

a more thorough investigation with the scrutineering activity (see “Franchise Tasks and Downtime” in chapter 2). Whatever approach the characters take, remember that learning the full scope of the orrery’s history, the secrets of its creator, and the range of its powers is the goal of the whole campaign. Whatever small bits of information can be revealed at the outset should hint at even more that remains to be discovered.

DRAGON SITTING

If the players helped Dabshabah, they might want to check up on the wyrmling. Helping her fully heal up and regain the use of her fire breath and sleep breath might require research or a customized use of the recuperating downtime activity (both from the *Player’s Handbook*.) If the characters want to arrange for someone else to watch over the young dragon, finding a suitable guardian might require research. Or the characters might decide to sow positive rumors in the area where the dragon wants to settle (using the sowing rumors activity from the *Dungeon Master’s Guide*), hoping to get the locals used to the idea.

ALTARED STATES

Characters interested in the strange altar under Waterdeep can undertake research to study its mysterious runes, which can lead to information regarding That-Which-Endures (see the sidebar in the “New Race: Verdan” section in chapter 3.) Gorkoh the goblin might assist with this task if the characters keep him around, as a kind of warm-up for the rules for letting NPCs run franchise tasks (which the characters will gain access to at the end of episode 2).

In the long term, Gorkoh could take the lead in the scrutineering activity to research the shrine, or set up a shady business practice to restore part of the altar’s power and arrange clandestine tours into the caverns by those who want other dangerous relics destroyed. See “Franchise Tasks and Downtime” in chapter 2 for more information on those new activities.

CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

With contracts in hand and downtime done, the characters can make the trek from Waterdeep to Phandalin. Episode 2 of this adventure details that trip and the new mysteries the characters encounter as they arrive in town, attempt to sort out what happened to the previous franchise—and start to build their own franchise as the newest members of Acquisitions Incorporated!

EPISODE 2: FUN IN PHANDALIN

In episode 2, Omin Dran sends the adventurers (now 2nd level) to Phandalin to learn the fate of an Acquisitions Incorporated franchise that opened there a few months earlier but has recently gone dark. After overcoming hazards on the road, the characters enter the town. There, they learn that the franchise had signed an agreement to purchase the oft-ruined Tresendar Manor, a small estate on the outskirts of town. However, some-

thing catastrophic occurred at the manor recently, and no one in town has seen any of the occupants since.

While in Phandalin, the adventurers have the opportunity to interact with the townsfolk, possibly becoming involved in small-town dramas—including a mayoral election. Those events could have a significant impact on the franchise the characters will establish at the end of this episode.

At the ruins of Tresendar Manor, the characters find clues about what caused the destruction. They locate one of the two surviving members of the previous franchise, the half-orc majordomo Gildha Duhn. Gildha provides details about the attack and the apparent goal of those who struck the manor—retrieving a mysterious magic clockwork device that the characters recognize as part of the magic orrery found under Waterdeep. Investigating where the attackers slipped into the manor’s basement and dungeon, the characters discover signs of recent rituals tapping into the power of the Far Realm—and take on the monsters the attackers left behind.

After dealing with the threats in the dungeon, the characters run into operatives from Dran Enterprises who have been sent to take control of the site. With the imminent dangers in and around Phandalin neutralized, the characters are rewarded by Head Office with the license to take over the failed Acquisitions Incorporated franchise. From there, they are set to investigate who was behind the attack on Acq Inc. and what connection the mysterious orrery might have to this new threat.

LAYERS OF VILLAINY

Although the characters have no way to discover this fact at present, the attack on Tresendar Manor was carried out by operatives working for the Six. That dark cabal of dark individuals wants to bring dark forces into the world—and its members have a specific motive of wanting to destroy Acquisitions Incorporated in the process. However, most of the agents involved in the attack had no idea they were working for the Six. All were hired individually and clandestinely by one of its members—the goblin Splugoth the Returned, who made no mention of his identity or allegiance.

The appearance of Dran Enterprises at the end of this episode is meant very much to imply that the organization was involved in the attack—and to distract the characters and the players alike from speculating on what other nefarious operators might be involved. The plots of the Six are revealed over the course of the adventure. More information on the Six, Splugoth, and Dran Enterprises can be found in “Factions and Rivals” in chapter 3, and in appendix B.

TRAVELING TO PHANDALIN

The trek from Waterdeep to Phandalin requires the adventurers to travel north on the High Road, then head east along the Triboar Trail before taking the track south into town. Walking at a normal pace, it takes about 6 days to travel from Waterdeep to the head of the Triboar Trail, 1 day to hike along the Triboar Trail to the track to Phandalin, then another 4 hours to reach the town.