

the characters don't replace the plating, it begins to regrow, even as the orrery housing magically straightens itself out.

Within a few days, the orrery housing is a pristine, golden six-sided device with a circular hole in each face. The setup of gears and attachments within the orrery makes it clear that six round components are meant to be placed into the device. Characters will not recall seeing any such devices in the shrine of destruction.

EXITING THE FISSURE

With Sergeant Teeshe saved (or with her body in tow and a convenient cover story), the characters can make their way back to the sinkhole. If they left any dangers behind them on their initial pass, those dangers re-emerge on the trip back—and will prevent them from fulfilling their contract if not eliminated.

When the characters climb out of the sinkhole, Captain Truff is waiting for them alone, and is pleased to see them. She's even more pleased if the characters rescued Sergeant Teeshe. Truff asks the characters to sign an affidavit confirming that they've completely investigated and cleared the passages beyond the fissure. If the characters lie about the success of their mission, they risk a fine, imprisonment, or both.

The characters must also agree to have all the goods they found beneath the city inventoried. If anyone later claims to be the rightful owner of any of the loot, a magistrate might rule that the goods belong to the original owner instead of the characters. Who knew adventuring required so much paperwork?

DOCK WARD AMBUSH

While the NPCs and characters are going over their bookkeeping, a group of villains working for the Xanathar Guild tries to take any treasure the party pulled out of the tunnels. The group consists of a **thug** called Stork leading three **bandits**. Stork believes she has the advantage over the party members, who are probably coming out of the tunnels bruised and bloodied. Plus, she's already bribed the two City Watch guards, Orvis Torval and Rosko Bosh, to "take a walk," so neither is on hand during the attack.

Captain Truff fights alongside the characters, as do Gorkoh and Sergeant Teeshe if the characters rescued them. Otis Adalgrim might show up too, either during or after the fight.

CONCLUSION

With this first episode completed, the characters attain 2nd level! But even as they get to bask in the warm glow of that achievement, they must return to Acquisitions Incorporated to report. Omin Dran is there to meet with them when they do. If the characters were successful and dealt with Captain Truff in good faith, Omin gives them the promised reward of 400 gp for the group (500 gp minus the Acquisitions Incorporated fee). If the characters were only partly successful, adjust Omin's reaction and what follows as necessary.

Having since learned about the initial mistaken identity when he met the characters, Omin is even more

impressed by their success. Or he might be in the mood to demand favors from them if things didn't go entirely as planned (because that kind of mess makes the whole company look bad). Either way, read:

"I've been told about the misunderstanding regarding your identities. I can't say much for your relative inexperience and lack of skill. But it looks as though you've got enough moxie to cover for that. And a willingness to do what it takes to get ahead. Those are traits we hold in high regard here at Acquisitions Incorporated."

Omin pulls a map from a satchel and places it on the conference room's oak table. "You know the town of Phandalin? Just off the Triboar Trail? A few months back, we awarded a group a franchise there. We received word that they were taking control of some ruined estate for their headquarters, and everything seemed to be going well. Only they missed this month's franchise payment, and their secretarian isn't answering any calls."

Omin snaps his fingers, and a paper, a pen, and an ink pot leap from his satchel. "This note gives you the right to travel to Phandalin and investigate the franchise there on my behalf. If you find the franchise in poor standing or otherwise in distress, I want a full report. And depending on how badly the last group botched things, I might look to you to take over. A failed franchise makes the whole company look bad. I'm sure you understand."

Omin then levels a hard stare. "I want you to appreciate what an incredible opportunity this is for you. You're skipping countless steps in the normal franchise process. No internships. No tests. It's unheard of. But I believe in you."

As before, Omin Dran is a busy CEO, and doesn't have time for a lot of questions. If the characters discuss finding the mysterious orrery housing, he tells them to make researching the relic part of their mission. With the characters all newly minted, official Acquisitions Incorporated employees, Omin trusts that they'll know what to do.

FRANCHISE DOWNTIME

Once the characters formally establish their franchise at the end of episode 2, downtime activities and franchise tasks will play a bigger role in the adventure. For now, though, encouraging the players to engage in downtime activities before heading off for Phandalin can help them get comfortable with the idea of dedicating nonadventuring time to personal and business development.

A few possible downtime activities are suggested below, but the party's downtime escapades can include anything that you and the players come up with.

THE ORRERY

Learning more about the mysterious orrery could be undertaken as basic research, which might lead later to