

*"Another world,
Another time,
This land was green and good;
until the crystal cracked.
Another world,
Another time,
Once more, they will replenish themselves;
cheat death again...."*
~The Crystal Method

Elven mythology tells the tale of Gia, the goddess of Septerra, holding a giant crystal aloft above her head. Translucent and pure, it was a gem of special magnificence. As it floated effortlessly above her fingertips, the other assembled gods stared at it in silent reverence. For in it was bound the energy of Septerra. The primal magics that fueled life were kept in harmonious balance. As light through a prism, magical energies shown through it, and danced among the gods.

It wasn't long before their revel ended, and their wonderment turned into fear. For before them, cracks began forming on the surface of the crystal. All the assembled gods gasped in shock, except one. For it was Eris, the goddess of discord and chaos, who found amusement in the tragedy. She laughed at their hubris; at their belief that such magical energies could truly be held in balance. For nothing is perfect, and nothing lasts forever.

The tale of Gia's crystal is often written off by most historians and theologians as nothing more than a parable that elven parents tell their children. A lesson that change is inevitable. But in it, there may very well be grains of truth. For at one time, lost in the far reaches of time, there must have been a great age. An age like no other.

Scattered all over Septerra lie the ruins of once mighty kingdoms. Elves and Dwarves once thrived along with the vulture like Skeksis, and the four-armed Shokan. From the frozen North to the deepest desert, there was barely a part of Septerra that their reach did not extend. The magical energies of the world were in balance, and the peoples of this world thrived.

But this era could not last forever. Cris-crossing all over Septerra, ley lines pulsed with primal magic. Anywhere near these lines, life blossomed and spread. For who knows

how long, these energies powered life with the consistency of the moon pulling the tide. But for some reason, this ended. The lay lines of the world surged with primal energy. The flora flourished like never before. Then the herbivores surged in number. With now over abundant prey, so did the predators. Orc, goblin, troll, ogre, and all manor of monsters grew to staggering numbers. Populations in which the civilized peoples could not keep up. Elves and Dwarves, who once commanded great kingdoms, now barely clung to life in what small refuges they could find. Others, like the Skeksis, Shokan and Nagaji, were not so lucky, and were soon lost to extinction.

This period is known by many names: the Dark Times, the Burgeoning, the Second Age. Millennia after millennia, this era dragged on. A bleak time of survival that would leave scars well beyond its end.

But eventually, it ended. A little over 900 years ago, the amount of primal energy given off by the lay lines began to recede. The populations of monsters were diminished. At long last, the orderly peoples began to crawl out of their refuges and began rebuilding their societies. This period was known as the Grey Times, or the Third Age.

While danger still roamed the land, the peoples who had once saw their extinction as inevitable, now began to see a future of growth and prosperity. Though monsters still roamed the land, civilization could now stand up to them. Little by little they expanded. Fields were reclaimed, new crops were planted, and new towns were founded. The slow crawl of progress moved toward a more certain future.

Once again, all things must end. It was the winds of change that blew from the northern island of Solstheim that ended the Third Age. Having grown in strength, the Norn unleashed raids on their neighbors. For decades, the raids brought chaos and turmoil. Along with loot, plunder and slaves, their excursions also brought back tales of far-off lands. They brought back spices, exotic animals and odd metal works. In time, the victims of the Norn grew in strength, and learned to fight back. Having overextended themselves, the Norn terror soon ended. However, the stories brought back by the Norn continued to be told and awakened a desire in people to learn of lands beyond their borders.

And so, Septerra has entered a new age. An age of discovery, an age of trade, an age of high adventure. This is the Fourth Age, the Age of Exploration. This is a time when ancient races seek to find their long lost kin. It's a time to discover lost civilizations; to seek new trade and forge new alliances.

While most kingdoms remain inward focused, there has been a growing demand for those willing to leave their homelands and sally forth into the unknown. To some these are

mercenaries, to others they are adventurers. But there is little doubt that the actions of such a small group of people will have a huge impact on the future.

Setting Notes:

This campaign is a low fantasy setting but using a high fantasy rule set. Magic is relatively rare. While there are a lot who claim to be able to use it, there are few who can. Most kingdoms consist of a few medium cities, several villages, and numerous farms. Soldier outposts are everywhere in a desperate effort to protect those who grow and raise food. The largest cities have 23-30,000 people at best. There are no metropolitan cities, and many people have never seen a race other than their own in their life. While most kingdoms are focused on protecting their own, there has been a growing need for adventurers. This is where you come in, a person who can facilitate things that are beyond a kingdom's scope.



Tales from Teghrim's Crossing

Despite the Dark Times being a distant memory, Septerra is still a very dangerous place. As soon a troll can be driven out, an new gang or orcs show up to antagonize the locals. Most kingdoms spend most of their resources in a never-ending defense of their own lands. Despite this, there has been a strong desire to open new trade routes with far off kingdoms.

In on such area, the continent of Avenlor is separated from the continent of Shangdu by the land locked continent of Astoria. Sea monsters make navel shipping routes unreliable at best. A long, winding land route clings to the coast south of Astoria, passing

through Nagaji lands. Though this route is reliable, it has to contend with many mountain passes approaches the Tamenroah Highlands.

About fifty years ago, a consortium of humans and dwarves began the creation of a road which would pass along the narrow coast north of Astoria. Though fraught with its own dangers, it has the potential to be a viable alternative to connect the Iron Kingdoms and Highland Dwarves to the west, with the Jade Kingdoms and Grey Dwarves to the east.

About halfway between the two lands, a long bridge was built over the Rothehurst River. Named after the dwarven engineer who built it, Teghrim's Crossing was designed to be wide and strong enough to support buildings. With Orc lands to the east of the river, and Bouvok lands to the west, this small settlement was claimed by neither race. About twenty years later, as trade slowly began along the route, the small settlement on the bridge was completed. It now serves as a caravanserai, a shelter and resting place for trade caravans as they pass through.

A small, motley band of humans and dwarves protects Teghrim's crossing from any immediate danger. Surrounded by hazards and peril from all sides, there has grown the need for mercenaries and adventurers who would be willing to take up freelance work in the lands encompassing the crossing. Pamphlets and posters have gone up in ports and cities far and wide, seeking any who would answer the call.