

## **WAGOLL - Eye of the Storm**

The journey is nearly complete.

Peering surreptitiously through the eyepiece, the pilot, with their heavy trench coat swaying in time with the movement of the airship, eyes the horizon longingly. A faint beam of light can be seen, its verdant aura calling out through the cloud-filled sky.

Satisfied, the figure, still donned in their pilot's mask and goggles, lowers the eyepiece to their waist, folds it telescopically and slips it absently into their inside pocket. Turning quietly on their heels, they walk the length of the gangway, patting Wanton reassuringly on the top of his horned head. The dragon's head shifts in response: an unbreakable bond between man and beast.

Once inside the cabin, the pilot inspects the map, carefully measuring the distance to the destination. Then, reaching across the table, he grabs a vial of green liquid, the same iridescent colour of the light on the horizon. Without ceremony, they launch the object, bottle and all, into the open furnace behind them. It flares with an otherworldly light, but no heat comes from it.

Without deliberation, they begin to empty the cabin's contents, throwing them carelessly into the furnace. With each additional item, the speed of the airship increases, the surroundings darken, and the weather worsens: the time has nearly come.

Reaching the last of the loose items, the pilot finds the box, the keeper of their most prized possession. For reasons they do not understand, they walk out of the cabin, along the

gangway and drop the box. It falls, like that of an angel, disappearing into the clouds.

As rain begins to fall from the blackened clouds above, the pilot realises it is time to give Wanton his freedom. Reaching for the lock on the dragon's shackles, which are rusty from lack of use, the pilot unlocks the beast. With a knowing glance to his master, the creature's wings expand and it beats furiously downwards, lifting its skeletal body into the air.

Once the dragon has gone, the pilot turns their attention to one thing, the last thing, the only thing: the shimmer on the horizon. With lengths of rope retrieved from the oak floor of the gangway, they secure the airship's wheel. Then, reaching for the controls, they push the accelerometer forwards, utilising the full power of the furnace for the final pursuit, the final destination.

With the mission nearly complete, the pilot walks calmly to his throne, and, sitting comfortably, waits patiently.