



Rivalry - Chapter 5

Prologue

You have finally arrived in the mountain town of Weaverville. What secrets does it hold?

GM Note - This chapter is built more as a list of locations to explore and scenes to experience rather than a sequential adventure. At this point in the story, the heroes' interactions with Weaverville will depend greatly on the choices they have made and continue to make regarding their allegiances and motivations. The events in this chapter are available to be sampled and remixed as needed and as appropriate for the party.

Also, if you like pictures and maps, the town of Weaverville was a real historic gold mining town. It is also the location of the oldest Taoist temple in North America, and that temple is still standing today. For pictures, search "Weaverville Joss House." The airfield can be placed in the modern location of Lonnie Pool Field, which lies to the northeast of the temple. Pictures of that air strip may help players visualize the location. The rest of the town is mostly situated between those two locations or west of the temple.

Scene 1 - The Delivery

One of the first things the heroes will need to do upon arrival is complete the delivery that has brought them here in the first place. Official shipments are received at a small airfield at the north end of town. There is enough room between the trees to fit two medium-sized airships, and in fact there seems to be one here already.

The airship that is parked at the airfield is like nothing the heroes have ever seen, even if any of them are knowledgeable aviators. It is built with an external rigid frame and open crew deck like French-style dirigibles, but the shape of both is more angular and decorated. The bag comes to more of a point at the front, with an ornate wooden bowsprit extending from the frame. On the prow of the crew cabin, there is also

what at first glance appears to be long narrow cannon forged to look like the mouth of a dragon.

A quick Common Knowledge check will confirm that this is unusual because cannons and shot are usually considered too heavy for airships and the firing of a cannon too disruptive to flight. Also, no crew could possibly muzzle-load such a cannon while in the air, as it seems to be hard-mounted on the prow. An appropriate Knowledge or Gunsmithing check may allow someone to realize that the tube is hollow straight through, which would seem to serve no practical purpose. There do not seem to be any other clues as to this mysterious object's purpose or function.

On one end of the airfield there is a large wooden storage building. There are a few workers moving crates and barrels into this building. Nothing is being brought out at this time. Overseeing the activity is an older, distinguished-looking Chinese gentleman. He wears a bowler hat and a suit and carries a clipboard. His name is Lo Bao.

When the heroes actually deliver the package, Lo Bao will simply have the workers take it into storage building. They will do nothing else at this time. If anyone manages to get a glimpse inside, there are many wooden crates inside, some of them also big enough to hold a person. They are not currently being loaded onto any vehicles for immediate transport.

The leader of the workers is a large, burly man. Lo Bao may call him directly to move the crate or check on something, in which case the heroes will hear that his name is Lo Feng. Upon closer examination, there is indeed some family resemblance between the old man and the laborer, but it is slight. As the adventurers meet more people around town, they will discover that most of the Chinese residents are either from the Lo family or the Liang family.

Unless the heroes start any incidents themselves, the delivery should go very smoothly. They are then free to wander around the town.





Scene 2 – Around the Town

In the town of Weaverville there are a number of locations that the adventurers may visit. They are presented here in no particular order, with a simple framework of setting and character information for each. In all of these cases, the townsfolk seem to be willing to go about their business as usual, welcoming the heroes as they would any other visitors. There is no immediate evidence of anything out of the ordinary happening in the town.

The Ba Gua Inn

There are a number of saloons, but only one has an inn. If the heroes intend to stay the night, they will need to make their way to the Ba Gua Inn. The sign for this inn is an octagon with a number of longer and shorter bars ringing a strange circular symbol in the middle.

The inn and its attached saloon are run by one of the small number of women you have seen around the town. Women are still somewhat more rare in the Rocky Mountain Republic than in other countries, and Chinese women in particular are not seen very often, even in San Francisco. You have seen several as you have walked around the town, suggesting that Weaverville - although still clearly less than 50 percent - may have a higher female population than other Chinese communities in North America.

The manager of the inn introduces herself as Liang Hui. She is a very friendly woman in her thirties. She will engage the heroes in whatever conversational topics they wish, although she doesn't seem as boisterous as many saloon owners can be. She encourages all visitors to take time to visit the Temple of the Trees Under the Clouds, a prominent Weaverville landmark. She also indicates that her husband might be found there.

Temple of the Trees Under the Clouds

The temple is located on the southern end of town, and is usually the first building travelers see when approaching from the east. The design is a mix of frontier practicality with Chinese ornamentation. It is not a large building, comprising only two medium-sized rooms. The first room is clearly the main temple, with ornate rugs and pillows framing a lavishly

decorated altar. The second room seems to be used mainly for storage, especially of chairs and a few other pieces of furniture.

In the temple, an older man sits cross-legged on a pillow facing the door. He does not rise to greet visitors but welcomes them quietly to the temple. He introduces himself as Liang Tao. He is happy to answer questions about himself, the temple, the town, or Taoism.

Liang Tao himself is not a priest or holy man, but rather the local Gearsmith. He has a workshop near the Ba Gua Inn, which his wife oversees, but he spends much of his spare time meditating in the temple. Others in the town visit occasionally, but often he is alone.

If asked about his work as a Gearsmith, Liang Tao will indicate that most of his work involves repair and maintenance for automatons that work in the mine. He is happy to offer his services to any automatons in the party, since he has no pressing projects at the moment.

The Apothecary

The apothecary is a small store in the middle of town that acts as a general store, but with some very specialized medicines.

Instead of the usual bottles of cocaine drops, hashish pills, and Mr.s. Winslow's Soothing Syrup (made with opium), there are strange herbal and even animal concoctions lining the shelves behind the counter. The pleasant and talkative proprietor, Lo Xing-fu, will engage all visitors in a spirited discussion about the many uses of his various medicines. He is happy to explain why Chinese medicine works much better than European medicine. (He does not even acknowledge the existence of "North American" medicine, and if pressed on this topic he will point out as an example that the continent has the wrong sort of snakes.)

In one corner of the store, there is also a display that may alarm some members of the party - a small open barrel of gunpowder with a scoop sticking out of it as if ready for serving. When asked, Lo Xing-fu explains that the powder is available for purchase by weight so that you may make your own rockets, fireworks, or dynamite. He does have some small rockets and fireworks that he makes and sells for special occasions, and the heroes may purchase some if they wish. Adventurers with

appropriate skills may even attempt to figure out how these creations work.

The one topic that Lo Xing-fu will not discuss is his other customers. He will attempt to deflect any such questioning, and will grow more firm if the questioning persists. He will be particularly tight-lipped about any discussion of the mine, the airship, or Lo Bao.

Other Locations

The rest of the town consists of a normal mix of frontier mining town locations, such as houses, stables, saloons, blacksmiths, and even a small bank and telegraph office. Most of the owners of these locations are indeed Chinese, though there are a number of miners from around the area who are not. The few automatons in town seem to be owned by miners or townspeople..

Scene 3 – Disturbance in the Night

Eventually the heroes will settle in for the night at the Ba Gua Inn or in the woods if they choose to camp. In the middle of the night, they will hear gunshots from the direction of the airfield. The nature of this disturbance will depend on what the heroes have done with the mining automaton and the Highwayman. The most likely possibilities are listed below, but feel free to adapt as necessary:

- The Highwayman was hiding in the crate with his gun, and when the workers opened it, they discovered that he was active and dangerous. The gunfire occurs as he is escaping into the woods north of town.
- If the mining automaton was delivered and the Highwaymen are still active, the gunfire occurs during a nighttime assault on the storage barn by the Highwaymen. The airfield is too well defended for the Highwaymen to be successful, but they may injure some of the workers. The rest will chase the attackers into the woods.
- If the original Highwaymen were incapacitated in the attack in the previous chapter, the attacker is yet another Highwayman, but operating alone. He is likely to be less successful in injuring the defenders, and so will flee sooner.

If the heroes go to the airfield either during the night or the next morning, they may volunteer or be asked by Lo Bao to join the manhunt for the Highwayman. (Use the stats from Chapter 4.) If the adventurers are allied with the Highwayman, they will be followed by Lo Feng. They will have to lose him if they want to do anything besides capturing the automaton and returning him to Lo Bao.

If the Highwayman is captured and returned, Lo Bao will trust the heroes slightly further. If the heroes are spotted conspiring with the automaton, Lo Feng and his workers will attempt to capture them as well. (Stats for Lo Feng and his crew will be provided in Chapter 6.) The heroes may prefer to escape into the woods rather than have that fight.

Epilogue

Now that you have a few answers but many more questions, you realize that you will need to spend a little longer watching the residents of Weaverville. It may also be time to visit the mine and see exactly what is happening there. Delve deeper into Weaverville's secrets in Chapter 6!



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