

the ritual or how best to take the fight to the Six. For any tasks in which the outcome includes a complication due to a rival, the Six could be attempting to undermine the characters' franchise to eliminate their threat.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Even as the characters are working on locating the ritual site, they might use the explore territory franchise activity to interact with local customers and allies to strengthen the franchise. A group of merchants might want to sell branded gear manufactured by the lichs the characters met at Lottie's, creating additional business opportunities or allowing the characters to follow up on previous negotiations with the lichs.

FRANCHISE RESTRUCTURING

Having recently interacted with several powerful organizations—including Lottie's lich alliance, the Six, and Dran Enterprises—the characters might be bursting with ideas for fine-tuning their franchise and headquarters before the final showdown. This might involve organizational restructuring, headquarters modifications, upgraded magic, and other activities meant to grant the franchise an edge in the coming fight.

MEET AND GREET

Engaging in shady business practices or outright crime during downtime might result in more than financial reward for the characters. With a suitable degree of success, such activities can bring the characters into contact with agents of the Six. Likewise, the characters might use the cover of criminal activity to infiltrate or expose the Six, or they could use carousing or other social activities to contact an ally or operative of the organization.

Any such interactions should automatically create complications to be resolved, with those complications revealing useful information concerning the Six's plots, the ritual site's possible location, and the defenses around the site.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

If the characters communicate with Head Office at any point during their downtime, it should be made clear that Acquisitions Incorporated is impressed by the franchise's success. Omin Dran does whatever he can to backstop the characters' efforts to find the ritual site, even as he directs other franchises and operatives to seek the site as well. (In the end, the characters will conveniently be the ones to locate the ritual site, but it should be clear that the entire organization takes the impending end of the world as seriously as they do.)

Omin is also troubled because he's lost contact with the members of the "C" Team (see appendix A). The members of that franchise have been actively seeking the Six, and Omin hopes that they might simply be in the midst of an operation with no chance to report in. But just in case, he asks the characters to keep an eye out for them. The fate of the "C" Team—and the possible fate of all Faerûn—will be revealed to the characters as they charge toward the grand finale of the adventure!

EPISODE 6: SHOWDOWN WITH THE SIX

The characters (now 6th level) have learned that the *Orrery of the Wanderer* channels magic even more powerful than intended by its creator, the lich Lottie. As such, Lottie broke the orrery into parts and scattered those parts far and wide, hoping that no one would discover their secret. But the enigmatic group known as the Six has collected at least one orrery component (perhaps more, depending on events in episode 5), and its agents now attempt to use those components to open a portal to the Far Realm.

After a suitable amount of questing and research, the characters locate the ritual site, which they learn is in the small town of Red Larch. That settlement is the childhood home of Omin Dran and the stomping grounds of the Acquisitions Incorporated franchise known as the "C" Team, whose members have recently gone missing.

The characters speed toward Red Larch, where they find foes allied with the Six guarding the Dran & Courtier inn. That otherwise quiet establishment has always possessed unusual magical qualities, but these have been warped by the slowly opening portal to the Far Realm. The characters can interact with the local townsfolk, learning that the members of the "C" Team entered the inn but have not returned. Likewise, the inn's co-owner and proprietor, Propha Dran, has not been seen since the planar strangeness suffusing the inn started.

When the characters enter, the Dran & Courtier appears normal at first. But opening any of its interior doors causes the entire site to transform under the watchful eye of an agent of the Six known as the Keymaster. A nightmare version of the Dran & Courtier is revealed, filled with aberrant horrors. Defeating the horrors of this incarnation of the inn returns the characters to the actual inn.

A second transformation turns the characters into miniature heroes as they are greeted by Splugoth the Returned. On behalf of the Six, the wily goblin asks the characters to surrender their orrery components—and then releases Onyx, the giant (relative to the characters) inn's cat, upon them. Successfully fleeing from Onyx transforms the inn once more.

In the final stage, the characters discover the members of the "C" Team fallen in combat and must fight the horrid Far Realm creature that slew them. Doing so brings those NPC heroes back to life. Once the Keymaster has been subsequently bested, the characters can open a final door leading to a dark series of dimensional caverns—and the lair of an ancient deep crow. That terrible creature is sure to defeat the characters, unless they can determine that it's suffering from a deep depression and desperately seeks a mate. Successfully playing the part of deep crow relationship counselor allows the characters to continue on, finally reaching the portal site.

Splugoth is in control of the ritual and has defenses in place to prevent the meddling characters from thwarting his plans. As the characters face off against a mutated