy and requires a successful DC Dexterity (Stealth), but one of them rings the bell next to the door once combat begins.

If the party approaches peacefully, the guards ask for the note and warn them of the dangers within, but a successful DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation) or Wisdom (Persuasion) convinces the guards to ring the bell and step aside.

B. THE FRONT FOYER

The inside of the tower is mostly clean, but the ceiling is still darkened by soot. Otherwise, this front foyer is charming, if you ignore the short weretiger and her growling beasts.

The front door is locked, and can be unlocked by a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. Jacklyn Hyde is in the foyer in hybrid form. If the characters manage to sneak in, she continues playing with her “cats.” If she is aware of them, she tries to talk to the characters, but Blinky, a **displacer beast**, and Thumbelina, a **saber-toothed tiger**, growl and hiss if anyone brandishes weapons. Rather than a fight to the death, she proposes a brawl, with the understanding that the first group to have a downed combatant is the ‘loser.’ If the party continues the fight after a combatant falls unconscious or dies, then two more displacer beasts join the battle.

After the fight, Jacklyn tells them what is going on. The displacer beasts have been running from the tower because her human daughter, Gretzel,tried to transform into a lich, but failed, instead becoming a terrible banshee!

Jacklyn tries to make a deal with the characters: if they bring Gretzel’s corpse and phylactery to her, she and all of her "babies," (the large cats and kittens) leave and go elsewhere. However, she takes the corpse and phylactery and try to reincarnate her daughter into an infant’s body in the hopes of giving her a second chance.

C. DINING ROOM

The dining room feeds everyone at the tower, including the “cats.” Avoiding combat is easy here, the characters won’t be attacked unless they attack the two displacer beasts under the table. To coax them out without threatening the cats requires a successful DC 25 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. Otherwise, they stay hidden and shiver.

D. KITCHEN

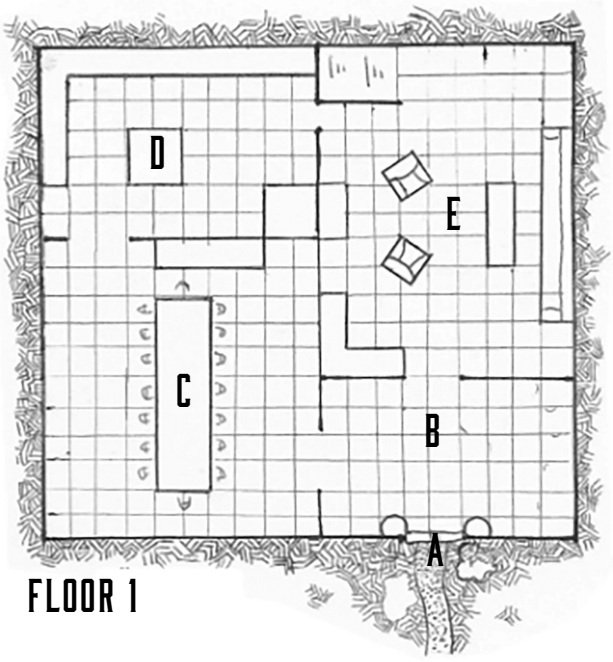
The kitchen contains enough food to feed the tower, several ways to start a fire, and plenty of meat.

E. LIVING ROOM

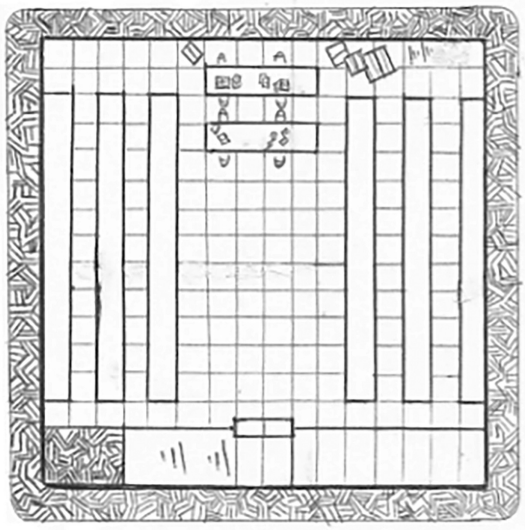
Several large, plush couches line the room, and a fireplace rests on the back wall. Several displacer beast/saber toothed tiger hybrids shake under the couches and tables. All seems calm until a shriek cuts the silence, sending the animals scattering just as a ghostly figure emerges out of the fireplace.

Although this image is incapable of causing harm, the party must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw

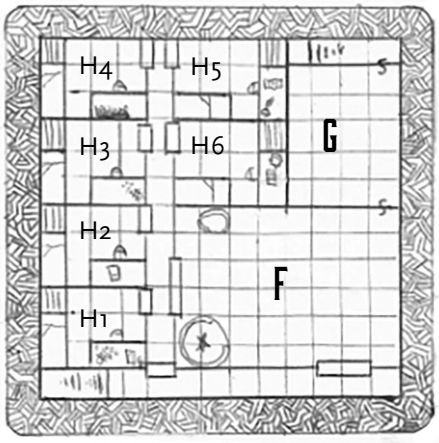
THE SPELLBURNED TOWER



FLOOR 1



FLOOR 2



FLOOR 3



FLOOR 4

MAP BY KM KOVALCIK

or suffer the effects of Horrifying Visage. Regardless of the results, they are still susceptible to Gretzel's ability.

This room of plush chairs hides several striped displacer beast kittens. They are fluffed up, hiding wherever they can. They do not attack, even if provoked. If necessary, they use the **cat** stats.

DEVELOPMENT

How they deal with Jacklyn determines the next chapter. If they manage to talk with Jacklyn, then she follows them into the next chapter but doesn't give any help in combat. Killing Jacklyn makes the next chapter much harder.

CHAPTER 2 – QUIET IN THE LIBRARY!

FLOOR 2: LIBRARY

The grand library is truly a wonder, covered in bookshelves, art, and chests. Standing just inside are three men, an albino displacer beast, and a purple displacer beast. The men all wield great axes, and wear a red tabard with the word "Jerk" emblazoned in white.

Morga Fae is more interested in testing the adventurers than trying to kill them. Even so, she has two displacer beasts, Snowball and Princess, and four bulky warriors; much bigger than the guards outside. (Use four **bugbears** as the warriors.)

Tactics: Morga Fae casts suggestion, urging the characters to flee back to Athelney. She continues the fight until one of her cats is downed, or two characters succeed on her suggestion spell, or all four bulky warriors are killed. When one of these conditions are met she surrenders with this speech:

"Well done, adventurers!" the lamia says. *"Excuse my manners, I am Morga Fae. These kind gentlemen have helped me run a test. Now, please, put down your weapons, and we can discuss more important matters."*

Morga Fae fears a panic in the nearby village. In addition, Gretzel's transformation is very troubling. She once believed her daughter to be loyal to her, but her followers have been disappearing, and she knows Gretzel is to blame. A visit by some competent adventurers is all she is truly looking for.

At this point, the party likely has questions. Use these examples to guide the conversation.

- ***Why can't you kill Gretzel?*** Morga Fae still loves her daughter, so she can't bring herself to kill her. She also doesn't know if she is powerful enough to stop her. Sending anyone weak would just give Gretzel more souls to sacrifice, bringing her terrible daughter closer to lichdom.
- ***What are you going to do about your displacer beasts wandering around?*** She will keep them indoors and build them a catio, but she needs to know this tower is safe before keeping them locked in.
- ***Is the lich your daughter?*** The banshee was once a human female that they adopted. They taught her everything she needed to become a witch, but unfortunately, her obsession with immortality and undeath caused her to make the grave mistake of trying to become a lich.
- ***What will you give us for killing Gretzel?*** Morga Fae has gold and artworks she is willing to part with. She will not allow anyone to take books from her library. Should a character want to read a book, she gladly lets them read it there under the supervision of her followers.
- ***Why should we let you live?*** Morga Fae may be greedy, but she isn't the kind of monster to go on rampages or kill indiscriminately. She also knows how to destroy the phylactery, and can provide the adventurers room for a short or long rest. As for the town, she offers protection and to send some business their way.

What if Jacklyn is dead? Morga Fae will not realize that something is amiss until after her "test." If the characters are caught lying, or if they confess, Morga Fae becomes enraged, and demand the party go into the next battle without a rest. Should they survive, she tries to kill them.

What if the characters decide to just kill everyone? Should this happen, they will be under-resourced for the next fight. Do not give them a short rest. Gretzel flees into the library once Morga Fae dies. The men do not fight if Morga Fae is incapacitated or killed. As they are under mind control, killing them after she dies would be evil. As the women are historians, experts, and art sellers, they do not fight the characters, and killing them would be an evil and unlawful act. If the party kills any of these unarmed women, they should face legal consequences.

What if the characters try diplomacy? If the characters talk to Morga Fae while she and her retinue are attacking them, and two characters manage to make successful saves against *suggestion*, award them an extra 50 gp each.

Floor 3: Living Area

F. The Lamia's Bedroom

This grand bedroom does not have a bed, but is instead covered in lush pillows, mattresses, and blankets. Several displacer beasts and saber toothed tigers are currently napping.

Before the party can rest, Morga Fae has a task. They must retrieve a bell from one of the sleeping displacer beasts. The party needs to succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to find the bell, and then need either a DC 20 Wisdom (Animal Handling) or Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check to get the bell off without waking the animal. The party may find other ways to keep the animal asleep or put it back to sleep. Attacking the beast automatically fails the challenge.

G. Secret Room

If the characters have made friends with Morga Fae, she tells them where the room is and unlocks it for them. Otherwise, a successful DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check is needed to see the door, and a successful DC 20 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check with thieves' tools is needed to open the door. Inside this room is Morga Fae's private library, her most precious possessions, and the stairs to the upper floors.

H1-6: Follower's Living Quarters

The living quarters are for her many followers, although several often bed with her. The men live in the servants quarters in the basement. Each of these rooms contains a bed, chest, and desk.

Development

To stop the lich, the characters must enter the secret door. If the party is friendly with Morga, she unlocks the door for them. If not, Morga has a diary with notes about the door.

Chapter 3 – The Cold Doesn't Bother Her Anyway

Secret Stairs

The secret stairs lead up into a cold tower that becomes colder the further up the characters go.

The Lich's Lair

This once large lab area owned by the wizard, once sectioned off for experiments and study, is now one large room. A few tables and bookshelves have survived the destruction. The room is unnaturally cold and dark, with no light shining in from the windows.

In the middle of the room stands a banshee, glowing with anger. Next to her are two creatures with the bottom half of a skeletal tiger and the torso of a women.

Gretzel's transformation was compromised by Morga Fae locking her in the third floor without enough sacrifices. Instead of a complete lich, she has become a **banshee**. Before she was locked in, she convinced two women to go with her. These two have been combined with saber toothed tigers to become hybrid tiger skeletons (use **minotaur skeletons** stat block). Reskin the Gore attack as a Bite attack.

Tactics: The two hybrid tiger skeletons begin combat behind rubble, waiting until the banshee wails. The banshee begins combat hiding under the bed, and begins combat with her wail. The three hybrid tiger skeletons use their Charge attack to try to knock characters down.

After the battle, Gretzel's corpse can be found on her bed, where she lays without a scratch. A DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) or Intelligence (Investigation) check is needed to find a black, leatherbound book where she had found the incomplete instructions for lichdom and a small, black amulet with a frosted, black gem wrapped around it.

Development

With the banshee and her retinue defeated, the unnaturally dim light gives way to the midafternoon light. The room warms up, but is still covered in shattered glasses, broken tables, and ripped books.

Conclusion

With the "lich" defeated, there is still the matter of the loose displacer beasts. To solve this crisis, Morga Fae and Jacklyn have two different plans.

Morga Fae

- Build a "catio" for her beasts so they stay close to the tower.
- Lure in wealthy merchants from nearby towns and cities to sell and buy art and books.
- Will be a provider of history, magic items, and arcane lore.
- Destroy the phylactery and book to put her daughter to rest.
- Could bring thieves and con artists into town.

If the characters side with Morga Fae:

Jacklyn kneels besides Gretzel's body, crying and holding her daughter's hand for the last time. Morga Fae squeezes her wife's shoulder, then tosses the phylactery into the fire. The two women hold hands as the flames crack the amulet, and their daughter's corpse magically turns to ash, as if it too was in the fire.

Jacklyn Hyde

- Remove herself and her beasts from the tower.
- Small retinue of women stays behind to guard the tower.
- Offers to make someone a weretiger.
- Offers the tower as a base to the characters.
- Bring phylactery and corpse to wizards to try and reincarnate the banshee that was once their beloved daughter.
- Could fail and create a worse monster than the banshee.

If the characters side with Jacklyn:

Morga Fae places the corpse inside a bag, then hands it to one of her guards to hold.

"Thank you, adventurers," Jacklyn says as she squeezes each of their hands. *"Thank you for a second chance. I promise you, this time, we won't make the same mistakes."*

Morga Fae walks over and nods at the adventurers. *"We will do our best to keep in touch. Thank you for having faith in us. We won't waste this chance, and I'm sure Gretzel won't either."*

REWARDS

XP is already calculated per character assuming four characters.

Obstacle	XP
Foyer Fight	563
Library Fight	763
Getting the ribbon	50
Gretzel fight	613

TREASURE REWARDS

Item	Value
Art pieces	Five pieces worth 100 gp each
Coins	50 gp, 63 sp
Not killing any "cats"	50 gp
Scroll of *blur*	
Two *potions of healing*	
Getting the bell	25 gp

Tiger-Striped Displacer Beast, Adolescent

If a character wishes to gain one of these animals as an animal companion, they use the **panther** stats, but replace Pounce with Displacement.

Characters without the ability to have an animal companion will not be able to take on one of these adolescent creatures as a pet, as they run away the minute they sense danger.

Tiger-Striped Displacer Beast, Cub

The cubs take a long time to grow up, and never count as more than a **cat**. However, they still look cool, enjoy travel, and have the Displacement feature. These cubs will never be useful in combat, but they are very cute.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

My husband was actually the one who gave me the initial idea of a female lich. Somewhere along the way, I decided to make her a bit of a tragic figure. I've kept it a bit silly, and I've made sure that everyone involved is a "crazy cat lady," but I do want the players to feel bad for Jacklyn and Morga Fae. I didn't add what drove Gretzel crazy, but I think I gave enough hints that she can fit into the GM's world without too much trouble.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

KM Kovalcik is a writer, teacher, babysitter, tutor, marketer, crafter, Game Master, player, librarian-in-training, and jack of all trades. She writes for a children's mentoring program and works with children with emotional needs in New Jersey. This is her first published adventure.