

COLOSSEUM OF CARNAGE

5TH EDITION ADVENTURE

FIGHT WITH YOUR LIFE ON THE LINE INSIDE THE ARENA OF DEATH

MonkeyDM

Colosseum of Carnage

COLOSSEUM OF CARNAGE IS A REVERSE DUNGEON CRAWL ADVENTURE DESIGNED FOR 3-6 ADVENTURERS OF LEVEL 10 , FOR USE WITH THE 5TH EDITION RULESET.



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Note

The best characteristic of Colosseum of Carnage is its modularity. It can be plugged in anywhere, the villain can be chosen from either a few preset variants or a personal creation, the enemies can be exchanged, and the locations can be rearranged. Feel free to play around with the Colosseum of Carnage as you wish and make it fit your group.

As a suggestion, since this adventure starts with the player waking up in a cell owned by compelling individuals, feel free to have this adventure by a return session after a TPK, time skip, or other such events.

If you are playing with the Domains of Dread, the Colosseum of Carnage can even be such a domain, with its dreadlord being a reincarnating master of ceremonies.

Background

No one can fully explain the true nature of the Colosseum of Carnage. This colosseum, lost within time and space, drifts on an island filled with lost souls, all of them watching from the rafters. Most cannot even remember how they arrived or for how long they've been watching the fights. Some might've been here their entire lives, watching as the Colosseum changes owners and competitors.

At its core, the colosseum is at the barrier between realms, serving as an unending cycle of dreadful combat. Every few years or so, the evil eldritch force that controls it changes its owner to one even more brutal. And, every now and then, particularly unlucky individuals or adventurers whose souls have been thrown into the aether of existence - either by death or ritualistic means - have to fight for the lifeless crowds.

At any particular point in time, any creature can control the colosseum, provided it enjoys fighting enough to attract the attention of the eldritch being that is the colosseum.

Plot Hook

The party awakens chained and with large metallic collars around their necks. They have significant headaches and do not know precisely how they got here or where "here" exactly is. Before they have any time to think further about what happened to them, they hear a whisper from the corner of the poorly lit room they are within.

Chapter 1. Fight For Your Life

In which the party is met with an option.

1.1. How Did I End Up Here?

Read this:

'As if thrust rapidly from a dream, you awaken, gasping for air. A sense of panic rushes through you. Where are you? What's happening? Why's the air so damp and dry all at once? Wh... The questions stop abruptly and are overtaken by a throbbing headache, which sets when you get to a vertical position. You see no light around you and discover you are on a small hay mattress amongst dusty blankets, rusted chains, and molded

breadcrumbs. This is, without a doubt, a cell. Knowing yourself to be a strong adventurer, you quickly try to use your skills. And yet... Nothing. Your strength feels dampened, your magic has gone, your dexterous hand hands - numb. And strangely, you have no memory of how you ended up here. You do feel a weight around your neck, however, which quickly proves itself to be a gigantic metallic collar that pulses with low magic energy. Only now do you start to grasp your situation fully. This is surely some elaborate and evil plan. With your eyes slowly adjusting to the light, you observe a number of other shining collars in the other corners of the chambers. Maybe you can find allies in this desperate situation.'

The players now find themselves in a holding cell, and all of them have *Dragonhelm Dampener Collars* around their necks but no other items in their possessions. The only light they can see is a very distant small white light, as well as orange pulses from their collars.

A **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check** will reveal a few piles of bones and dead bodies are also within the chamber. Any party member can try to decipher the nature of their collars with a **DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check**.

DRAGONHELM DAMPENER COLLAR

wonderous item, very rare

If a collar is secured onto a creature, the creature cannot cast any magical spells, activate any magical abilities and has its Strength and Dexterity scores changed to 8. It retains no racial abilities aside from darkvision. The dampener collar can be opened by a codeword or by a successful DC 20 Dexterity (Thieves Tools) check.

Once detached, the collar can be secured onto a different creature after 1d4+1 days of recharging and recalibrating. The collar can be used 3 times before it breaks down.

The party can speak amongst each other and, if you are playing this adventure as a one-shot, introduce themselves to each other. Give each player time to describe their appearance and give out their name. Unfortunately, none of them remember exactly how they got here. This is because an emissary of the villain has wiped their recent memories. The last thing they remember is determined by you.

GM NOTE :

Due to trying to make Colosseum of Carnage a modular adventure, we've built a hook of the party, not knowing how they arrived here, but feel free to change this. Maybe, they've been defeated and imprisoned by an archenemy, who decided to send them to the Colosseum to die. Feel free to customize this part as you see fit!

After the players, all discuss amongst themselves for a brief period, describe how they begin to hear a whispering call from the shade. A dark-furred figure, blending in almost completely with the poorly lit chamber's walls is beckoning them over. You may proceed to the next chapter.

1.2. Twisted Palm Plan

Read this:

'From the other end of the room, the figure uncoils itself and stretches its bones. You watch its body contort to inhumane levels, and a feline tail begins to weave around. It flashes a Cheshire smile, and you now observe. This figure, with palms twisted and black fur, seems to be a black cat Rakshasa. "Aaah, you've woken up! I was hoping you weren't too wounded. We really ought to speak before everything else starts or else... We'll be in biiiig trouble." The figure displays the same collar around its neck, but it is nevertheless quite polite and smiling, its twisted hand making gestures for you to come closer.'

The figure will now introduce itself as Ubaida, a **rakshasa** who has been imprisoned here "longer than he'd like to admit" and start speaking with the party.

UBAIDA

Information: Though usually cruel and vile, Ubaida is quite desperate after being imprisoned here for countless years. Now, after several prisoners have all come and gone without aiding him, he will give up anything to finish his escape plan. Even work with people he'd deem "too holy" in his better days. He'll be smiling, forthright and welcoming.

Maintaining an act of being somewhat skittish and desperate, Ubaida will tell the party he's been sitting in this cage for too many years to count, yet he has a plan to escape. All he needs is help. He'll tell the party the last 5 people he asked all snitched on him, getting themselves killed. He'll beg the party for aid, saying that although he is a fiend, he is willing to repent. This lie can be detected with a **DC 21 Wisdom (Insight) check**. In any case, Ubaida will say it's in their best interest, as they are soon going to die if not.

GM NOTE:

As mentioned before, Colosseum of Carnage is a highly customizable adventure. Ubaida can be turned into whatever NPC you want him to be, whether new or familiar to the party.

After the party agrees to work with him, he'll say it's better not to shake on it, saying the following: "Just in case some god is watching here. You never know. They might take away a paladin or cleric's powers, and that would not be in our best interest. So, for that sake, this is not a deal. It is a mutual ceasefire and collective attempt at freedom."

Then, with the "deal" made, Ubaida will introduce the party to their captor.

GM NOTE:

This is the point during the adventure at which you should choose the main villain for this adventure. This villain is the current owner of the Colosseum of Carnage and will determine the party's final battle. Each of them has a different description, a different personality, and a different stat sheet. You can choose from amongst the villains in the table below or create one of your own.

d4	Villain Name & Description	Stat Sheet
1	<i>Extos, The Flaming Dervish.</i> Extos is an elemental baron, powerful and cunning. Having spent a long time as a powerful force for vile elemental lords, he now delights himself with fun and close fights. He enjoys the most flashy of combats.	efreeti
2	<i>ZathAgalla, The Mistress Of Torture.</i> ZathAgalla is one of the most feared fiends of the world, now given control over the fights. She enjoys brutality above all else and loves bloody mayhem.	erinyes
3	<i>Jaheel, Face of Apathy.</i> Jaheel was born completely cold to feel. The only thing that can stir him is interesting magical strategies, but nothing else. He is as cold and detached as they come.	archmage
4	<i>Godan the Greedy.</i> A shape-shifting dragon, Godan spent his younger years under the care of a smuggler who bought his egg. What he learned, in return, was the beauty of bets. But, as with any betting empire, he likes easy fights, always taking safe bets.	young gold dragon

As Ubaida says the villain's name and, a bit of their history to the party, a distant gate opens. Ubaida tells the party they have no more time and advises them to fight as best as they can and look for weapons while he puts his plan in motion. After this rushed conversation, proceed to the next chapter.

1.3. Let The Games Begin

Read this:

'Before you get a chance to say anything else, your cell gets invaded by 20 or so heavily-armed guards, all of them wearing masks that cover their entire faces and turn them into terrifying jailors. One by one, you are all cuffed and taken through a dark tunnel, which opens into a blinding light. Your eyes adjust to it, but even before that, you hear the roar of the crowd. A gigantic crowd, hundreds large, is waiting to shout from their seats. A large seat in the middle, however, is occupied by the master of ceremonies, the villain, the one who's brought you here. Their appearance is imposing and radiates power, with their ornate garbs only helping differentiate you from them. As you step within the colosseum, light is finally shed on the fact you have no gear past a simple cloth garb. So how are you expected to fight?'

As the party enters the colosseum (map 1), the crowd will erupt with joy. Guards will slowly take off their cuffs and place a smaller cuff on one leg, before finally removing the large collar around their neck. After this is done, the villain you've chosen will start speaking again.

Read this:

'You stand in the middle of the colosseum and find yourself unbound, except a small binding around your ankle. You feel your strength return. The crowd cheers loudly as they know you are preparing for combat. In the corner, you watch Ubaida smirk before turning invisible. Then, the cloud goes silent. You turn your head towards the master of ceremonies, your captor, who sits idly with a raised hand. Then, they begin their speech: "Ladies and gentlemen, meet our newest combatants! How long will they last within the Colosseum of Carnage? Who knows!?! Combatants, be brave! And try not to teleport, as there's no escaping the colosseum's challenges. Whenever you find weapons or armor, simply touch them. They will be instantly given attached to you via the magic imbued in the creations on your ankle. In addition, I should mention, do not aim at the crowd or me. It will... Not end favorably. Now, the best of luck, adventurers! LET THE GAMES BEGIN!" The crowd erupts, and you watch the rocks around you shiver. Then, a portal opens in front of you. And your first enemies emerge, three half-humanoid brutes. You must fetch your gear, but where from? No time left to think! Roll for initiative!'

The party now enters the Colosseum of Carnage's combat challenge. They have no armor, no weapons, and no material components for spells. Their first challenge is **3 wereboars**.

The following rules need to be kept in mind for the encounter:

- All teleportation and banishment spells that would take a creature outside the fighting pit instantly fail. The creature who attempted such a spell instead must make a **DC 17 Constitution saving throw**. On a failure, they take 6d6 force damage and are stunned until the end of their next turn. On a success, they take half damage and are not stunned.

- All spells targeting people outside the fighting pit also instantly fail and force the same saving throw.
- All spells targeting the ankle bracelets also instantly fail and force the same saving throw.
- All spells that have an area of effect cannot affect anyone aside from colosseum combatants.
- Every round, at initiative 20 (losing initiative ties), roll 1d4. The number rolled on the d4 indicates the number of gear orbs that will arrive. Select any of the 8 areas of the map and describe how light orbs drop-down at each location. Any party member who touches the orbs has 1 item they can use appears in front of them. They can choose to don that item and be attuned to it instantly immediately.

GM NOTE:

Regarding the gear rule, there are various ways one can do it. If you are playing this as part of an ongoing adventure, you can give any party member one item they previously had in their inventory.

If you wish, you can pick any item from the common, uncommon, rare or very rare magical item list and give it to them (either at random or an item they can use).

You can also allow them to ask for 1 magical item and get that specific item; make a list of items; include cursed items; red herring orbs; or even only allow spellcasters to use the orbs. It's all up for you to decide and customize.

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MAP 1



Once the party has defeated their first challengers (the **3 wereboars**), the crowd will erupt with cheers. Now, based on which villain you chose, one party member will gain a benefit from the villain, who will praise them as their favorite. Do not directly tell the party what benefit they've gotten, but do tell them they've felt invigorated.

Villain	Benefit
Extos	<i>Stylish Strikers.</i> The party member who has narrated the most interesting-looking action during the previous challenge can now take an additional reaction until the end of this challenge.
Zath'Agalla	<i>Brutality Incarnate.</i> The party member who has dealt the most damage during the last challenge will have his critical hits triple damage instead of double them until the end of this challenge.
Jaheel	<i>Magical Excellence.</i> The party member who cast the highest-level spell in the previous encounter will deal maximum damage with all his spells until the end of this challenge.
Godan	<i>Underdog's Bet.</i> The party member who has the least current hit points has their movement speed doubled until the end of this challenge.

GM NOTE:

Extos' benefit might feel odd since not all players narrate their attacks. If so, feel free to switch it up.

After the "boon" has been given, the party's second challenge starts.

Read this:

'You await your next challenge and watch as a small portal opens. Out of it, angry and roaring, emerges an angry stone giant, roaring and wailing his club. But you also see a puff of smoke. And out of it, slinking in between the shadows, a shrouded figure.'

The party must now fight a **stone giant** and an **assassin**. During this challenge, the same rules apply. Once both enemies are defeated, proceed to the next chapter.

Chapter 2. Off We Go

In which the party makes their escape.

2.1. GO! GO! GO!

Read this:

'As you complete your second challenge, you begin to take in harsh breaths. You think back on the plan of escape, but you

fear it might never come. Surely, you were fooled. You look up at your master of ceremonies, who laughs, seemingly enjoying the action. They wave their hand. And, within a second, you watch another portal open. But before a figure can step outside it, your ally, Ubaida, emerges from his invisibility and casts a spell of his own on the portal. He turns towards you with the same Cheshire smile. "NOW OR NEVER, FRIENDS! GO! GO! GO! I can only keep the portal open for so long! COME!" He shouts, as the crowd boos loudly.'

As the party quickly rushes into the portal, the villain will shout for the guards to get them, and the crowd begins tossing various objects. Nevertheless, they all make it through the portal.

Read this:

'You all step through the portal and one by one find yourself within a large chamber, filled with sand and dust. Lastly, you see Ubaida step through the portal and close it behind him. He quickly dusts himself off and throws the small ankle bracelet on the floor. He begins speaking to you. "I reckon you all didn't notice since I tried to make my magic be as subtle as can be, but I disabled your bracelets. I had spoken with one of the guards to give me a dud. Bribe him with eternal youth. The possibilities you can have when being a fiend! It came with a price. It'll be eternal because he'll be killed when they find out. So he'll die young. Anyways, then! Shall we?" He dusts himself and starts looking around. "We should find a way out before they can retrace the portal's origin. Lucky for us, they pick our enemies randomly from the aether of existence. I broke it a bit and made it so we arrived here while they summoned an enemy to the colosseum. So I sent them a dragon, hopefully, to deal with until we break open this door." He smiles, looking about at the walls.'

The party now finds themselves at the Clockwork Door (map 2). They can speak to Ubaida, who is looking about at the ground. If asked about why he is not leaving them yet, he'll say, "Because we might still be in a pocket dimension, so I am keeping you as security." He is currently looking for what beast could have been called from this plane. He'll ask the party to aid with a **DC 18 Intelligence (Nature) check**. A success will reveal no tracks of any creature, meaning nothing has been here a while. If they also ask Ubaida further questions about the portal, he will avoid questions. Either a **DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana) check** or a **DC 21 Wisdom (Insight) check** will reveal he is lying and not telling the party something.

They can start exploring as they see fit. When they start exploring, proceed to the next chapter.

2.2. The Clockwork Door

AREAS OF THE CLOCKWORK DOOR

There are 4 areas, 3 of which must have their objectives completed for the door to open. If a party is missing the areas and not looking for them, allow them to find them with a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check**.



1 - WATERLOGGED CIRCUITING

Read this:

'You see as on the side of the water, a small bit of artifice and magic, a clockwork creation of sorts, lets out intermittent sparks, coming from the waterlogged bits of circuiting. You reckon that in order to open the gate, this small bit must be fixed.'

To fix the circuiting, a party member must get on the contraption before touching the water. This can be done either via teleportation, flight, or a **DC 16 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check**. After they've gotten on top, they can fix the circuits with a **DC 16 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check**. If they fail on either roll, the electricity sparks onto them, and they take 4d6 lightning damage.

After the circuiting is fixed, a light on the door will open up.

2 - LODGED ROCK

Read this:

'Observing the door, you notice a massive boulder on top of one of the main portions of support, seemingly blocking some cogs. It should be moved away before the door opens.'

This boulder can easily be moved with a **DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check**. This is, however, a trap. After it is moved, it will trigger a strong repellant blast towards the person who moved the boulder. They must make a **DC 18 Dexterity saving throw**. On failure, they take 8d8 force damage and are paralyzed for 1 minute. On a success, they take half damage and are not paralyzed.

3 - BROKEN CIRCUITING

The broken circuit must be fixed, but in order to find the issue, the party must first make a **DC 16 Intelligence (Investigation) check**. With the broken circuits found, they must make a **DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana) check** to do so. Failure will cause the circuits to explode, removing any progress done on area 1 and forcing them to once again fix that bit of circuitry.

4 - MAIN SENSOR

The main sensor looks to not work. This can be discovered via anyone making a **DC 16 Wisdom (Survival) check** while searching for clues or a **DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check** while looking up and about. The solution is quite simple, simply wipe the dust off.

GM NOTE:

Watch your party overcomplicate this last one! It will bring you the most joy.

After areas 1, 3, and 4 have been taken care of, the door finally opens, and you can proceed to the next chapter.

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MAP 2



2.3. Open!

Read this:

'You watch the gigantic door start to gain power and break open, with Ubaida showing off his bright smile once again. "I should keep you all, but I can't. In we go!" And ahead, he charges, purring happily, paying no mind. You move and keep moving until corridors begin to divide. But, despite everything, Ubaida moves ahead, seemingly knowing exactly where to go to. And then, he stops short of a large door. He turns back towards you. "Let's see what's past this one, shall we? Open!" He opens it with a pull of a lever, and it opens to reveal a gigantic, forge-like chamber. In the middle of it, a familiar figure, that of your captor. "Enough games, Ubaida! This is your last stand." The rakshasa sighs loudly. He cracks his knuckles as best as he can. "I expected you here, ruler of the colosseum. But we must step forth... Towards freedom." He turns his gaze towards you, awaiting a reaction.'

The party has a brief opportunity to speak with the villain and Ubaida. Their villain will say Ubaida has been for crimes against all of humanity, while Ubaida will try to convince the party to aid him in completing their journey.

Once the discussion is completed and the party has chosen their side, proceed to the next chapter.

Chapter 3. Freedom?

In which the party finally escapes... maybe.

3.1. Last Stand

As their last stand, the party, now on map 3, must fight the person they sided against.

If they choose to fight Ubaida (**rakshasa**), he will fight until he is below 40 hit points, at which point he will try to *plane shift* away. During the fight per se, the villain will not aid, saying this is the party's last challenge.

If they choose to fight the villain, have the party fight their chosen villain with Ubaida turning invisible and not aiding.

After their enemy is defeated, proceed to the next chapter.

3.2. The End Of Our Collaboration

If the party has sided with Ubaida, he will thank them for the aid and say he has to retrieve something before returning. He will turn invisible and disappear for a minute before returning and casting *plane shift* on him and the party. Once in the material realm, he will leave posthaste, thanking the party for their collaboration and giving them a gold purse with 14000 gold.

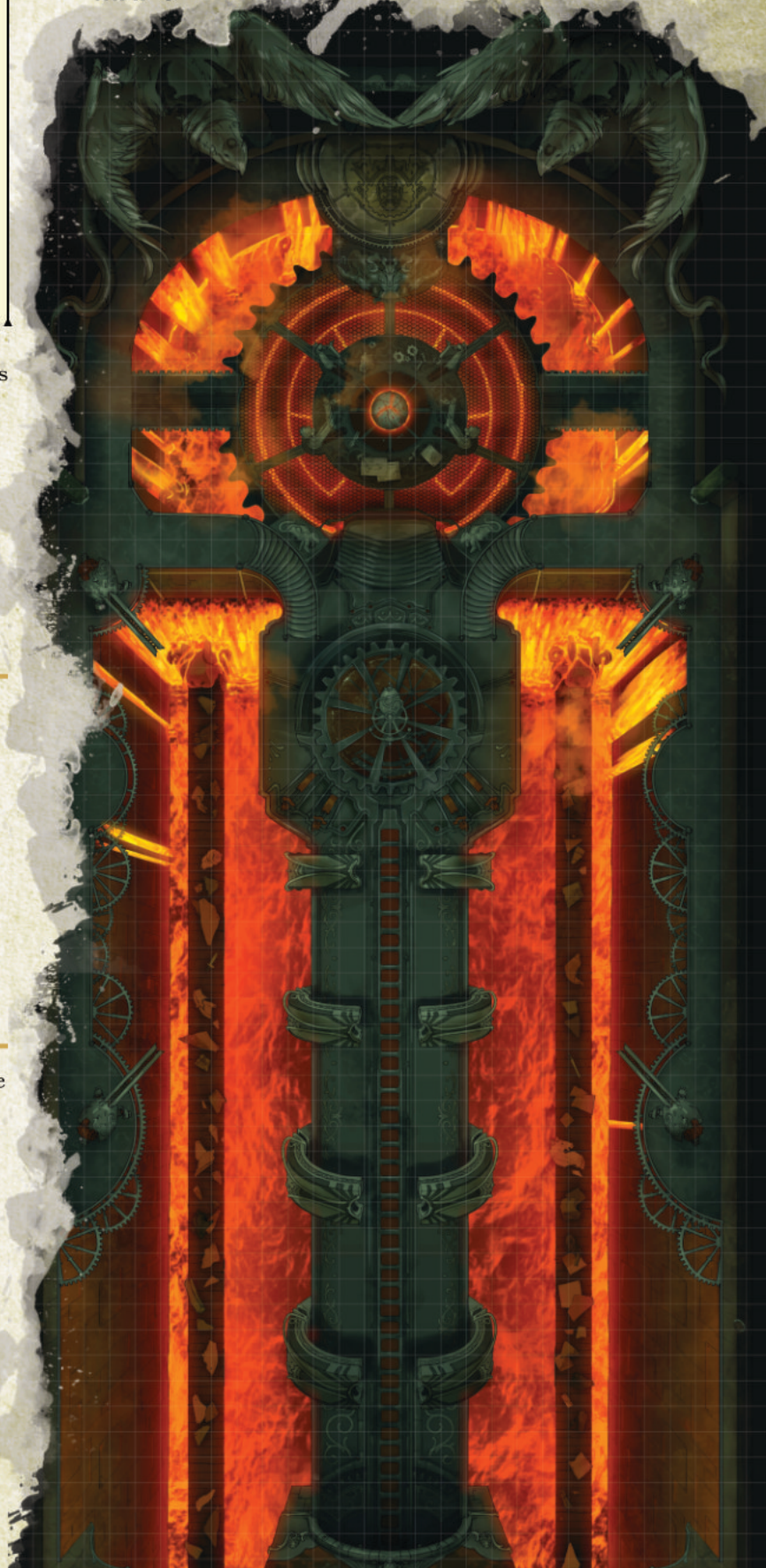
If the party sided with their villain, the villain would thank them for killing Ubaida and tell the party that Ubaida has been trying to steal a precious relic from the Colosseum for the past 500 years, infiltrating himself within the cells and tricking combatants. The combat is not endless, but rather only 3 challenges, after which, if one survives, they can return home. Then, the villain will teleport the party to their home with 5000 gold each.

The end.

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MAP 3



THANK YOU!

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW AND SUPPORT ME, WITHOUT YOU I COULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT THIS PROJECT TO LIFE.

COVER ART BY **LAWRENCE VAN DER MERWE**, USED WITH PERMISSION.

MAPS CREATED BY CZEPÉKU ON PATREON.

AND NOW ONTO THE NEXT PROJECT...

CHEERS !

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS ONE-SHOT, YOU CAN JOIN US ON PATREON TO ACCESS PLENTY OF OTHER ADVENTURES ! AS WELL AS TONS OF CONTENT FOR 5E TO AMAZE PLAYERS AND GMs !

A MASSIVE THANK YOU TO ALL MY PATRONS!

