

and to incorporate a mayorship to handle increasingly important decisions about Phandalin's future.

Two people, both current councilors, are running for mayor. One is Harbin Wester, a male human with the integrity and unctuous personality of ... well, a career politician. Wester is a former townmaster, and is running against Sildar Hallwinter, a male human, member of the Lords' Alliance, and former adventurer. Hallwinter is a circumspect sort who opposes Wester mostly because of the latter's corruption. For more information on both, see the "People of Phandalin" section.

Wester is the town's banker and a major landowner, so some consider his wealth and power to be ample justification for his greedy, conniving nature. More importantly, a number of monstrous and magical incidents in the area over many years have left Phandalin's citizens anxious for strong-sounding leadership. Even though adventurers solved many of the town's problems in the past, Wester has gained much popularity by convincing people that the town's troubles would have never surfaced if those well-armed wandering busybodies hadn't gotten involved in the first place. The banker has even gone so far as to suggest that adventurers might have orchestrated some of Phandalin's past woes for their own gain.

Sildar Hallwinter isn't a great orator. He spends most of his time refuting Wester's "unsubstantiated claims." The retired warrior also points out that Phandalin needs a leader who knows the dangers of the wilderness, even as its people need a mayor unburdened by scandal and potential conflicts of interest.

The characters can become involved in the mayoral debate if the players wish. If they don't, wrap it up and let the characters interact with the townsfolk as they see fit. Talking to any townsfolk yields up the information detailed in the "Recent Events in Phandalin" and "People of Phandalin" sections, below.

## RECENT EVENTS IN PHANDALIN

The Fellowship of the Golden Mongoose was the Acquisitions Incorporated franchise previously established in Phandalin. When that group arrived in town a few months ago, they spoke with Harbin Wester about acquiring the ruined Tresendar Manor, since the banker held the property's title. Wester worked out terms with Head Office and the deal was signed. The members of the franchise soon got to work on restoring the manor, frequently coming to town for supplies. When not slipping off to adventure for a few days here and there, most of their time was spent at the manor.

A number of days ago (the same day the franchise's payment was due to Head Office), the townsfolk heard explosions from the manor, with a few people reporting seeing goutts of flame and hearing the commotion of a battle. No one was really keen to investigate, wanting to avoid any trouble that the Fellowship of the Golden Mongoose had brought on themselves. (Adventurers, right?)

When scouting a base of operations, consider how many of the local businesses in your area could be strong-armed into submission, or how many of the politicians could be replaced by a member of your own implausibly large family.

—Rosie Beestinger

## THE MAGIC OF CONVENIENCE

The work of the gnome archmage Hoobur Gran'Shoop is a constant presence in episodes 2 and 3 of the adventure, even before his actual appearance toward the end of episode 3. Savvy players might note that the undead minions Hoobur creates to harry the party don't follow the standard rules by which a spellcaster character might create undead. Likewise, some of the creatures working for Hoobur do so in ways that aren't covered by *dominate monster*.

If the characters develop a strong interest in creating undead horses or summoning will-o'-wisps to their service, you can decide to reveal the "unique rituals" Hoobur knows, which can show up as treasure in the adventure or be something that the characters can learn through research. Otherwise, just assume that like many classic villains, Hoobur Gran'Shoop has access to whatever magic is necessary to advance the plot in the most interesting way.

But after a few days passed and no one from the manor came into town, Sildar Hallwinter braved the walk up the hill to investigate.

Where the manor once stood, he found only rubble, scorch marks, ruined construction, and bloodstains. He failed to discover the single franchisee left alive in the manor, who was unconscious at the time. The townsfolk have given the ruins a wide berth since then, not wanting to risk awakening whatever mad magic delivered the adventurers of the Golden Mongoose to their final fate.

## PLOTS OF THE SIX

Just over a year ago, operatives of the Six came across one of the components of the *Orrery of the Wanderer*—the *far gear*. Quickly realizing the potential power in the component and the orrery it was a part of, they began to scour the Sword Coast for information regarding the artifact. A month ago, their intelligence-gathering resources turned up word that two Acquisitions Incorporated franchises—including the newly minted Phandalin franchise—had been scrutineering for lore about mysterious magic clockwork devices. Wanting to determine what Acquisitions Incorporated might know about the orrery, the leaders of the Six put a plan into motion. (The second franchise was based on the Sword Coast between Neverwinter and Luskan. Its fate will be discovered by the characters in episode 3.)

The Six set up an agent in Phandalin—Ditch Fundi, who first raised and now runs Phandalin's new Temple of the Coin Maiden. Using Ditch's intelligence on the activities of the Company of the Golden Mongoose, the Six confirmed that the franchise held an orrery component called the *timepiece of travel*—and that Acq Inc head office was so far in the dark about their discovery. So the Six hired a number of agents—including archmage Hoobur Gran'Shoop—to attack both franchises.

Hoobur's forces snuck into Phandalin and razed Tresendar Manor to the ground. However, the Six operatives were unable to find the *timepiece of travel*. Knowing that one of the franchisees had teleported away from the fight, the agents assumed that the orrery component was gone. Unknown to them, the timepiece stayed behind, and remains in the possession of the survivor still buried alive in the rubble.