

LORE CARD 024 "TUCKED AWAY"

"I'm not calling you an idiot, but it strikes me only one of those would want to go all the way up here. Know what I mean?" The airship pilot sneered at his only passenger. This altitude was pushing the limits of his vessel, and the winds and proximity to the cliff faces were concerning.

The stranger in his long coat only nodded. He hadn't said much at all in fact, apart from his destination and his offer. It was good gold, old currency from the days of the Infinite Republic. And the stranger's face wasn't the sort to invite questions, more so just a clear message of 'take it or leave it, but don't talk to anybody about this either way'.



The pilot twisted in his cockpit chair so he could see all around the high cliff and plateaus, but there wasn't a sign of any structures or even ruins of one. Nothing obvious, at least. It really was bugging him.

"It's partly my fault, you know, if you die up here and I'm the one that took you. Legally liable, if you understand." The pilot didn't understand that himself, and was babbling to try and trigger the stranger to explain something. But the dark, silent fellow in his faded, weather-worn coat only shifted his charred carbine over his thigh in preparation for jumping out once the airship got close enough. He pointed at the spot where he wanted to jump, his face a natural frown. It struck the pilot that this would be a terrifying face to see angry and in a flash of lightning.

As the pilot lowered the airship and approached the cliffside as near as he dared, his eyes brightened at a thought, "Ahh...you think there's an oriel up here! That's right, isn't it? You think an old airship gate is still alive somewhere on the mountain, and you're planning to raid it."

The stranger's eyes were sharp, glaring at the pilot as a warning to shut his mouth, maybe before he said too much out loud or made too many connections. It was a look that shot ice down the pilot's back, and the airship went quiet for a moment. The winds were dying enough to allow a closer approach than he'd expected, and he angled the vortices of his engines in opposite directions to steady the ship close enough to get to the ground without any lines or ladders.

"Must be on the other side of the mountain, huh? Keeping your secrets tight with this desolate spot. They say most of those old, abandoned oriels still have people living in them. Wouldn't that be something, after all this time?! Maybe you'd like to pay in advance and have me come back up here to pick you up? Long way to climb down." The pilot couldn't help himself but chatter, and the skin around the stranger's eyes tightened.

Clutching his carbine's palm trigger tight enough to whiten his knuckles, the stranger said only, "Any ship or any man I see up here will burn." With that, he launched from the siderails and landed on the high cliff.

The pilot leaned over to take one last look at the stranger, who was standing in place to watch and await the airship's departure, apparently till he was all the way out of view.

Inhaling slowly to steady his nerves, the pilot shook his head, "Hope he's found a map somewhere."