

Blank maps

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As he peered around the corner he saw the band of adventures disappear into the tavern.

Thankfully the town had received a shipment of beer from rustgarden, he hoped it would be enough to sate them. The band of “adventurers” had come from a wide range of backgrounds but they somehow managed to work together, at least on the surface. There were two groups of them, one group that pretended to be a band but none of them could play instruments and the other operated as some kind of freedom fighter cell for the resistance. Well its the republic now but same people, new flags and all that but still not likely to respond to his letters regarding well needed land reform. The group that pretended to be a band(he couldn’t remember their name but it was something like kittens on a griffon) was pretty normal for the most part. They ran the town as their leader had been voted mayor and in general tried not to cause too much trouble. The other group called themselves the regretables however the townsfolk called them by another name, Hell’s wraith. Only behind their backs of course, no one was brave enough to speak up in front of them. They had been known to be cruel, one time they fed a fellow villager milk knowing full well he was allergic. Each member of Hell’s wraith had new reason to be afraid. The bird was definitely a criminal overload who controlled the local drug trade, the dragonborn was a member of a mercenary company that had setup base in town for “our own protection”. The most fearsome member was none other than Zio Brando the terrorist. He had previously burned down the whole town yet for some reason the towns people let him back in. No one knew exactly what his powers were or if he even had any but regardless everyone was on edge when he came into town in case he decided to burn everything down for a second time. A lot of folk had a kind of mental break when they saw him come back and heard tales of his travels, they started a cult. Its

weird, they set stuff on fire and run away. Occasionally they will hand out pamphlets but none of them seem to know how to read or write so the pamphlets are just crude drawings of Zio doing different things. Small cults had caused a lot of trouble for the town over the years but he didn't have any room to complain cause he had been in a secret cult for years. His name was Peter and when he was young his mother had been killed by zombies and his father spent all his time in the field before he also died. Peter's siblings had a variety of jobs in town but most of them had died when it burned down. He had one brother left, Fin was his name and he had left on a mission with one of the adventuring parties and never returned. None of these deaths phased Peter, he sort of expected this. Average folk were little more than fodder during wars. There was a time when he missed everyone but after traveling around and speaking to multiple priests he was able to find object proof of an afterlife so no one was really dead in his mind. He also learned that some people didn't go on to live forever in some far off realm but instead they were simply born again as a baby without any memories of their past life. Without a doubt that's what he had chosen, most Gods don't want you to reincarnate though. There was one god he knew of that did offer reincarnation and that god was the god of death. While other gods swept you to their higher planes(or lower) the god of death allowed you to be reincarnated with one condition. Whether it took a dozen or a million life times once you had your fill of life she would lead you through the door to oblivion and there would be no more. Peter like that idea, he wanted a final ending to his story. Its not like other people would forget about everything he had done and with new souls being created every day he was happy to make more space. He imagined next time he would like to be an adventurer, he was scared of them but they seemed to have a big impact on things and he envied the way their actions weighed on everything.

Once the coast was clear and the adventuring parties were all asleep he made his way to his small domicile. The Rorce family home had burned down but the cellar remained and had become a sort of home for Peter. The hatch had been re-enforced and he had covered it with beeswax to keep rain from coming in. The inside of the cellar was covered with furs which made it feel quite cozy and a

warm ember stone he had stolen from one of the adventures kept him warm in place of a fire. There was a main room where he slept and did most of his living and then a second smaller room where he would pray. The prayer room had a small shrine, the god of death didn't require much only enough to make it clear who's shrine this was. There were many "gods of death" but only one god of the true death and her symbol was not a skull or blood splatter but instead she recognized any item with potential. A blank page, an empty canvas, music script without a poem or in his case Peter had chosen a map. The map covered most of Aramoor but the northern side was blank, his family had meant to travel to Twinhold and copy a map from the local cartographers guild, for Peter that blank space on the map represented all the adventure he could ask for in his lifetime. He knew there were some cities up north but the areas in between the cities was teeming with wildlife and strange ruins. Along with the map were several drawings of the Rorce Family which he would think of fondly. After praying he went to bed and enjoyed a nice sound sleep till morning. In the morning the adventuring parties had left and it was business as usual. During the day in order to earn his coin Peter was a loader, he spent all day at the carriage depot moving barrels and boxes. He made 10 copper a day which included a meal and some tips. He missed his old boss Orin who had left for TwinHold some time ago, he had been offered to ride up with him but Peter wanted to wait a little longer for Fin just in case he showed up. The work today was heavy, large barrels of beer were being sent to the front. There were three competing factions and Summerfell's population was desperate not to get pulled into the conflict so beer was sold on a one to one ratio. If the Empire brought a barrel then they also sent one to the republic and Witches as well. They would still expect payment but it was less about coin and more about the message. Summerfell was more than capable of defending itself, there were magic barriers in place as well as fighters from all corners of the sphere gathered together so its not that Summerfell was weak. The inhabitants were just tired of fighting and most of them were still rebuilding from the last time. The empire typically preferred to send their own wagon for pick up with a small band of soldiers, the others preferred

someone drop by with the delivery. The mercenaries usually delivered the barrels, collected payment (by force if needed) and returned home to collect a small fee from the carriage depot manager.

Peter started moving barrels from the back of the depot to the front, there were about forty barrels in all. Once the barrels were loaded he would be free to go, it wasn't a terrible living. He spent most of his time wandering around the depot waiting for shipments to come in or go out and occasionally he would help sweep. In the bigger cities like Emerald landing he heard people worked all day and couldn't leave their place of employment even if all the work was done. This was better than that cause it freed up time for him to day dream about what kinds of crazy things were waiting at the top of the map. As he moved one of the barrels to the front he noticed two wagons had pulled up and there was some commotion. A small crowd had gathered mostly made up of towns folk who were looking a bit nervous and then a couple of the mercenaries sprinkled in. At the center of the crowd were two groups, one imperial soldiers and the others were men in black cloaks. He assumed the men in cloaks were witches of some kind, they had both arrived at the same time to collect their beer and seemed to each be trying to get the other to make an aggressive move. The crowd was getting worked up about it all and the mercenaries were now starting to grow in numbers on the outside of the circle. A large red dragonborn approached him and placed its hand on his shoulder. I'm sorry friend but I need a favor of you, if you could take a delivery to the republic while we keep the peace that would be best for everyone. As the dragon born spoke he conveyed a sense of seriousness that let Peter know this was not a request. What about an escort? We had several shipments go missing earlier before you guys went with us? Peter was hoping he would be able to get at least one of them to go with him although if they refused he would have to go on his his own. I'm sorry friend but were going to need everyone here keeping the peace, If you stick to the main roads you should be good. The republic wants their beer so they shouldn't give you any trouble, don't worry about collecting payment if they refuse. This was not what Peter wanted to hear but he loaded up one of the towns wagons and headed north so he could be back before sunset.

The journey to the republic lines was fairly long, it was about 3 hours one way. He should get there just after midday and then it would take a few moments to unload before he could head back. The road to the republic was much better than the road to the witches or imperials, each of their roads was slightly overgrown with trees right up to the side of the road so that you could never see if something was stalking you behind the trees. This road had open fields on either side, there were a couple trees here and there but overall it was a pretty easy to get a look around. About half way to his destination he saw what looked like a small cow in the middle of the road. He pulled over to get a closer look, it seemed to have a small bundle attached to its back. When he got a better look at the creature it seemed to be a small orange furry cow with the neck of a horse and the head of a warthog? He had never seen such a creature before. On its back was not a bundle but a small child who seemed to be sleeping. It looked human based on the little face sticking out from the bundle. The beast was weary of his approach and took a step back every time he got a bit closer. It looked hungry and thirsty so he used his leather apron to make a small bowl and filled it with beer from one of the barrel's spigots. The creature seemed to light at the smell of beer and consumed the beverage with haste. He didn't want to risk giving it more cause they might notice when he delivered it. He didn't want to leave the pair in the middle of the road so he with great effort raised them onto the passenger seat next to him. He did try to remove the child to get it into a better position but the beast's eyes began to glow and he didn't want to take any risks. The rest of the trip was uneventful and he began to pull up to the drop zone. There was a small guard post on either side of the road with about five wood elves visible. There was a treeline behind the guard posts marking the end of the safe roads and the neutral territory. Generally speaking it was good to assume that however many wood elves you saw double that and that's how many were in the nearby trees. He pulled up and waved to the guards and jumped down to start unloading. He didn't hear the strings draw but he felt the arrows pointing at him now. He was just beside the wagon where he got off, he hadn't made any quick movements, he slowly turned around with his hands up to face the guards. They were now right in front of the wagon but their bows weren't on him like he had suspected.

They had their sights trained on the creature who's eyes were now glowing green and emitting a bit of mist. Hello fellas, I have your shipment here, this creature and child were just wandering the road. I don't think they mean any harm. If you drop your bow the creature should calm down. Peter began to wonder why he didn't leave them on the road and pick them back up on the way back. He forgot how high tensions were now. One of the elves stepped forward from the group, he was taller than the others and seemed to be the leader. This creature is a catoblepas, they are witches familiars. Your town has been gracious enough to supply us with supplies and I appreciate that. You did not choose this war and you're not ready to handle witch tricks. We will dispose of the creature for you. Peter slowly began moving forward towards the front of the wagon where the mule team was. There is a baby on the creature, you have to safely remove him first. I'm sorry Friend but any child that comes from the witches is cursed, even if we wanted to we cannot spare any spell casters to save the child. Peter looked over at the child and saw that there did seem to be some kind of growth sticking out from the side of the blanket. So you're saying a spell caster could save the child? We have some in our town why don't you just let me unload and take them back. We have our own resources to handle this kind of thing and children are precious. The tall elf moved close now, almost right on top of him. Perhaps you've been charmed by a witch and that's why you think it's safe to keep these two alive. Peter knew that voice, it was the voice of a man who had made up his mind. Peter slapped the back of one of the mules with all his strength sending it scrambling forward into the elves and felt several arrows land in his chest before losing consciousness. When he awoke he was standing on a smooth stone ground surrounded by a sea of stars. A familiar face approached. Would you like to go again? Or has the tie come to pass through the evening door? Peter thought about this for a moment but he had made his decisions already. Send me back, I want to take a stab at adventuring.