

FRANCHISE HEADQUARTERS UPGRADES

All the characters' hard work and luck to date is about to pay off in the form of headquarters upgrades! The "Franchise Advancement" section in chapter 2 has details of the cosmetic, expansion, transportation, and weapon options available to the characters for their headquarters. The available upgrades can cover literally any features that you and the players decide on, but always keep in mind the ways in which the events and developments of the adventure might drive those upgrades.

For example, the expansion option available to the headquarters might amount to simply digging out more space beneath Tresendar Manor. But it also might arise as a result of the franchise moving its headquarters to the Silent Sound lighthouse—or even claiming both sites as a joint headquarters. That latter option is even easier to set up if the characters' possession of the orrery and its components allows them to channel teleportation magic into their headquarters as their transportation option.

HIRING STAFF

At rank 2, the franchise gains four additional untrained hirelings and one skilled hireling, allowing the characters to hire new staff to meet their needs. Such hires can be done in-character if the players enjoy those kinds of scenes—and the franchise could even set up a job fair for potential employees at a local market or tavern. If the characters have made any allies or hired NPCs during preceding episodes, those NPCs might be taken on as official staff members at this time. This is also an excellent time to bring in an NPC the characters enjoyed interacting with, making that character an official part of the franchise family.

Crew. In addition to staff, ten crew are hired to help with the franchise. In addition to working on the upkeep of the franchise headquarters, these NPCs might be part of the team necessary to operate a mobile headquarters (sailors for a sailing ship or airship, arcane engineers for a walking statue or teleporting tavern, and so forth).

MAKING FRANCHISE ADVANCEMENT REWARDING

Advancing a franchise is meant to be a major accomplishment for the players and their characters. This is a moment to celebrate and reward the party's deeds and to help the players get excited about designing and selecting their franchise upgrades. Some players might focus on mechanics, while others enjoy the creativity of dreaming up how a franchise headquarters looks and feels. There is no wrong way to approach the process.

Headquarters customization is deliberately open-ended to allow for creativity. This might create some work for you as the DM, since you adjudicate the characters' customization choices. A good rule of thumb is to allow the players full creative freedom while sticking to the mechanics (however loose) presented by the rules in chapter 2. If the characters want their headquarters to be a giant bouncing rubber ball, let them go for it! In the end, that option can still make use of the general idea and mechanics of a walking statue headquarters, even

if the description of the headquarters' appearance and movement is vastly different.

Once the characters are done planning their upgrades, Gilda the majordomo takes over the mundane task of hiring contractors and starting construction. The length of time it takes for upgrades to be completed is up to you, but one to two months is reasonable. During that period, the characters have plenty of opportunity to engage in downtime activities and franchise tasks.

FRANCHISE DOWNTIME

During the break between episode 4 and episode 5, the characters are likely to be focused on deciding their next move. The urgency of seeking out the final orrery component at Horn Enclave depends on whether the party successfully claimed the two components held by Dran Enterprises, or whether they watched the mind flayer Szorrulax vanish with the components in hand. Moreover, knowing that the Six are behind the attacks on Acquisitions Incorporated, the characters can learn everything Head Office knows about that faction—but what is known about the Six amounts to little more than rumors and their somewhat-trademark-infringing logo. You can tease any of the information from "Factions and Rivals" in chapter 3 as you see fit.

Since the characters are now running a rank 2 franchise, they can assign two franchise tasks to be run by staff in addition to any personal downtime activities they wish to engage in. If those downtime activities or franchise tasks involve actively seeking connections to and information about Horn Enclave, that information can be revealed in any number of ways.

All the activities mentioned in this section are introduced or talked about in the "Franchise Tasks and Downtime" section in chapter 2.

THE ROAD TO HORN ENCLAVE

Characters or staff engaging in the research, marketeering, or scrutineering activities can uncover all kinds of connections to the dwarven Clan Horn and its fabled fortress. The characters might connect with customers or allies who know of caravans that make regular runs to the enclave, or who have heard rumors about local nobles or mages who have left relics there to be safeguarded.

The carousing activity can bring the characters into closer contact with merchants or nobles connected to Horn Enclave. One of those is a company called Dhargun Ironworks, who are sending a caravan to the enclave within the next month for the unlikely purpose of celebrating a wedding. Episode 5 has much more information on the Dhargun wedding—and the unique opportunity it offers for the characters to gain access to the enclave.

You can use the following guidelines to give the characters a quick overview of Horn Enclave. And as they learn about the enclave, they'll also discover its storied and problematic (for them) connections to Acquisitions Incorporated:

- Horn Enclave is a dwarven stronghold run by the wealthy shield dwarves of Clan Horn.