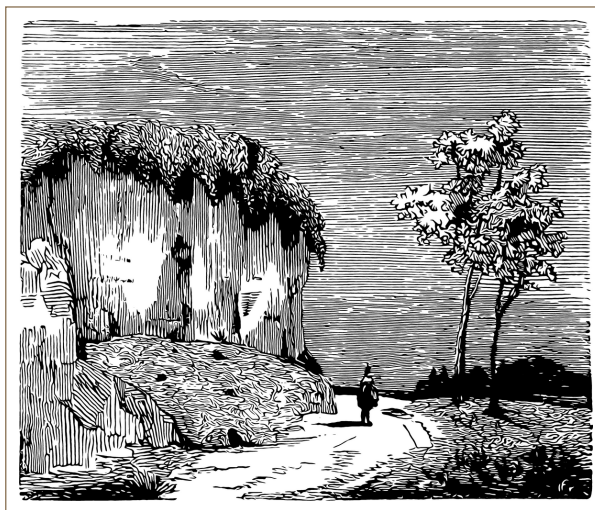


WIZARDS & LIZARDS

# THEOGONIA

A WIZARDS & LIZARDS STARTER



**B E T A**

*Version 0.12 · not yet playtested*

*Jon Mayo. PUBLIC DOMAIN (CC0-1.0)*

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*A heroic game of the Godlit Cities. Players tell the referee what their heroes dare. The referee tells them what it costs.*

The shining city-states stand under living gods. Each has a patron who takes flesh at the festival and in the hour of need, and within the walls it is an age of wonder: plate steel and the crossbow, the first crude handgunne, colleges of artificers and temples where a god may answer. But a god's reach ends where the walls do, and the world beyond is old. Out past the marches lie the **ruins of the fallen Age of Titans**, battlefields where the dead do not rest, and things that were cast down and have not forgiven it.

You are heroes of the cities, out in that dangerous between: to win a name the songs will keep, to haul back what the frontier yields, to do the deed no one else would. Heroes here are meant to be equal to monsters, but the wild is deep and the titans' leavings do not care whose song you are in.

This is a starter page for Theogonia, the default setting. It runs on the Wizards & Lizards engine; the reminders below are enough to play tonight, and the SRD carries the full rules. Several optional rungs sharpen it: **Playbooks** (the divine triad, Shield / Hand / Sword), **Magic Traditions** (divine and artificer sorcery), **Travel** (crossing the marches), and **the Hundred and Eight** (the demons loosed from Eridu).

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## THE DICE, IN BRIEF

When something is uncertain and failing would cost you, the referee names where you stand and you roll a pool of d6, take the **two best**. A **5 or 6 is gold**.

| Where you stand | Pool |
|-----------------|------|
| Desperate       | 1d6  |
| Poor            | 2d6  |
| Fair            | 3d6  |
| Good            | 4d6  |
| Commanding      | 5d6  |

Two gold, you do it clean; a 1-2 and no gold, it goes wrong; anything else, you do it at a cost the referee names. The neutral, unaided roll is **Poor**; your attribute lifts it (a +1 to Fair, a -1 to Desperate), and the situation adds or drops dice from there. Argue your footing up before you roll.

Your **stress** is five boxes (push, cast, buy a reroll). Your **condition** worsens Healthy → Wounded → Incapacitated → Dying → Dead; every wound is one step, and **worn armor turns the first wound of a fight aside**. A safe night clears stress and heals a step. This is a heroic frontier: no one dies to a single blow, but the wild wears heroes down.

## MAKING A HERO

**Stats.** Spread -1, 0, +1, +1 across Might (arms, force, endurance), Agility (speed, the bow, the climb), Wits (lore, craft, the read of a place), and Will (nerve, command, and the favor of the gods). A stat is a die.

**Origin (roll d66).** Roll two d6, first as tens, or pick. Your origin is your background: it grants permission for what that life plainly taught, and points at why you left the walls for the wild.

**What you came for.** Write a line: a name to win, a wrong to right, a debt owed a god or a house, a titan-relic to claim, a companion to bring home. It is what drives you past the marches.

**Kit.** Take one, or build your own and let the referee price it.

- **The Panoply** (a hoplite): spear and shield, a bronze cuirass and helm (armor), a short sword, a few days' rations.
- **The Temple-Sworn** (of the holy triad): mail that a god's grace lets you pray in, a sacred arm (sword, shield, or censer), a hymnal or reliquary (a source), oil and a lamp.
- **The Hunter** (a frontier scout): a bow and a quiver, a long knife, a leather jack, climbing rope, a hound.
- **The Adept** (a College artificer or a hedge-sorcerer): a grimoire or a College tome (a source), a hand-crossbow, a padded coat, a pouch of reagents.

**Vice.** Name what you take to steady your nerve. Watered wine (clears 2 stress; your next roll is a die worse). The lotus (clears 3; the world goes soft, a die worse on your next physical thing). A charm of titan-bone (clears all; roll Fair, and on a Failure the old thing in it takes a little of you and does not give it back).

**Rank (renown).** You start a Novice. You earn **Expert** the first time you win a real name in a deed the frontier will remember; you earn **Master** when your name is one the songs might keep, one great deed from legend. Rank buys the clutch reroll (mark 1 stress). Most who go past the marches never earn it.

## FAITH AND MAGIC

Anyone holding a **source** may work its power (mark 1 stress, roll Will, read the three bands; a Failure turns on the caster; see Magic). Theogonia has two kinds:

- **Divine.** A hymnal, a relic, or a god's own favor. The holy triad, the **Shield** (guardian), the **Hand** (mender), the **Sword** (smiter), serve a city's god and may pray even in armor.
- **Artificer's fire.** The Colleges of Halkis bind flame and force into grimoires and tomes; borrowed fire burns brightest, and it burns the borrower too.

A caster may take the **Adept** playbook or the **Magic Traditions** rung for a fuller sorcery; the base rules alone are enough for a hero who dabbles.

## WHO YOU WERE (ROLL D66)

| d66 | Origin                                                                           |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11  | <b>Hoplite of Branigrad.</b> The battle you broke in, or held.                   |
| 12  | <b>Watchman of Dritsa.</b> The night the lamps failed on your street.            |
| 13  | <b>Clan-child of Drymos.</b> What the Green Lady's faewood asked of you.         |
| 14  | <b>Docker of Vodena.</b> The cargo you should never have signed for.             |
| 15  | <b>Artificer of Halkis.</b> The working that got you cast out of the College.    |
| 16  | <b>Sun-sworn of Heliara.</b> The heresy you could not unsee.                     |
| 21  | <b>Advocate of Dikaia.</b> The verdict you refused to write.                     |
| 22  | <b>Temple Shield.</b> Whose life you were sworn to guard, and lost.              |
| 23  | <b>Temple Hand.</b> The ward you could not mend.                                 |
| 24  | <b>Temple Sword.</b> The unhallowed thing you were sent to smite, and pitied.    |
| 25  | <b>Disgraced Noble.</b> The house that disowned you, and why.                    |
| 26  | <b>Mercenary.</b> The contract you are still, technically, under.                |
| 31  | <b>Grave-warden.</b> The battlefield you tend, and what walks it.                |
| 32  | <b>Relic-thief.</b> The titan-work you sold, and the collector who has it.       |
| 33  | <b>Fen-guide.</b> The party you led into the marches and came back from alone.   |
| 34  | <b>Charioteer.</b> The race you threw, or won, and who paid.                     |
| 35  | <b>Shepherd of the high pastures.</b> What came down off the mountain that year. |
| 36  | <b>Oracle's servant.</b> The prophecy you carry and cannot speak.                |
| 41  | <b>Ship's navigator.</b> The star that was not on any chart.                     |
| 42  | <b>Smith.</b> The blade you forged with something wrong in the metal.            |
| 43  | <b>Vintner.</b> The vintage that made the whole village dream the same dream.    |
| 44  | <b>Foundling of a temple step.</b> The mark on the blanket you were left in.     |

|     |                                                                                                |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| d66 | Origin                                                                                         |
| 45  | <b>Tax-farmer.</b> The parish you bled, and the god who noticed.                               |
| 46  | <b>Physician.</b> The plague you survived when your patients did not.                          |
| 51  | <b>Runner of the marches.</b> The message you never delivered.                                 |
| 52  | <b>Beast-tamer.</b> The thing you caught that should not have a cage.                          |
| 53  | <b>Scholar of the Titan Age.</b> The name in the old text you were told to forget.             |
| 54  | <b>Miner of the deep seams.</b> What breathed on the other side of the wall.                   |
| 55  | <b>Herald.</b> The war you announced that need not have been.                                  |
| 56  | <b>Bell-founder.</b> The bell you cast that rings on its own.                                  |
| 61  | <b>Gaoler of a temple crypt.</b> The prisoner you let walk.                                    |
| 62  | <b>Scribe of a god's ledger.</b> The debt you quietly struck out.                              |
| 63  | <b>Pilgrim.</b> The shrine you were bound for when the road ran out.                           |
| 64  | <b>Kennel-master of the hunt.</b> The pack that would not follow you home.                     |
| 65  | <b>Exile of a fallen city.</b> The god that died and left your home to fade.                   |
| 66  | <b>The Only One Back.</b> The expedition that ended everyone but you, and the choice you made. |

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## THREATS

A creature is a **tier** and **one true sentence**. A blow is a Success or a Partial (a Partial fells it, but you pay). Lesser 1 blow · Common 3 · Greater 6 · Dire 8; Lesser/Common face a trained hero at Fair, Greater/Dire at Poor. Outnumbered, drop a die. Never announce the count; narrate the state.

- **Battlefield shades.** Common. The restless dead of an old war; steel passes through them, but fire, salt, and their true name spoken lay them.
- **Stymphalian flock.** Common (a swarm). Bronze-feathered; arrows glance off, and their numbers press you (outnumbered), but noise scatters them and fire fells them.
- **Gorgon-kin.** Greater. Meet its eyes and you turn to stone; fight it in a mirror, in the dark, or blind.
- **Bronze Sentinel.** Greater. A titan-forged guardian, tireless, and armored against the first blow; the ichor-seal at its nape, or the word that woke it, stops it.
- **The Hydra.** Dire. Cut it and the stump grows two heads back, unless the wound is burned; a clock fills while you learn that the hard way.

- **Titan-Spawn.** Dire. A god that lost its city, loosed from the seal at Eridu (see the Hundred and Eight): its one true sentence is the compulsion it cannot break, telegraphed in fresco, ledger, and rhyme. Killing the shape it wears only sends it back a season.

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## GETTING INTO TROUBLE

Roll a d6 for why the heroes go past the marches.

| d6 | The rumor                                                                                                               |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | A titan-age grimoire lies in a ruin past the frontier; a College will pay a duchy for it, and a duchy to keep it quiet. |
| 2  | A holding's lamps are dimming; its patron's reach is failing, and no one will say why.                                  |
| 3  | An old battlefield's dead have risen and are walking, in order, toward a living town.                                   |
| 4  | A rival city's expedition went into the same ruin eight days ahead of you.                                              |
| 5  | A hero's companion came back from the wild changed, speaking a name no one taught them.                                 |
| 6  | A map has surfaced to a lost titan-seat, the kind of place scholars keep vanishing to find.                             |

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## THE BACK PAGE

*A frontier holding (your base at the edge). Roll four d6.*

| d6 | Lives on                  | Lacks                                | You answer to                       | The wild nearby holds                              |
|----|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | The god's dwindling grace | A priest; the temple stands empty    | A young captain, out of their depth | A battlefield that will not stay buried            |
| 2  | Silver from the old mines | Steel; every blade is reground twice | A widow who owns the only granary   | A titan-work half-sunk in the fen                  |
| 3  | The last good pasture     | Anyone under thirty                  | A returned hero, gone strange       | A ruin the locals will not name                    |
| 4  | The river crossing        | Clean water; the well went wrong     | Two rival houses, loudly            | A shrine that still receives offerings from no one |

| d6 | Lives on                    | Lacks                                  | You answer to                   | The wild nearby holds                |
|----|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 5  | Pilgrim traffic to a shrine | A wall worth the name                  | A College factor, buying relics | A pass that time runs wrong inside   |
| 6  | Salvage from the ruins      | Rope, oil, and any reason to trust you | The oracle, who speaks in debts | A seam that opens onto the deep dark |

*What a ruin was, and is. Roll four d6.*

| d6 | It was                      | Ruined by                       | Guarded now by                       | It hides                           |
|----|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1  | A titan's seat of rule      | The war in heaven               | A Bronze Sentinel, still at its post | A relic worth a war                |
| 2  | A fallen city, god and all  | The god's death, and the fading | Its own dead, in their stations      | The god's last name, still potent  |
| 3  | A colossal working          | Whatever it was digging toward  | The thing it dug into                | A door barred from the inside      |
| 4  | A temple of an elder power  | Conquest, and rededication      | A curse laid to keep looters out     | Tablets no College will read aloud |
| 5  | A war-camp of the Titan Age | Plague, then panic              | A flock, a pack, a swarm             | Arms that never dull               |
| 6  | A prison, or a seal         | Someone who opened it           | What was sealed, or its hunger       | The reason the seal was made       |

*What you carry out (roll 2d6, a relic).*

| 2d6 | Relic                                                                                                                  |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2   | <b>A hero's blade</b> , named in an old song; it never needs the stone, and the songs know your name once you bear it. |
| 3   | <b>A god-forged aegis</b> : worn as armor, it turns aside the first two wounds each fight.                             |
| 4   | <b>A phial of the sun's tears</b> (Heliara): light that lays the restless dead; three uses, then dark.                 |
| 5   | <b>A titan-bone charm</b> : ask the dead one question; it answers, and takes a stress.                                 |
| 6   | <b>A College tome</b> : one spell within, water-damaged, that works every time you dare open it.                       |
| 7   | <b>Coin of a fallen city</b> : a hoard of it, bulky, and cursed to whoever spends the last piece.                      |

|     |                                                                                                                |
|-----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2d6 | Relic                                                                                                          |
| 8   | <b>The Green Lady's boon:</b> a seed, a token, a promise; it will save you once, on her terms.                 |
| 9   | <b>Bronze that does not tire:</b> a sentinel's hand or heart; the Colleges will bid against each other for it. |
| 10  | <b>A mask of the oracle:</b> wear it to see one true thing about a place, and one lie you will believe.        |
| 11  | <b>A demon's true name,</b> half of it, on a shard from Eridu; worth everything, and a death to hold.          |
| 12  | <b>A titan's grimoire:</b> the rarest thing on this table, worth a duchy and a quick end.                      |

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## DIFFICULTY STANCE

Theogonia runs **heroic**. Heroes are meant to be equal to monsters and to win their names, so the wild is dangerous but not merciless: no one falls to a single blow, and armor and a good position carry a hero far. Referee, lean gentler on the biggest dial (Tuning the Difficulty): spend many Partials as ground lost, light lost, or time, not always as blood, and save the killing pressure for the titan-haunted deep, where a Dire foe met without a plan is meant to send heroes running to fight it better.