

TORG

ETERNITY

WASTELANDER'S GUIDE TO THARKOLD

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THE WASTELANDER'S GUIDE TO THARKOLD

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THE BLASTED LAND

The Blasted Land is an ever-changing area full of danger and scattered tech that can bring wealth or pain. Knowing the secrets of surviving in this brutal place is the difference between amassing a fortune and succumbing to a horrible death.

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BLASTED LAND

Torg Eternity and the *Tharkold Sourcebook* both give a general overview of the Blasted Land. Here it is presented as a short history because, while it was created quickly by the destruction of the first Moscow maelstrom bridge, it was a series of events that led it to being what it is today.

Before the invasion, northwestern Russia was a diverse area of densely populated cities, separated by vast tracts of taiga and tundra. Small rural towns and villages dotted the area, with a vastly different lifestyle than those in the centralized urban areas. Since the invasion, this area has been afflicted by two large “waves” of misfortune, which has changed the land and way of life of countless Russians. After the destruction of the maelstrom bridge, the nuclear fallout and irradiated pieces of the bridge itself littered the entire area, forming a strange mixed zone of Tharkold and Core Earth. Since the area was not bound by stelae, it gave no source of Possibility energy to Malgest. A combination of eldritch dark energy, fallout radiation, and released occultech nanotechnology formed a blue-tinted haze that is clearly visible throughout the region, although it has places of lesser and greater intensity.

During the “first wave,” radiation killed many people, fauna, and flora; some survived, and among them were mutants with strange and powerful abilities. These mutants became known as abominations. The area had the axioms and World Laws of both Tharkold and Core Earth. Freed Race thralls fled into the Blasted Land, hiding from their former masters. In the aftermath of the short war between Russia and Kranod’s Tharkold, much of the Blasted Land was left to fend for itself. It is

at this time that locales began to take on distinct characteristics. Cities and towns that were able to use the high Social Axiom and Core Earth World Laws of the Underdog and Glory and stood strong in the face of adversity. Solidarity and organization broke down in those areas in which the people embraced the Tharkold World Laws and warbands of marauders destroyed other cities, took over vast tracts of land, and fought against each other while trying to carve out a piece of the land to call theirs. The cities that did not succumb to hopelessness in the face of Tharkold horror became akin to bright beacons in the darkness of the wastelands, but even more hardships quickly came.

During the first wave, like miners in a gold rush, scavengers and fortune seekers made their way into the Blasted Land. Some smaller towns and villages were taken over by the scavengers, and other "rush towns" popped up to serve the scavengers. A cycle of booms and busts has left ghost towns where an area's technological debris has been picked clean. Some, after having been picked clean, began to raid surrounding areas of supplies. If they were able to survive, they became marauding warbands.

Just when Duke Volkov was beginning to plan the first actions to stabilize the area, Kranod was slain by Jezrael, and the "second wave" of misfortune began. With Moscow at the epicenter, the three-way civil war started, and stelae were planted in an earnest attempt to please Malgest and become the new High Lord of Tharkold. Places like Nizhny Novgorod, which were close to the border between Jezrael and Thratchen, were simply unable to survive in any meaningful way. In the current infighting, neither side cares to put any resources into these cities as it is almost a certainty that the continued warfare destroys that which was rebuilt. Warband leaders such as Bazz Pila were able to take advantage of the power vacuum and consolidate power under themselves, apart from the three.

For the most part, Jezrael has stayed south of the Blasted Land and President Volkov only expanded into that area around St. Petersburg. Duke Thratchen, on the other hand, planted his stelae throughout the Blasted Land. The stelae flipped many of the zones to Dominant and the axioms and World Laws of Core Earth are no

longer present. Over time, creatures from the Tharkoldu home cosm have made their way into his territory and techno-horrors stalk the land in addition to the mutated abominations. During this time, many more city and town governments were unable to cope and were replaced by opportunistic Tharkoldu and marauder warband leaders. When Thratchen expanded his stelae into the area, he forced cities, warbands, and mutant villages to submit.

A last aspect of the second wave was when Aysle Tharkold mixed zones formed with the westernmost areas into which Volkov and Thratchen expanded. This created a fantastical and horror-filled area that is like a siren's call to the Tharkold creatures of magic that were suffering from Tharkold's Magic Axiom decline.

Today, the Blasted Land is a vast wasteland overrun by abominations, techno-horrors, and marauder warbands. Scattered across the whole area, powerful technology and occulttech lays in wait for both the lucky and unfortunate. Rare stable cities are few and far between, their survival has greatly strengthened them into bastions of humanity within the wastes. Railways are the main means of transportation between the stable cities, as they are guarded by Protectors with advanced weaponry. Roads and highways have fallen into disrepair. Vehicles need to be modified in order to traverse the land. The winter brings deep snow that requires treads and tire chains.

To try to sum up the entirety of the Blasted Land as being one thing or another is to forget the many varied aspects of what is in the area. It is a hodge-podge or patchwork area where a stable city may share a border with a marauder warband or a mutant village stoically sits on the edge of a forest filled with techno-horrors. The two waves the Tharkold World Laws brought to the area have culled the weak, but the high Social Axiom has allowed the places where people stood strong together to become even stronger in the face of adversity. Surviving in the Blasted Land requires knowledge of all its aspects, for to focus on one is to be overcome by another.

THE STABILI

Stabili, short for Stabilizirovannye Goroda or "stabilized cities," are those rare cities in the Blasted Land able to maintain a semblance of law and order after the fallout of radiation and pieces of the maelstrom bridge rained down on North-Western Russia. Thratchen, being both powerful and impatient, grew his power base by dominating various warband leaders, Tharkold despots and city rulers, forcing them into submission. Those who resisted were swept aside and replaced by trusted lackeys.

But Thratchen has only bounded roughly half of the Blasted Land. The eastern half is still free of Stelae and considered to be Russia, although since they are not bound by Volkov's stelae it is not considered to be Wolflands. The cities that survived still try to maintain life as best as they can. With Thratchen to the west, Jezrael to the south, and the Urals to the east, the stabili in this zone are practically cut off from the world and are in a desperate situation of survival.

KIROV

The city of Kirov lays almost on the border of Thratchen's territory. It was a late addition to his stelae bounded area and had been operating under Russian rule until recently. The city, being a transportation hub, was lucky when the Blasted Land was formed. The city was able to procure supplies and equipment from non-affected areas of Tharkold Russia once the truce between High Lord Kranod and President Volkov was established. As a hub, it was then able to send out supplies to other cities in the Blasted Land, such as Kotlas and the closed city of Pervomaysky, which hosted the main division of the Bureau of Psychic Research before its destruction.

When Thratchen planted stelae and surrounded the city in his territory, Kirov tried to fight back. His forces destroyed the northeastern part of the city and he uncharacteristically gave the city's Duma one last chance to accept submission, which they did. Kirov now holds an important role as a defense against Jezrael to the south and Russian forces to the east. He allows the Igru to continue and broadcasts it throughout Russia and the other

countries now under Tharkold reality, as it shows cities can maintain day-to-day normalcy under his rule, as well as resistance against him is met with certain destruction. He currently does not have the time to properly train Russian Thralls, so he is content with leaving a working city run as it previously did.

The Vyatka river forms the eastern border of Kirov. The river runs north-south, and before the civil war it provided a means of transportation into what is currently Jezrael's territory. Now trade no longer goes past Kirov, and most supplies and people are transported by train. The river trade has drastically fallen.

NOVOVYATSKIY RAYON

This southernmost district of Kirov is split off from the central section. It is extremely fortified, and the Duma continues to build its Protector forces, readying for the day when Jezrael moves north. Kirov accepts refugees, and this district, with its heavy security forces, is where they undergo rudimentary background checks and quarantine. If they are deemed fit to be allowed into the general populace, they can take a short train trip to the Leninskiy Rayon and from there enter the city proper.

Between the Novovyatkiy and Leninskiy Rayons was once an area of rural houses and farmland interconnected by dirt roads. The radiation of the Blasted Land gave rise to some of the population becoming mutations. The Kirov Duma made a fateful decision to force non-mutants from this area into the city proper and move mutants into it. It is now called Gorod Mutantov. The mutants are forced to work the farmlands and provide for the city. In turn, the city's Protectors keep the area safe.

LENINSKIY RAYON

North of Novovyatkiy Rayon and Gorod Mutantov is the Leninskiy Rayon, the center of the railway transportation hub, which includes the Trans-Siberian railway. The Kirov Pass hub links railways from the north, west, and southeast. A large and efficient system of checkpoints and warehouses surround the hub, making it easy to store and distribute goods. These are well protected



The raiders of the Blasted Land are not subtle.

by Kirov's Protector security forces. Street vendors dot the area, providing food and goods from kiosks and folding tables. As discussed in the commerce section, physical currency as well as the digital New Ruble are used as the primary form of purchasing goods, even by these independent street vendors. The eastern part of Leninskiy is where the ruling Duma and judicial branch of government are headquartered. The Leninskiy Rayon is where most of the population goes for entertainment as well as other business. Restaurants, theaters, and malls all function and are open for business. A significant number of people take their residence in this district as well.

OKTYABR'SKIY RAYON

Directly north of Leninskiy Rayon is Oktyabr'skiy Rayon. This area is mostly residences with some workplaces, factories, restaurants, and other shops. It is less densely populated than Leninskiy, but still

is a much more urban area than Gorod Mutatov. Paved roads, and modern amenities are fully functional in the rayon. The people here live their lives much the same as before the invasion. The Blasted Land haze is present, but the Russians have adjusted to this. As long as Thratchen does not decide to remove the Duma and Jezrael does not raze the city, the people carry on with life, making the most of a terrible situation.

PERVOMAYSKIY RAYON

The Pervomayskiy Rayon is not part of the Town Pervomayskiy to the north. This area once covered the eastern part of Kirov, urban on the west of the Vyatka river and rural on the eastern bank. Thratchen, wanting to keep the city functional, attacked this area, leaving it in ruins. The Duma has established this area as off limits to the city's populace and has instated it as a large arena for the Igri. Konkursitov (contestants) outfitted with

occultech, willing and unwilling alike, are sent into the district of crumbling buildings and blast craters to fight for survival against hunters, Psi-Borgs, and Horgons linked to elite Igri gamers. The occasional Tharkoldu sometimes use the Igri to have fun hunting konkursitov. Scavengers also roam the area, picking fallen contestants and hunters clean of their equipment and occultech. Although, so far, no one has made it across the bridge over the Vyatka, if anyone would do so, they are supposed to be freed and would find themselves with celebrity status within Kirov, the Wolflands, and the rest of Russia that is connected to either the Internet or Kur.

KOTLAS

Situated at the confluence of the Northern Dvina and Vycheгда Rivers, Kotlas was previously part of the Arkangelsk Oblast. It is far enough away from Arkangelsk itself to not be under the sway of the Angel, but both cities are under Thratchen's rule. The Northern Dvina reaches all the way northwest to Arkangelsk, and the Vycheгда stretches northeast to Syktyvkar.

The worst part of history repeats itself in Kotlas. The city refused Thratchen's demands of submission and its entire Russian population was forced to become thralls. It is now ruled by a foul-tempered Tharkoldu that goes by the name Bes. During the Soviet Union, the city was home to a labor gulag, and in an unfortunate twist of fate it is now something equally horrible. Under Bes, the city has once again become a focus of forced labor, this time using Race and Russian thralls.

Kotlas is a small but important city. It is connected by railway to the larger city of Kirov to the southeast. Supplies, equipment, food, and thralls deemed unworthy of the Igri are sent from Kirov to Kotlas. The river connecting

it to Arkangelsk make Kotlas the geographical center point of Thratchen's area. Ironically, under Thratchen, the city is actually more important. Before his expansion, the warbands, cities, and mutants of the Blasted Land were in a constant struggle with each other and within themselves. Even now, the inhabitants of his territory are only in a loose alliance with each other, but they must answer to Thratchen. As long as they obey and serve him he does not care if they have petty fights amongst themselves as long as they do not become weakened enough to hurt his war against Volkov and Jezrael. That some trade is needed to keep them from being completely in Kotlas serves this purpose.



The thralls of Kotlas produce occultech for Tharkoldu and other beings that serve Thratchen. They also load trains and barges with trade goods to be sent throughout Thratchen's part of the Blasted Land. Any laborer who is unlucky enough to have a factory mishap is quickly fitted with an occultech implant, which normally rejects or is barely enough to function. As with most of the functioning cities under Thratchen which did not submit, life in Kotlas has been completely transformed into a Tharkold dominance chain. It serves as a harsh warning to others who try to resist Thratchen as he expands eastward towards the Urals.

SYKTYVKAR

Syktyvkar is located east of Thratchen's territory and still considered a part of Russia. Thratchen has his sights set on Syktyvkar for a couple of reasons. It is just outside his latest stela plantings, and he hopes to encompass it with his next stela. The city is also on the Vycheгда river and would be connected to Kotlas, and thus linked to Arkangelsk

which is near the Aysle Tharkold mixed zone border. He recently learned of the flora properties of the surrounding area and wants to use them against Aysle.

The city was once known for its trade in timber and woodcraft. A strange side effect of the deep toxic haze on the nearby woodlands has created a parallel industry. Plant life infused with the haze of the area petrifies within a week after it dies. Everything from trees to grass can be cut, shaped and then left to transform into something as hard as steel. The mayor of the city has kept his city prosperous as they make quick and easy weapons and armor akin to those from Aysle. The occultech nanotech infused into the flora causes them to grow quickly, and they have a special characteristic that makes items created from them extremely valuable. They cost double the amount as an Aysle equivalent, but this quality allows them to effect ethereal beings and defend against magical armor piercing. A weapon shaped from Syktyvkar wood provides half of its Strength bonus against ethereal beings. Armor forged from these plants halve the AP value of weapons that have AP through magical means. These items cause Contradiction outside of Tharkold.

Syktyvkar flora is also used in making armored coverings for vehicles, city wall fortifications, ammunition, and practically anything that can be formed from wood. Since it is not actually metal, it does not corrode or oxidize, but also does not dissipate heat or conduct electricity. The city has become very self-isolated. They are cut off from both the Wolflands and Eastern Russia. The mayor plans to surrender if Thratchen invades, knowing the horrible fate that happened to Kotlas and wanting to prevent it from happening to them.

TRADE AND COMMERCE IN THE BLASTED LAND

In the territories controlled by marauders, the mighty simply take what they want. But there are sometimes cases when two marauder bands do not wish to fight. In these situations, trade and barter of supplies and gear take place. Tharkold, being a harsh reality, favors those who can successfully

intimidate others, but one should be careful as a failed *intimidation* attempt results in a much worse deal at the minimum and thralldom in the worst cases.

For those seeking a “fair” or more equitable place to conduct business, cities such as Trade Town provide a safer place. A person does need to know whatever local laws might be in effect, as in order to stay independent and maintain their reputation, the local law enforcement officers are well-armed and trained. They keep everyone in-line and don’t take kindly to those trying to disrupt daily business.

Besides barter of basic supplies and gear, Vril has taken the place of physical currency. Most vehicles and machines that required gas to work have been converted to being powered by Vril. Vril is a crystal-like substance that forms from the solidification of pain when a person is attached to a pain inducing occultech Vril Converter. Since Vril-crystals vary in size and potency, game masters can assign them a value in dollars, just like a currency, when outright purchasing an item, or as a bonus to a requisition check while in Tharkold.

In the rare self-governed Stabili, residents have access to the Internet and Kur. This connection allows them to access the world outside the Blasted Land, and here the New Ruble is the safest and most widely used currency. Russian society is also very community oriented, and in the Stabili, as well as mutant villages, this still holds true. The Social Axiom allows these cases to even help further, much like the Free Race. Before people go to banks or outsiders for help, they ask their family, friends, and even neighbors. Even with the Law of Domination, those on the same “level” work together and help each other—at least until it is time to make the attempt to raise one’s status to a higher rung.