

THE THEOTOSIAN AGE

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THE PITCH

It has been 461 years since Talos betrayed the rest of the New Gods to kill his brother Typhon, the Lord of Death, causing what became known as the Soulblight. With the disappearance of Death, the New Gods fell, abandoning the Mortal Realm, like the Old Gods before them. The once glorious Kingdoms of Eld now lie shattered and desolate; eternally cursed under a shroud of darkness, they are now known as the Deathless Lands.

In the dangerous times of the Theotosian Age, you will play as one of the few survivors who still cling to a meagre existence in the wake of The Fall. You live in a world of nightmarish horrors, as the Soulblight means that sentient beings cannot die anymore. Every time they are struck down, another piece of their soul is stripped away until, finally, they turn into a wild beast that will forever haunt the lands in undeath.

OVERVIEW

The Deathless Lands are the remains of the once-prosperous Kingdoms of Eld, now abandoned to rot and corruption after the Fall of the Gods. In the Theotosian Age, these lands are filled with the destroyed remnants of former glory. The sacked ruins of once-glorious castles and ancient settlements, overrun by nightmare horrors that spew forth from the corrupted wilderness. The forces of nature have been perverted by dark influences in the wake of the abandonment by the gods.

The Fall of the Gods brought with it the Soulblight – the inability of the souls of mortals to pass on after death – now forever a curse on those who struggle to eke out a living in this bleak desolation. Since the Soulblight began, the numbers of undead have been rising steadily. Corruption is spreading everywhere and all manner of living beings are mutating into hideous abominations. The world is forever enshrouded by dark skies and ever-growing shadows that seem to get

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darker with each passing generation. Very few of those who continue to survive here still have hope that this world can ever be redeemed.



It has now been over four hundred years since the gods abandoned the Deathless Lands and those who still survive here have rebuilt what they can into a meagre existence amidst the ruins of the Old World. A few cities and fortresses have endured The Fall and still stand. Albion, the largest settlement in the Deathless Lands, is a bent and broken shadow of its former glory as the grand capital of the Kingdoms of Eld. Yet, its walls and gates have been repaired and it offers some semblance of security from the dangers that lurk all around. It is home to a sturdy garrison of survivors and its convents, the ruins of its university and the remains of the once-great Tharsian Library hold the greatest collection of Old World knowledge to still exist in the Deathless Lands.

Across the Forsaken Sea, in the fortified city of Hightower, surrounded by deadly wilderness on all sides, a king is said to yet reign. But sailors who have reached Albion from the harbour settlement of Dunhaven speak of weird goings-on, perverse sacrifices and horrors beyond imagination that stalk the night and abduct people from their homes, never to be seen again.

In the south, it is said that the Umbran Isles still somewhat prosper. Among them, the former jewel of the Free City of Umbria, once home to an enlightened, self-governing people, is now a place of corrupt and deadly politics, as once-powerful interests try to hold on to precious influence and even rarer resources with an iron fist.

As the disparate communities of hardened survivors endure and cling on, against all odds, they look to an uncertain future in a world that seems hopelessly doomed. But as harsh as daily life in the Deathless Lands is, there is also wonder among the darkness, too. With the gods gone, powerful magics are finding their way into the world from other realms. Somewhere in the monster-infested, burning hellscape of the Crimson Mountains, the mythical Anvil of the Gods is hidden. The great forge that the Old Gods built, and that the New Gods used to smith legendary armaments for many a timeless hero. Here and elsewhere, rumours speak of powerful relics of the Old World, weapons and spells once wielded by the gods themselves. And there are those who still believe – in a return of the Old Gods or the New, or in arcane rituals that would allow a

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mortal being to ascend to godhood and conquer mortality and, maybe, even the Soulblight. Some scour hidden vaults full of dusty tomes and brittle scrolls, left over from before The Fall, in order to attain the awesome power once wielded by the gods and their chosen champions – to save themselves and their own, but maybe also to save these wretched lands they call home.



COMMUNITIES

All communities are available in this setting. **Ridgeborne** and **Underborne** communities essentially remain unchanged.

Highborne — Highborne communities are very rare in the Deathless Lands. Formal nobility ceased to exist when the Old World ended and the Soulblight destroyed the natural cycle of birth, death and rebirth and almost all of the members of the old elites died in the ensuing conflagrations. But there are those still clinging on to titles, either out of sentimentality, pride or as a means to control others. The ruling class of those few towns and cities big enough to still possess something resembling one tends to be based either on personal merit or substantial wealth – as there are always those who know how to exploit others for their own gain, no matter how horrible of a situation they will find themselves in.

- What title does your family claim? Is it a remnant of the Old World or do they style themselves according to an invention of a strong-willed ancestor?
- What is the basis of your family's or clan's power? How do they hold on to it in these desperate times?

Loreborn — When The Fall happened, many libraries were burned and most of the information from the world that existed before was lost. In an age where everyone is, first and foremost, concerned with their own survival and that of the immediate members of their community, those that still seek knowledge for its own sake are few and far between. They often stick together and

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tend to sequester themselves in isolated, tight-knit communities. More often than not, they are seen with suspicion by others, who generally don't understand their comings and goings or their way of life.

- What knowledge do you or those in your community seek and why?
- Is your community clustered around a certain location that contains knowledge from before the fall? What does it look like?

Orderborne — There is precious little order and faith left in the Theotosian Age. Therefore, orderborne communities are very rare. In the circumstances of desperate survival that most people find themselves in, order can quickly morph into tyranny and totalitarianism. Still, those who are lucky enough to live in such communities often prefer the security they bring to the alternatives.

Seaborne — The open waters in the Deathless Lands are extremely dangerous to traverse as they are often inhabited by huge sea monsters. It is very rare for ships to venture beyond the coastal waters and those who dare often don't come back to tell of their journey.

- Why did you become a sailor? What made you choose such a dangerous life?
- You once, in a notorious harbour tavern, heard a story about a ship that vanished without a trace. What detail from this story haunts you to this day?



Slyborne — Since there are no official laws to speak of in most of the Deathless Lands, being slyborne more often than not means a character is at odds with the community he or she lives in. This is more about the character habitually breaking the unspoken social contract that exists among those who survive these harsh lands and shelter in its communities than about being in conflict with some written law or an organised legal system. In the Deathless Lands, there is a general understanding amongst folks that people need to stick together and help each other, as one might just as well depend on the help of others very soon. Being slyborne is mostly about not honouring this understanding and gaining an edge on others in the short term, dire consequences be damned.

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Wanderborne — Travel across the Deathless Lands is very, very dangerous. There aren't many wandering communities, at least not those that wander permanently. Those that exist have adapted to a world full of corruption, unnatural monsters and unspeakable horrors in very specialised ways. Members of these communities are often much sought after as guides and for their considerable survival experience gained while being out in the wilds. While travelling the roads can be deadly, it can also be very lucrative as trade is essential and those who bring new goods and supplies to a settlement are usually very well compensated.

- How has the community you hail from adapted to travelling such dangerous lands?
- Why are your people on the move? What could they possibly be fleeing from that is worse than trading the safety of a defended settlement for a life of peril and danger on the road?
- What is the one sight you have seen that resonated with you and continues to inspire your imagination? Why do you quietly want to return to it?



Wildborne — The wilds of the Theotosian Age are incredibly dangerous. Living away from established settlements means being surrounded by deadly creatures at all times. Very few manage to do so successfully. Those that do live in tight-knit communities that have adapted to their environment and hold out against all odds or with the help of obscure and forgotten magics.

- How do your people live in the wilds and how have they managed to survive?
- Why did you leave life in the wilderness behind? What was it that you saw that scares you to this day and still makes you wake up screaming in the middle of the night?

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ANCESTRIES

All ancestries are available, but most have unique aspects in this setting. **Goblins** and **Humans** remain unchanged. When creating a character, tend towards dark and weird aspects. The corrupting influence of the Soulblight means that most beings in the Theotosian Age have flaws. True, unblemished beauty is very rare and usually hides a much darker secret.

Clank — Clanks are vessels constructed to house souls, and as such they suffer from the Soulblight like all other sentient beings. The art of the creation of clanks has been lost with the great cataclysm that engulfed civilisation in the wake of the Fall of the Gods. Clanks can be repaired, and repair themselves to a limited degree, but since most of the secrets of their construction have been forgotten, their bodies more or less age like those of mortal beings. Since no new clanks have been constructed for hundreds of years, they are becoming increasingly rare.

Drakona — Drakona are rare in the deathless lands. There are many stories about their origins but nothing is definitive is known. They are worshipped, and feared, almost as gods in communities that also worship dragons; most notably on the Reed Isles in the far east.

Dwarf — Dwarves are very emotional beings. Their anger is especially fierce and they hold on to grudges for a very, very long time.

Elf — Elves have the ability to mediate in a deep trance instead of sleeping (this replaces the Celestial Trance mechanic). They are followers of logic and have dedicated themselves to rid their lives of the influence of their emotions. Showing feelings of any kind or being influenced by them carries a strong stigma within elven society.

Faerie — Faeries are generally as tall as humans in this setting. Their close connection to nature makes them more susceptible to the changes that have been wrought on the Deathless Lands since the beginning of the Soulblight, leaving many of them warped and corrupted-looking. Because of their fearful exterior, many individuals and communities are strongly prejudiced against, or even afraid of, faeries.

Faun — Fauns are relatively plentiful in the Deathless Lands, but they mostly live in isolated communities, often in mountainous terrain, and, as a rule, don't mix much with other ancestries. Their bodies are well adapted to survival in harsh conditions which makes them more likely to be able to survive outside of settlements than most ancestries.

Firbolg — Like fauns, firbolgs tend to stick to their own, often living in tight-knit communities. Most firbolgs are of a gentle nature, which often puts them at odds with the harsh needs of survival out in the wastes.

Fungril — Adult fungril in this setting are at least five feet tall. For the Fungril Network mechanic to function, both fungril that make the connection must have access to some kind of fertile ground and must have been stationary for at least ten minutes or so. Both participating fungril must actively seek a connection. Fungril often initiate connections like this as part of their daily ritual – often in the evening before going to bed. Most fungril in the Deathless Lands stick to their own communities that are often weary of outsiders, especially from other ancestries.



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Galapa — Galapa hail from the seas east of the Sunspear Archipelago, which are dotted by small chains of tiny islands. They are very adept at surviving sea journeys across very dangerous stretches of water, which makes them highly sought after as sailors and many quickly rise to captain their own ships. Galapa are exceedingly rare in most parts of the Deathless Lands, especially in the northwestern regions.

Giant — Giants in the Deathless Lands are the descendants of the Titans of legend, half gods who walked the lands together with the Old Gods in times immemorial. These Titans were much larger than the giants we know today. When the New Gods usurped the High Heavens, the Titans died out or were banished with the rest of the Old Ones. Today's giants are the result of interbreeding between Titans and humans of old.

Halfling — Halflings in this setting normally live as long as humans. They often live together with humans in shared communities and get along with each other well.

Infernus — Infernis in this setting cannot reproduce. They are very rare, being the offspring of a human and a demon from beyond the Mortal Realm. As such, many people are afraid of them and they are often prejudiced against. Many people see in them all that is wrong in the world since the Fall of the Gods and hate them for it. They are often blamed for the Soulblight, even though they suffer from it as much as any other sentient being. Hated by almost everyone, most infernis tend to wander, never staying in a place long enough to put down roots.

Katari — Katari in the Deathless Lands are generally as tall as humans. They generally live to around 50 years of age.

Orc — Orcs hail from the Crimson Mountains to the southwest of the Deathless Lands. Because of the destruction wrought on that landscape by the Fall of the Gods, many of them were wiped out hundreds of years ago. As orcs breed slowly, their numbers have been very slow to recover from this blow.

Ribbet — Ribbets in this setting are large, often six to eight feet tall, and prefer to skulk on all fours when not leaping or standing still. They often look more like toads than frogs. Because of their close connection to nature, they are often impacted by the corruption inherent in the Deathless Lands since the Fall of the Gods, leaving some of them warped and mutated. Ribbets affected in such a way are often shunned by other races and even prejudiced against, mostly because others fear them and their perceived connection to the corrupting influence of the Soulblight. Since much of the water in the Deathless Lands is spoiled and corrupted, it is getting harder and harder for ribbets to find places where they can breed. Because of this, their numbers have been dwindling for quite a while.



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Simiah — Simiah in this setting can be anywhere from five to seven feet tall. Simiah hail from the tropical Sunspear Archipelago and prefer a warm and humid climate. They do not like the cold and seldomly venture north of the Iron Range or the Hill Country.

CLASSES

All classes are available in this setting, but there are some changes, especially to those classes that use magic or have a connection to the gods or nature.

Bard, Druid, Rogue, Ranger, Sorcerer & Wizard — The practice of the magical arts and especially the hubris of wizards and other spell-crafters is thought by many to have caused the rise of the New Gods and the resulting abandonment of the Deathless Lands by the Old Gods and the New. As such, people who wield magic are, by many, held responsible for the Soulblight. Anyone manifesting any signs whatsoever of magical talent is met with awe, fear and often disgust. Often, people are horrified and sometimes react violently. Magic users in this setting should always consider how brazenly they use their magical abilities as being detected could lead to the direst consequences.

Druid — There isn't much uncorrupted wilderness left in the Deathless Lands. Druids care for what small oases there are left over from the world before The Fall, but those are few and far between and so are druids themselves.

Ranger — In the Deathless Lands, rangers don't hunt animals as much as they hunt the horrors that lurk in the wilderness. Because of this, they are adept at tracking, hunting and avoiding many of the horrors that exist outside of protected settlements. Rangers in this setting are more monster hunters than they are hunters of wildlife.

Seraph — Since the gods have left the Deathless Lands behind, there is little organised religion left. Very few people still have faith in the divine. Believers in the gods are often seen with suspicion by others in their community. If you chose the Winged Sentinel subclass, you will have to come up with an explanation of where your ability to fly comes from, because it probably wasn't bestowed upon you by the gods. Since the gods have abandoned the Deathless Lands, it is believed that they cannot directly affect the lives of mortals in the Theotosian Age.

Splendor Domain — Since worship in the gods has become very rare, and since those few who still worship either the Old or the New Gods do so in secret, seraphs or wizards who display their Splendor domain abilities or spells will draw a lot of attention and make a profound impact. In most places, people will abhor them and their abilities and most likely react by expressing their hate for the gods and their chosen champions, who have abandoned them and left the Deathless Lands to rot. In the company of those who still believe, such displays of power, magic and faith will most likely elicit awe and maybe even worship of the character as a divine instrument of the gods. Players should be aware of the heavy responsibility both of these types of reactions will put on their character.



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Sage Domain — With much of the natural world being as corrupted as it is, the Sage Domain draws its power from the few uncorrupted remnants of the World That Was. Players who use Sage abilities and spells should come up with an explanation of where their powers originate from and how they hold on to them in the face of corruption, abandonment by the gods and ever-encroaching darkness.



DISTINCTIONS & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following background information is useful to understand the campaign frame for players and GMs. This is general information about the world, the forces at work within it and what sets this setting apart from others.

A Fate Worse than Death

Since people cannot die in the Theotosian Age, death has become a curse. Instead of being just a normal part of the circle of life, death – or more specifically the absence of it – has become the major force of entropy destroying the world. Once a person's soul has been sundered by the Soulblight, if their body is not burned quickly within a Sacred Pyre, they rise as an undead intent on destroying anything that lives. Survivors see it as a solemn duty to hold a vigil over the bodies of fallen comrades and to strike them down and burn them should they rise in undeath. Because if it isn't possible to recover the body of a fallen friend, you might very well see their features in the next enemy you encounter: their face distorted into a rictus grin, their body broken, twisted and mutated, as it charges you to extinguish your life as well.

But the Soulblight also affects non-sentient beings. Animals are increasingly becoming possessed by dark spirits and are physically mutating into horrific monsters. Some think that this is caused by sundered, disparate souls that have no way of finding their way into the next life. Whatever truth there is in that, it is clear that with the absence of Death, a malevolent influence has enshrouded all of the Deathless Lands; one that can only be kept at bay with utmost effort by those who yet live.

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Eternal Gloom

Since the abandonment by the gods, the Deathless Lands have become a dark place – and not only metaphorically. An endless gloom has engulfed the skies, turning every single night into a pitch-black nothingness and the noon of the brightest day into a dreary, foggy and glum affair. This gloom only breaks very seldomly and only in those few places untouched by the corruption, like hallowed ground preserved from the days before The Fall. In these rare places, golden sunbeams or gossamer moonlight can sometimes be glimpsed and rumour has it that pure light like this can bestow esoteric blessings on those who witness it.

Some even believe that, in the highest peaks of the Mountaintops of the Gods, far to the northwest, Elysium – the fabled home of the gods in the Mortal Realm – still stands. It is said to still be filled by the light of day forgotten since The Fall.

Volatile Weather

The Deathless Lands are wracked by continuous storms and heavy rains, accompanied by brutal thunderstorms. In the north, icy winds make survival almost impossible, while the areas around The Reach, the Hill Country, much of the Sapphire Coast and The Bloom are drowned in downpours much of the year. Further south, deadly sand or ash storms often make travel impossible.

The seasons themselves have warped, and continue to do so, with the abandonment by the gods. The winter has become colder and much longer, summers are very hot and humid and both spring and autumn have devolved into short periods filled with inordinate amounts of rainfall. But much stranger weather phenomena have also appeared since The Fall: rains of acid, ash and even fire, freak hailstorms that appear out of nowhere with huge ice chunks raining down and destroying roofs as well as clubbing people and animals to death, and sometimes even downpours of tar, ichor or even weirder things. Additionally, burning rocks that come crashing down from the sky and devastate whole areas have become more and more common. Storm clouds are often of vibrant or queer colours and the climate in general has been growing more erratic with every passing year.

In the most cursed regions of the Deathless Lands, like the Crimson Mountains or The Blight, some of these weather phenomena have been constant for several hundred years now.

Rarity of Respite

With undead and mutated monsters lurking everywhere, danger is omnipresent in the Deathless Lands. Those who want to survive have no choice but to cluster together in a few, well defended settlements. Travel is very dangerous and is generally only undertaken when the need for it becomes so strong that it might be worth the very real risk of death out in the wilderness.

Those who survive are hardened people and almost without exception have been trained in the use of some weapon or other since very early childhood days. There is little innocence left in this world and people treasure moments of peace like nothing else, because they know how rare such moments are.



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Shadow of the Old World

Not much truly new has been built or invented since the Old World fell with the abandonment by the gods. Most people live in the shadow of toppled statues, smashed bridges and the ruins of the grandiose castles and cathedrals of the kingdoms of old. But the sprawling cities and prosperous estates of the Old World are now a mere memory, with the survivors huddling together in what small sections of the old settlements they managed to fortify and what buildings they were able to patch up enough to at least somewhat keep out the ever-present rainfalls.

What remains are mere ghosts. Ghosts of the rich history of the old kingdoms and their many powerful institutions. When the gods fell, most of this history was forgotten and only ruins were left after the destruction of those chaotic days. While the old titles and glories are slowly being swallowed by the horrors of a new reality, a new culture is being built by those who are still hanging on: a culture formed in the brutal crucible of survival against all odds. And maybe one that includes even a tiny spark of hope that speaks of better days to come, when all this suffering, too, shall pass.

Very Little Hope Remains

While very few people still retain hope, where it can be found still, its flame burns even brighter than before. Through long nights, horrific storms and myriad dangers, people still hope against all hope. Because that is what people do.

When playing a character in this world of bleak desolation, you might intentionally lean into a cheery disposition. It will not change the nature of the world or the very real danger of death you are facing, but it might just be the coping mechanism your character needs to carry on. Maybe spreading this tiny, vulnerable flame of hope is their only mission. On the other hand, embracing the hopelessness of the setting can also be a valid playstyle, if you are into this sort of thing. Characters might have become very stoic or extremely cynical, faced with such harsh realities of daily life. However you approach this, the thing that is unavoidable in this world is that its brutality and despair touches everyone and leaves no character in this setting unaffected.

Embrace Lethality

The Deathless Lands are a realm of hardship, loss and despair, and every action a character takes counts. The lethality of the Theotosian Age lends an amount of gravitas and meaning to even mundane gameplay decisions that you might not be used to from more light-hearted settings. Leaving a settlement on even a minor quest may mean that you will not come back. Most parties of heroes that venture forth from a protected settlement will have lost one or two members when they get back.

As a GM this means that you very deliberately set out to kill characters in encounters and do not shirk from inflicting permanent consequences on your players. As a player it means that, however attached you've become to your character, you need to prepare yourself to lose them. Death is very real in this place. Nothing prevents you from creating a new character and rejoining the party at a future junction, however. Faced with such a churn of danger and death, many party leaders are eager to recruit helping hands at every opportunity.



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CAMPAIGN MECHANICS

In order for the game to reflect the unique qualities of this setting, the following unique mechanics should be implemented when playing campaigns in the Theotosian Age.

The Soulblight

When a player character dies, roll a D10. If the result is higher than the characters level plus the number of Soul Scars they have accumulated, they revive the next morning and mark a Soul Scar on their character sheet, permanently crossing out one of their Hope slots. If the roll doesn't beat the total of level plus Soul Scars, the character dies permanently and will turn undead during the next night.

Sacred Pyres

If the bodies of the dead are burned in Sacred Pyres, they will not turn undead as the stray soul energy is permanently severed from the Mortal Realm. This is the only way to permanently destroy the undead. Even if their bodies are completely destroyed in another way, the soul energy will seep away and seek to find another host – may it be another dead body or even the corrupted flesh of an animal or other living being.

Fire from Sacred Pyres can be transported over long distances and is used to burn the bodies of the fallen. As long as the fire is continuously kept alight, it retains its power to release souls from undeath.

If a character turns undead, the GM may bring them back as an adversary either directly or at some point in the future. Unless their body is destroyed in a Sacred Pyre, their features and mannerisms can appear on future adversaries.



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Unrelenting Fury

To reflect the omnipresent dangers of the Theotosian Age, GMs are encouraged to make combat especially challenging for their players by pitting them against strong opponents regularly.

Undead and those creatures affected by consequences of the Fall of the Gods, such as the Soulblight or the corrupting influences of nature, gain an additional type called Unrelenting Fury. These creatures seek to destroy anything that is alive with unnatural ferocity and they strike fear into living beings wherever they appear. Adversaries with this type critically succeed on attacks against a PC on a die roll of 19-20.

All Alone in the Night

When resting outside of established settlements or locations guarded by other survivors, players may face dangerous consequences if they are not being careful. When the party finishes a short or long rest in such circumstances, the GM rolls a D12 and consults the following list for possible consequences:

- 1-2** Describe how something monstrous found the party in the dark. An adversary chosen by the GM initiates combat.
- 3-5** Describe something terrifying that stalks nearby. The GM gains 2 Fear.
- 6-9** Describe how the imposing darkness and sense of hopelessness intensifies. The GM gains a Fear.
- 10-11** Describe how the characters rest undisturbed. No effect.
- 12** Describe how the characters stumble upon a hopeful omen. Each PC gains a Hope.

In the Deathless Lands, it behoves adventurers to be careful in the darkness and to never let down their guard completely. Player characters have access to an additional downtime move:

Keep Watch: Describe how you stay vigilant against possible dangers lurking beyond your camp. When the GM makes an All Alone in the Night roll at the end of downtime, you roll your Hope Die and choose whether to replace their roll with yours. If multiple players in the party chose this move, you can take the highest roll.



