

# THARKOLD

## **WELCOME TO THARKOLD...**

Content Warning . . . . . 5

## **ONE YEAR LATER...**

The Basics of Tharkold . . . . . 8  
Life In Tharkold . . . . . 9  
The State of the War . . . . . 14  
Core Earth's Response. . . . . 15  
Year 1 Major Timeline Events. . . . . 17

## **CHARACTER OPTIONS**

Races . . . . . 18  
Ancient Enemies . . . . . 21  
Remember Axius. . . . . 22  
Debilitating mutations. . . . . 24  
Perks. . . . . 25

## **MAGIC**

Demon Magic. . . . . 34  
Freedom Magic. . . . . 35  
New Spells . . . . . 35

## **PSIONICS**

The Way. . . . . 42  
The Psychic Research Institute . . . . . 43  
New Powers . . . . . 44  
Mind and Willpower . . . . . 53

## **GEAR**

Tharkold Possibility Energy . . . . . 65

## **WARZONES**

Moscow . . . . . 67  
The Wolflands . . . . . 69  
The Mayhem Bloc . . . . . 72  
The Blasted Land. . . . . 75  
Kur. . . . . 77  
Lost in Kur . . . . . 79

## **THE INVADERS**

High Lord Kranod . . . . . 80  
Relations with the Other High Lords . . . . . 82  
The Darkness Device, Malgest . . . . . 84  
Stelae . . . . . 85  
Jezrael . . . . . 86  
Thratchen . . . . . 88  
Aleksandr "The Wolf" Volkov . . . . . 88  
The Tharkoldu . . . . . 90

## **REALITY**

Axioms . . . . . 94  
World Laws. . . . . 98

## **THE DELPHI COUNCIL**

The Tharkold Agenda . . . . . 102  
Council Personnel . . . . . 102  
Resources . . . . . 106  
Ongoing Operations . . . . . 108  
The Race . . . . . 109  
Race Field Contacts . . . . . 111

## **ADVENTURES**

Themes . . . . . 112  
Navigating Sensitive Topics . . . . . 113  
Broken. . . . . 116  
Tone . . . . . 116  
Dominance Challenges . . . . . 117

## **THREATS**

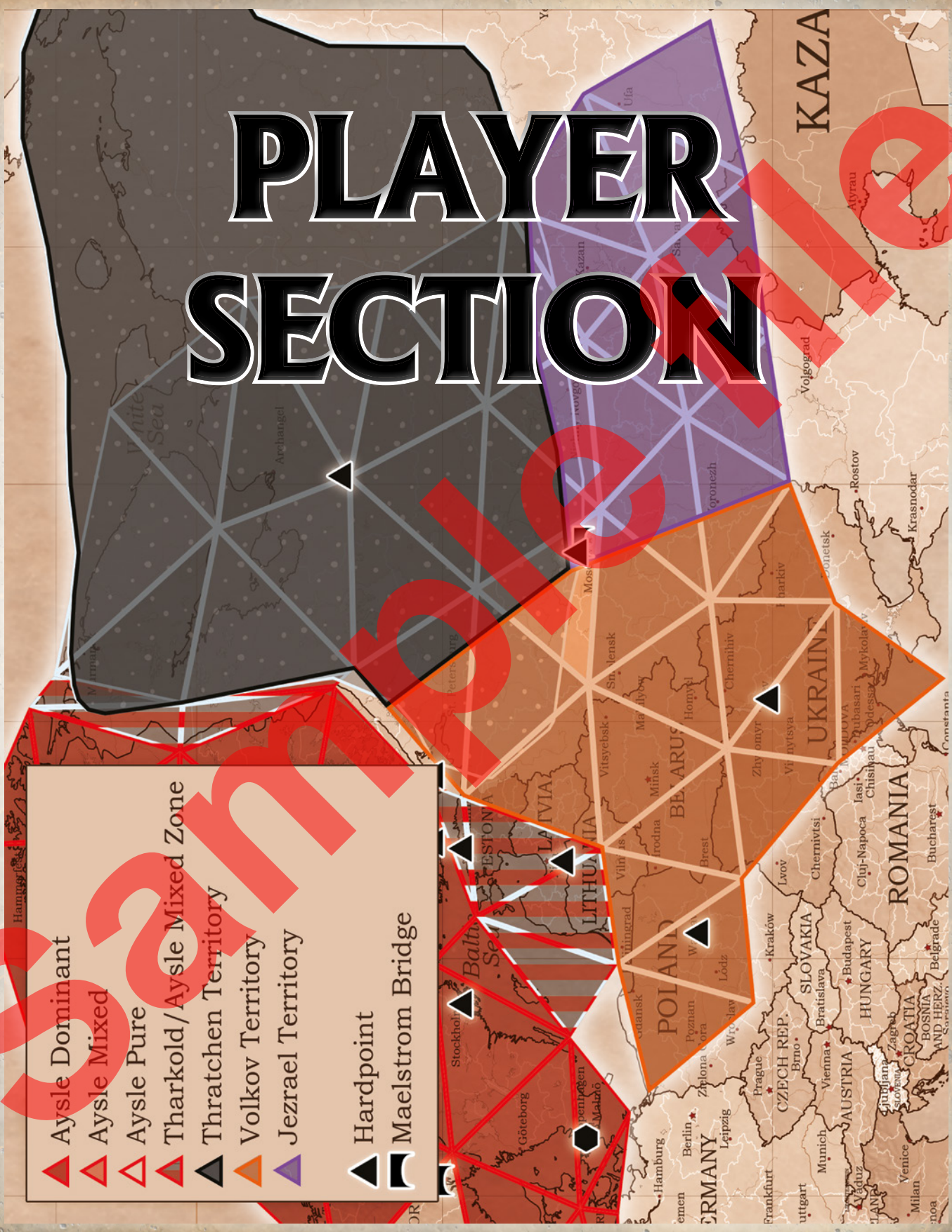
Gospog . . . . . 118  
Abominations . . . . . 121  
Combatants. . . . . 128  
Demons . . . . . 132  
Environmental . . . . . 134  
Kur. . . . . 135  
Vehicles . . . . . 137

## **ETERNITY SHARDS**

140

# PLAYER SECTION

▲	Aysle Dominant
△	Aysle Mixed
◻	Aysle Pure
◻	Tharkold/Aysle Mixed Zone
▲	Thrachten Territory
▲	Volkov Territory
▲	Jezrael Territory
▲	Hardpoint
◻	Maelstrom Bridge



# WELCOME TO THARKOLD...

**W**hy can't anything just be easy? That was Kranod's constant, silent lament. The Gaunt Man had been hounding him for months, and the High Lord of Tharkold wasn't used to answering to anyone, much less a glorified hairless monkey. That wasn't true, he knew. The Gaunt Man wore a human face, but he was something altogether more ancient and evil than any demon. The thought gave Kranod a silent shudder of fear. That was something else he wasn't used to, feeling fear of any kind.

But this time it wasn't the Gaunt Man making trouble, it was that sniveling worm Duke Thratchen. Thratchen had been an irritant for centuries. He thought he was some great schemer, but Kranod saw right through him. He was a coward, always lusting for power but too weak to take it without subterfuge, but now Duke Thratchen had openly challenged him. A bold, open move wasn't like him. The Duke must have believed he had the upper hand.

He was probably getting support from the Gaunt Man — and who knows what dire promises had been exchanged to gain that support. Now with a challenge in the air the other Dukes were getting anxious, and Duke Volkov was already maneuvering to take advantage of it.

Volkov. The ape Duke. It had seemed like such a masterstroke at the time. Dropping a second maelstrom bridge had nearly cost the demons everything, and no one, not the humans and not the Gaunt Man could be allowed to know just how near a thing it had been. Negotiating with the human bought time, gave the demons most of what they wanted anyway, and best of all Kranod replaced a potentially powerful foe with a tiny little human. Unfortunately, the human had turned out to be canny in the ways of power and was already becoming more trouble than he was worth — just like a demon Duke after all.

Bah! The Dukes. Kranod could kill them all, but that just meant more work. Replacing them, teaching those replacements to fear him, learning their names. Actually, did he even know all the names of the current Dukes? Not that it mattered. His disdain made his strength and their weakness clear. Better to keep them in line — and keep them afraid.

He'd have to make an example of Thratchen to remind the rest of the scum *he* was High Lord of Tharkold. Not Thratchen, not Volkov, and certainly not the Gaunt Man.

Kranod smiled wickedly to himself while contemplating what was to come.

He yanked the chain connected to his favorite pet, Jezrael, and laughed as she sputtered in pain when her collar pulled her to the ground and towards him. Most technodemons had gone to remote collars, but Kranod liked the physical reminder that solid chain links provided, and the satisfaction of feeling the slight, unconscious resistance from a thrall being completely overwhelmed by the tug from her master.

"Time to get to work, Mugly," Kranod hissed gleefully. Mugly – Ugly Monkey – was a childish nickname for Jezrael but it never ceased to irritate her, and that was all he required to keep using it. She looked at him with fire in her eyes, but she managed to keep her mouth shut. Good girl.

He gave the chain another hard pull and dragged her, scrabbling for balance, closer to his throne.

"Thratchen has challenged me, but he's not worthy of bloodying my claws. So I'm gonna send him you, my pet, and he's gonna die the worst, most embarrassing death a demon can die. Defeat at the hands of a *thrall*."

Kranod punctuated the statement with a long lick to the side of Jezrael's head with his rough tongue. He knew she hated it, and he did it often enough that her hair didn't grow there anymore. He could feel her desire to pull away from him – to resist – but she won the internal battle with her own flinch or gag reflex and remained perfectly still. He sighed, content that she knew her place as his pet. As his good girl.

"When you fight Thratchen, let him rough you up some. I wanna see who's rooting for him. Also, a few more scars might make you prettier. Then, when he's preening, in front of everyone and gloating at me, you get him with this."

He opened a panel in his throne and carefully drew out a grotesque dagger. It would be small even in a hairless ape's hands – and easy to hide. In his own huge hands it was comically tiny. He gripped it by a black, writhing handle that resembled gaunt fingers wrapping around a pure silver blade. The

## CONTENT WARNING

Tharkold is a reality where very bad things happen to good people. Acts and situations described in this book may trigger those who suffer from trauma caused by sexual assault, torture, slavery, and violence.

Have a conversation with all players about what may come up during adventures in Tharkold, and whether some players may have problems handling certain aspects of it.

We also strongly suggest using some sort of safety tool such as the X-Card, Script Changes, or Lines and Veils. For more information see **Navigating Sensitive Topics** on page 113.

Additionally, the terminology used in this book is similar to that used in the BDSM and kink communities. The important difference is that those communities believe strongly in safe, sane, and most importantly, consensual activity...none of which describes Tharkold.

blade emerged from both sides of the handle, and both ends were honed to razor sharpness.

"It's called the Demon Blade. A relic from another time. This is the beauty that killed old Prince Alph. Just a scratch and the most powerful demon who ever burned just fades away. One prick from this and Thratchen is done."

Kranod was lost in thought for a moment, remembering the days when Alph was his master as he was now Jezrael's. He'd been a different creature then. Younger, stronger, and definitely more ambitious. The Prince had used him, tortured him mercilessly, and had made Kranod everything he was today. It disgusted him to think about, but he was Alph's legacy. Of course he knew that would have pleased his old master immensely. The evil we do lives after us.

"Watch that it doesn't take you too, the dual blade is more than a metaphor. One wrong turn of the wrist and the blade takes your life just as swiftly as it takes his. And we can't have that – I've got big plans for you, Mugly."



*The blade can cut both ways.*

He dropped the artifact in front of Jezrael and the blade sank down to the hilt in the stone floor. His favorite little thrall picked up the blade and tested its balance thoughtfully. It fit her hand much better than his own gross paw, and he bit down on a sudden surge of jealousy over her lithe, perfect little killing body compared to his own disgusting, bloated frame.

He'd take that jealousy out on her later, that usually made him feel better. But for now, she had a job to do, and she was the only one he trusted to see it done. Thratchen needed to be dealt with. With one last mean tug he unclipped the chain from the back of her neck — their shared ritual of unleashing her against his foes. This was going to be fun to watch. Thratchen would never see it coming.

"Now, my pet, get out there and kill!" he ordered smugly.

In one lightning fast motion — she was so quick, no ape or demon could compare to her speed —

she plunged the Demon Blade into the center of his chest. No thought, no hesitation, not even a sound until the blade bit his flesh and he felt his power buckle. He would have felt pride at the efficiency of her betrayal if it hadn't been directed at him...or had been a little less deadly.

No! This was to be Thratchen's wretched fate, not his! He was immortal, invincible thanks to his connection to the Darkness Device Malgest. With its power any blow could be avoided. So long as there was a reality where Kranod survived this moment, he could latch onto it and make it this one with Malgest's dark energy.

He reached out to the tendrils of reality wafting around him, the What Ifs that were his by right to command. There must be one where his fate was not sealed, but as he reached for other outcomes they slipped away. He tried to draw more power from Malgest, the dark scepter in his loosening grip, but no power came. Stark realization flooded Kranod's fading consciousness.

Malgest was aware but silent. The Darkness Device wasn't simply denying him power, it was actively suppressing his own abilities. What could cause Malgest to turn on him? Was this the power of the Gaunt Man? Whatever the reason, Kranod now knew this was his end.

Demons come into existence knowing there is nothing for them after they perish. Neither eternal paradise nor punishment. Nothing eternal at all. They may crow and strut and pretend that hell will belch them forth again, but it's just another lie. The closest a demon can brush against immortality is leaving an everlasting scar on someone else. The evil we do lives after us — that was the creed, a mantra all demons could repeat but few truly understood.

In his last moments Kranod wished he could lash out and destroy everything. If he had to perish, so should the world and everyone in it — Jezrael, Thratchen, Volkov, and especially the Gaunt Man — but he didn't have the energy or the time to destroy anything. The blade did its work too well. Perhaps he had the strength for one last strike, to push the blade back towards Jezrael, and she could join him in oblivion.

Suddenly it came to him. He could lash out at the world. He just had to muster the strength to spit out five words before he perished, and he'd become immortal. Not in the sense he would prefer, but in the only way he could. The evil we do lives after us.

"I'm so proud of you," he managed to croak to Jezrael through the blackened blood filling his mouth.

He knew this woman. He knew how those words would haunt her. They would spur her rage, her self-loathing, and her self-destructive impulses. Everything of his that he'd poured into her for her entire life, just as Alph had done for him. She'd lash out for him. She'd burn the world in his name, whether she meant to or not.

She would never be totally free of him, of his influence over her. She would never be anything except what he made her, and he hoped someday she'd realize it.

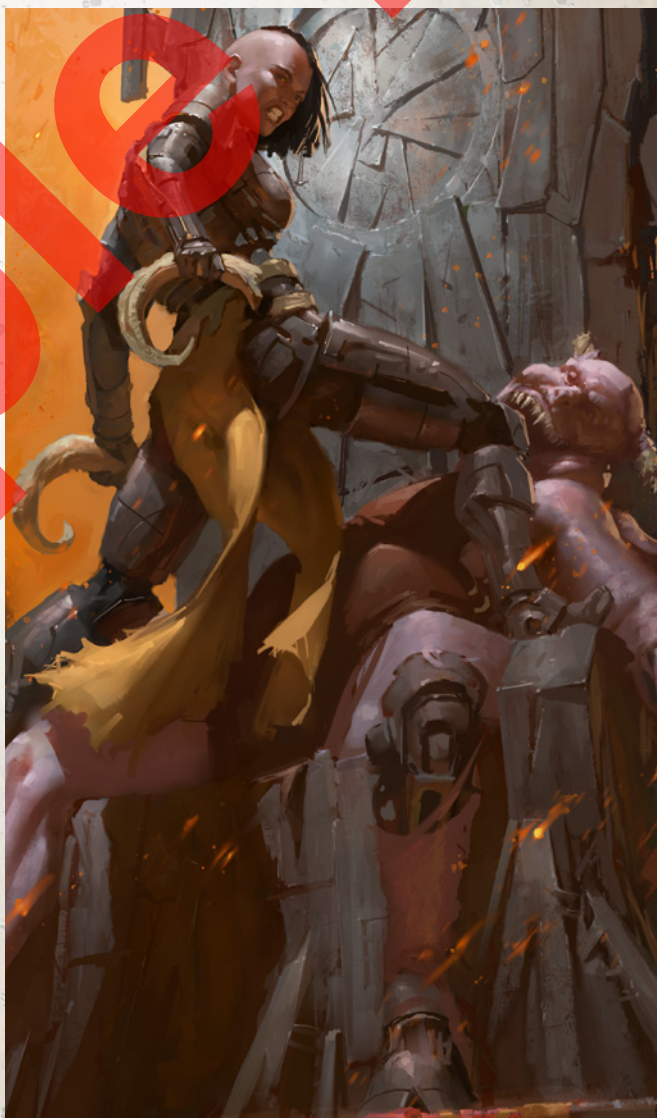
Jezrael's haggard screams were music in his ears as he died. She ripped the demon blade from his chest and stabbed it back into him over and over in a frenzy. Into his belly, into his eyes, everywhere.

As life drained from the former High Lord of Tharkold, his own carefully constructed lies began to drain from him too. If anyone could burn the world, it was her, but he didn't really care if she did or not. He just didn't want to kill her in his last moment. She was something more than a thrall to him.

He really was proud of her — of the monster he'd made her into. She probably would kill Thratchen, and Volkov, and the Gaunt Man, and every stupid monkey on both worlds, and whether it was from love or hate, she would be doing it for him. His legacy.

The evil we do lives after us. It finally made sense to the demon lord as the last of his consciousness bled away.

Good girl.



# ONE YEAR LATER...

Tharkold has been a mess since Day One, and the situation has only devolved as the war moved into its first year. With the death of High Lord Kranod, his Darkness Device and the entire cosm are now up for grabs. Rather than improve the circumstances for Core Earth resistance, this turn has made the situation even more dire and desperate. Kranod's lethargic advance after the failures of the initial invasion limited the pressure on Russia and fostered a tentative alliance that did much to limit potential counter-offensives from the Delphi Council.

With Kranod gone, Tharkold has split into three major factions, all of which have been more aggressive in applying the powers of the technodemons towards capturing Core Earth's Possibilities — even the one that's supposedly working on behalf of Core Earth. What had been an imperfect armistice is now a brutal civil war.

## THE BASICS OF THARKOLD

Technodemons are monsters, in every sense of the word. Each one is a reflection of some of humanity's worst characteristics, and in turn their appetites warp the nature of reality itself to reflect their dark views of the world. Beyond their physical size and power, sometimes the line between the technologically enhanced demons and the humans who serve and surround them can become thin indeed.

There are immigrants inside Tharkold beyond just the demons. Most of these are "The Race," the humans of another world who have been crushed and enslaved for a thousand years. Not all of them serve the technodemons. Some have secretly resisted for generations, while others broke free during the chaotic aftermath of the early invasion. But all of them grew up in a world ruled by demons, and their perceptions of reality are biased by that.

Other than The Race there are bizarre creatures the Tharkoldu brought over as weapons or pets, plus unwanted vermin that nobody can manage to exterminate. The occult energy and radiation released when the maelstrom bridge over Moscow

fell has created an entire new class of being: creatures born of Core Earth life but mutated by these energies into twisted and ruined abomination.

A taut balance exists within Tharkold. Domination, ferocity, and pain govern reality, but violence isn't as common as one might think. The threat of violence, or even the capability, is often enough to stymie a potential attack. If a bluff is detected, or one side or the other estimates relative strengths incorrectly, the results are invariably unpleasant and blood-soaked.

Inside Tharkold, every individual is forced into a role: either dominant or deferential. The dominant take what they want, not just because they can, but because if they don't that's a sign they aren't strong enough to rule. Dominance is an eternal struggle that requires fending off rivals, quelling the discontent of the deferential. While it lasts, the dominant enjoy as much power as they can wield, whatever luxuries are available, and the grudging respect of other dominant personalities.

The deferential live a life of fear. They survive — or die — by the whims of their dominant masters. They scrape out a life in the margins. They hide what they make, in constant suspicion that someone is going to take everything. They don't fight back because if one submits thoroughly then usually aggressors won't bother with killing or maiming.

Everyone in the realm is viewed, consciously or not, through this lens. When different levels of power and society interact, the dominant of the weaker level become deferential to those above them. What makes Tharkold especially toxic is that it encourages the weak to find someone even weaker to bully. Those little gains entice, entrap, and invest the population in the system. The alternative is to be at the absolute bottom, with nothing but abuse and desolation to show for it.

Technodemons are physically very powerful, so even the weakest of them rates higher than most humans. They may still be "put in their place" by an Alpha demon or a Duke, but then they take their frustration out on their thralls or any civilians unfortunate enough to cross their path. Human politicians and military leaders tend to rank highly in the hierarchy as well thanks to the power they wield. A demon may consider itself superior to a "hairless ape," but if that ape has five

bodyguards with grenade launchers he's not going to push his luck.

Most services still exist within Tharkold, as does currency and economy. A doctor may be deferential, but gives his services to a dominant politician who then must protect her servant from anyone else. Thus other patients, even dominant ones, must still pay the doctor for his help unless they wish to challenge the politician he serves. These complex relationships are how most commerce functions in Tharkold. Things only get bloody when it's not clear who is most powerful, or when someone decides to challenge the status-quo.

The technodemons live much like they have in their home cosm. Tharkoldu hunt and live among their prides. Most gravitate towards the cities where they can find weaker species to turn into their thralls. They take over old hotels, businesses or wherever they please. Tharkoldu are much less likely to be encountered in the more rural areas of Russia, where human overlords fill the same role.

## LIFE IN THARKOLD

Over the last century, the people of Russia and neighboring countries have been subjected to one harsh regime after another. The Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and its devastating collapse, and modern Russia's forceful taking of former Soviet lands have all forged the Slavic people into a stoic group that perseveres even when there is no hope. They adapt. They live life as they can. They do what they must to survive. The invasion by Tharkold has not changed that inner strength. If it requires scavenging for food and huddling in a burned-out building in Jezrael's Mayhem Bloc to avoid a press gang, they will do it. If it means being a "good thrall" to an underling of Thratchen so they can live to see another day when they might escape and be free, they will do it. Or if it takes working day in and day out in a factory under President Volkov, because they at least have a home and family to go to after work, they will do it. Life in Tharkold is hard. It is cold. But the people endure.

Life in the cities under Tharkold reality were relatively calm after the truce between High Lord Kranod and President Volkov. Kranod, being

lazy, was content for Volkov to keep the Russian government and rule in place as long as Volkov did not overstep his bounds. Using the existing government structure meant he was not bothered with these details. Over the past 20 years, Volkov had been slowly changing the government to a dictatorship in all but name, and it fit the Tharkoldu power structure of Domination well. The Russian president quickly took this world law and the high Social axiom to fuel his propaganda machine. Opposition and discontents were quickly dispatched and Kranod put Tharkoldu in charge of many of the oblasts and cities. Under the truce, Russian citizens were immune from becoming thralls, but President Volkov had a law passed that would allow "traitors" to have their citizenship revoked after which they would no longer have such immunity. The average Russians continued to go to jobs, manufacture goods, and enroll in the military.

With Kranod's death, everything changed. The tenuous alliance between President Volkov and Duke Thratchen fell apart and Jezrael did not care about any deals that Kranod had made. Life under the rule of the three is vastly different. They are micro-cosms of Tharkold, each distinct but all reflecting the harsh reality of Ferocity, Pain, and Domination.

## CITIES

### Wolflands

The most stable cities in Tharkold are those under President Volkov's rule. He continues to use his propaganda machine to push the narrative that he is both Russia's and Core Earth's last hope. In order to reinforce this message, he continues to show stability and normalcy. In a much greater magnitude than either Thratchen or Jezrael, the Wolflands are well-run. The police and military use advanced tactics and strategy to keep out the horrors of Tharkold and this in turn gives reinforcement to the idea of peace, if not freedom, under Russia's rule. While commerce of goods and trade have been disrupted by the global war, Volkov uses the massive natural resources of Russia and Tharkold's higher tech and social axioms to keep the populace content.

Pre-invasion, official salaries were low. Many people were paid "under the table" with extra money from

employers off the books, to keep taxation at a minimum. Bribes, fines, and fees intermixed and were a common everyday occurrence. A person might present a bottle of wine to a busy clerk or bank teller who suddenly would have free time. Or a small "gift" of chocolates to the postal worker to make sure mail was delivered was common. The Law of Domination has kept this in place, where those with even a small amount of "power" using their position to climb a little higher on the dominance chain to those who need their services.

Russians were already accustomed to using digital payments with phone apps even for small shops and services. The global war and the three-way civil war has proven that cash is easily lost, so in the cities most people have gone fully digital. A new type of digital currency introduced by President Volkov is the Noviy Ruble (New Ruble). This currency is more secured than crypto-currency block chains and even difficult to hack by the cyberchurch and Nodders because they are stored in the Kur. This currency is commonly known as the Krovaviy Ruble (Blood Ruble) by those who understand its origin.

Pre-invasion Russians were just beginning to use credit, including credit cards in the place of bank debit cards and loans from family and connections. A population of discontent young adults sprang from this shift, known as sarancha (locusts) who racked up outrageous debt to live as lush and fabulous lifestyles as possible, with the understanding that life is short and one should try to live it to the fullest, even if for a short time. The invasion has given this movement even more steam although they have shifted from debt to making themselves the top of dominance chains through wealth and power.

To keep citizens content, the Wolflands offer a variety of virtual reality video games, television shows and especially the Igri (Games) which are gladiatorial style games with techno-horrors, abominations and the less fortunate political and war prisoners who are condemned to be participants. These entertainment activities are broadcast both on TV and the internet for viewers to consume and players to gain fame.

### Thratchen

The cities taken by Thratchen have fallen into two broad categories: Russian and Tharkold. Thratchen is less lazy than most demons, but if there is a way for