

is written "Congratulations!" Within the bag are thirty strange coins that appear to be gold, but which are actually copper covered in gold foil and stamped with the letter L. (These are tokens for Lottie's casino; see "Lottie's Palace" later in this section.) Also in the bag is a note bearing a message in a regal script.

Congratulations on the determination that got you this far in search of the wheel of stars! And sorry that your reward has been denied you. The wheel has been with me always, and even as this ruse is ended, I promise it shall never be given over to those who would use the power of the orrery for woe. If that be you, feel free to face me—and know your doom. But if perchance you have come here seeking the orrery so as to destroy it ... well, then, you have piqued my interest.

My name is Lottie. Find me if you can.

LOOSE ENDS

If the characters kill the clockwork dragons without talking to them, the constructs are able to speak even after being smashed. This can allow the characters to question them, and vice versa. If the characters completely miss all the clues in this section, additional downtime or asking Head Office for help can provide details regarding someone named Lottie with a penchant for creating clockwork creatures.

Though the characters are unable to claim the final orrery component at this time, they now know where it and its creator can be found. Once the caravan departs and they return to their bodies, they can plan their next move.

GOING IN STYLE

The journey south and east to the Greypeak Mountains covers miles of treacherous terrain, and time is of the essence. As such, the trip presents an opportunity for the characters to play with one of Acquisitions Incorporated's most sought-after assets—a battle balloon.

The characters can report back the outcome of their Horn Enclave mission to Flabbergast or Omin Dran, or Head Office makes contact with them if they report back to Gilda Duhn first. Knowing the importance of tracking Lottie down, Omin authorizes the loan of the battle balloon at once, with the vehicle arriving at the characters' location within a few days—accompanied by a voluminous contract and an extensive list of penalties to be paid if anything should happen to it.

The primary focus of the agreement is to clarify the incomprehensibly high rental cost (waived by Omin for this mission), and to emphasize that the vehicle remains the property of Acquisitions Incorporated. The lengthy process of signing, countersigning, witnessing, and signing again is followed by the characters providing samples of fingernail and hair clippings. In case of the destruction of the balloon and all aboard, the company reserves the right to resurrect characters as indentured servants to work off the loss.

The crew that delivered the battle balloon remain with the ship, though the characters are firmly in charge and have plenty to do on board, as seen in the next section. Appendix C provides combat statistics for the battle balloon (because you know that's coming), so assume that a suitable number of crew are available to operate the balloon and its weapons alongside the characters.

RIDERS ON THE STORM

As the characters travel to the Greypeaks, they encounter unusual weather, followed by an ambush by the Six. How well the characters negotiate the weather determines certain elements of the ambush.

NASTY WEATHER

The sun hides behind clouds that increasingly darken as you head toward the Greypeak Mountains—and, hopefully, the wizard who created the orrery. A steady rain begins to fall, and the wind begins to howl. A crash of thunder is followed by forks of lightning. Soon, sheets of rain are falling while lightning flashes on every side. The lightning forms concentrated pockets, creating a maze of sorts.

A successful DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) check confirms that the storm is not natural. It might have been manipulated by a powerful spell, an artifact, or proximity to a portal to an elemental plane. But whatever its origin, it is obvious to the characters that they must maneuver the battle balloon through the storm, and retreat is not an option.

Have the characters select a role on the battle balloon from one of the following:

Captain, providing leadership to the other characters and crew

Pilot, charting a safe course

Weapon master, directing the crew operating the vehicle's weapons in case enemies appear

Lookout, watching for dangers

Mechanic, leading the crew battening down the hatches and making repairs

Additional characters in a really large party can use the Help action to aid one of the characters taking a role above, or can come up with their own strategy (such as casting an appropriate spell). Any roles not filled by characters can be filled by crew members, who have a +3 bonus to any ability checks made in this section.

Riding out the storm takes place as three distinct events that play out over a few minutes.

EVENT 1

The storm has become deadly, with pockets of lightning flaring all around the battle balloon. Have the characters make the following ability checks, with the outcome determine as noted. Spells and clever ideas can be substituted for any of the suggested actions if you deem them effective.