OPERATIONAL CONTEXT: 378 AD. POST-ADRIANOPLE.

THEODOSIUS: THE LAST IRON WALL



The Empire is dissolving. Following the death of Valens, the state is paralyzed. Zosimus records a prodigy on the road to Constantinople: a motionless body, beaten from head to foot, eyes open, staring at passersby. It vanished when approached.

“The commonwealth should appear as if it had been beaten and whipped, until, by the misconduct of its magistrates… it would expire.”
— Zosimus.

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THE SPANISH APPOINTMENT

DATE:
379 AD

LOCATION:
Sirmium / Thessalonica

THE OFFICER:
Theodosius, native of Cauca (Hispania Callaecia)

THE MISSION:
Containment of the Goths, Taiphali, and Scythians who had crossed the Ister.



Gratian, paralyzed by the Rhine incursions, recalls Theodosius from exile.

The eastern garrisons are terrified, refusing to leave their walls.

The Roman field army is effectively non-existent.



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OPERATION: MODARES (THRACE)

TACTICAL ANALYSIS

COMMANDER: Modares (Scythian Royal Defector)

INTEL: Enemy forces located on a summit plain, consuming plundered provisions. Status: Intoxicated.

THE MANEUVER: Modares orders heavy armor dropped. Infantry uses light kit (swords/bucklers) for rapid ascent.

OUTCOME

Total liquidation. Zosimus notes many enemies "died insensibly" in their drunken stupor. 4,000 carriages captured.

GRIM DETAIL

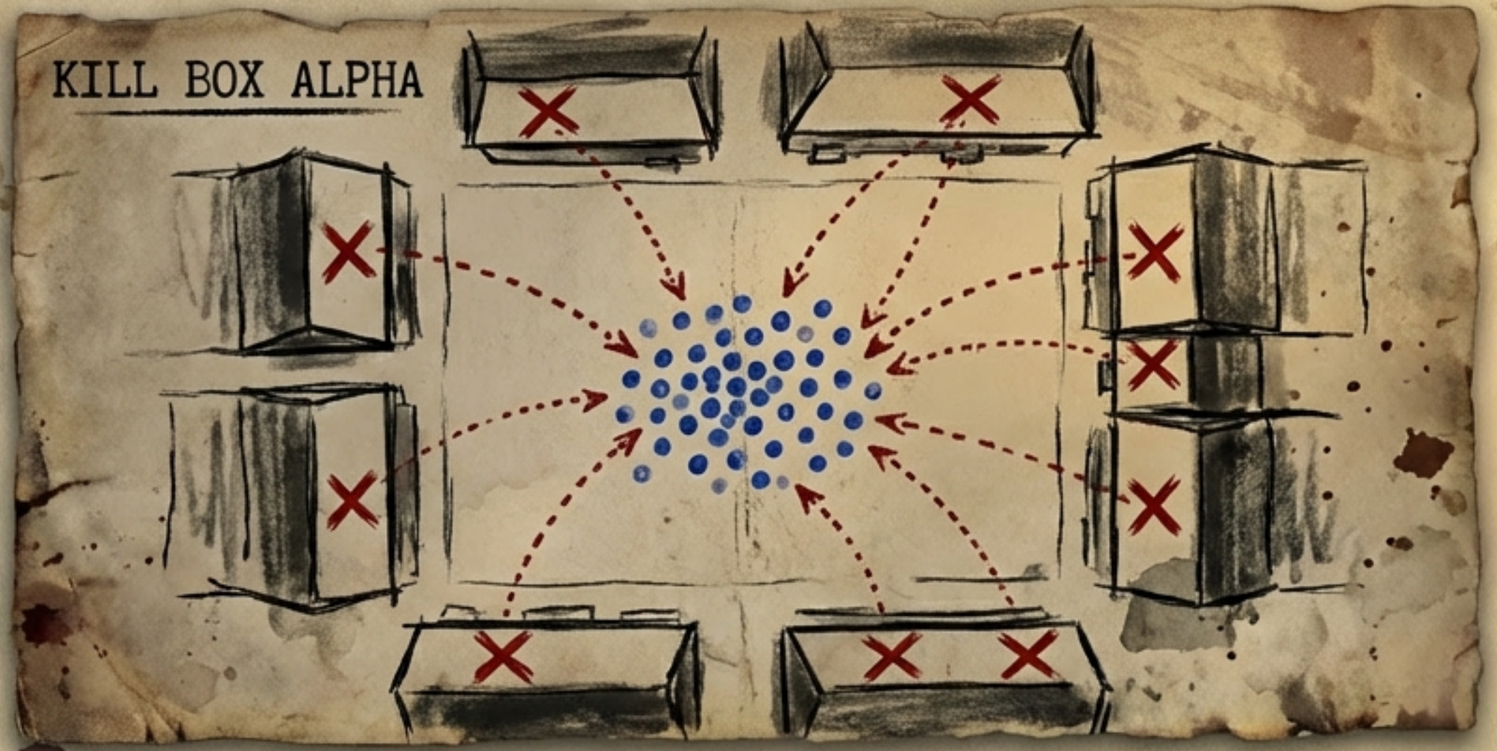
"The slaughter was promiscuous."

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THE ‘TROJAN HORSE’ PURGE (ASIA MINOR)

CONTEXT:
Gothic youth, taken as hostages/levies by Valens, raised in Roman cities.

Now reaching maturity, they pose an internal threat.



THE ORDER:
Julius (Master of Militia) sends secret, synchronized letters to all garrison commanders commanders.

EXECUTION:
1. Rumors spread of "imperial presents" to gather the Goths in market squares.
2. Signal given.
3. Roman troops on rooftops unleash stones and darts.

RESULT: Simultaneous extermination of the Gothic population across eastern cities. The "danger was averted" through cold-blooded calculation.

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THE ERROR OF PHILADELPHIA (LYDIA)

NARRATIVE: Theodosius integrates deserters from beyond the Ister into the legions. No muster rolls. No discipline.





The Incident

Location: Philadelphia, Lydia.
Combatants: 200 Egyptian Legionaries (en route to Egypt) vs. Theodosius's Barbarian Levies.
Trigger: A barbarian soldier draws a sword on a tradesman over a small debt.

The Skirmish

The Egyptians, outnumbered but disciplined, advise order. The Barbarians attack.
The Egyptians slaughter 200+ barbarians, driving the rest into the city sewers to die.

Takeaway

The 'Roman' army is now a disorganized, internecine mess.

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THE USURPER MAXIMUS

A

MAXIMUS USURPS (BRITAIN).
GRATIAN MURDERED.



B

THEODOSIUS ACCEPTS IMAGE.
ERECTS STATUES OF MAXIMUS
IN ALEXANDRIA (DECEPTION).



THE FALSE ALLIANCE

C

SECRET MOBILIZATION.
EMPRESS JUSTINA SENT
TO ROME.



THE ESCAPE

STRATEGY

"The Rhetoric of Necessity."
Theodosius feigns alliance while preparing for total war.

INTEL REPORT

WARNING: Maximus's admiral Andragathius patrols the Ionian Sea with swift ships, hunting the Imperial family.

Result: Failure; targets slipped through.

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The Alpine Blitzkrieg (Battle of the Save)

TACTICS:
- Route: Upper Pannonia -> Appennine Defiles -> Aquileia.
- Surprise: Theodosius attacks before Maximus's scouts report his presence.
- Breach: The gates of Aquileia forced open by pursuers.



SOURCE: ZOSIMUS

"The guards were 'too few to resist.' The speed of the advance negated the defensive advantage."

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REGICIDE AT AQUILEIA

THE FALL OF THE USURPER MAXIMUS



EVENT LOG

TARGET: Maximus

STATUS:
Captured while distributing money to soldiers.

ACTION:
Stripped of imperial regalia. Presented to Theodosius.

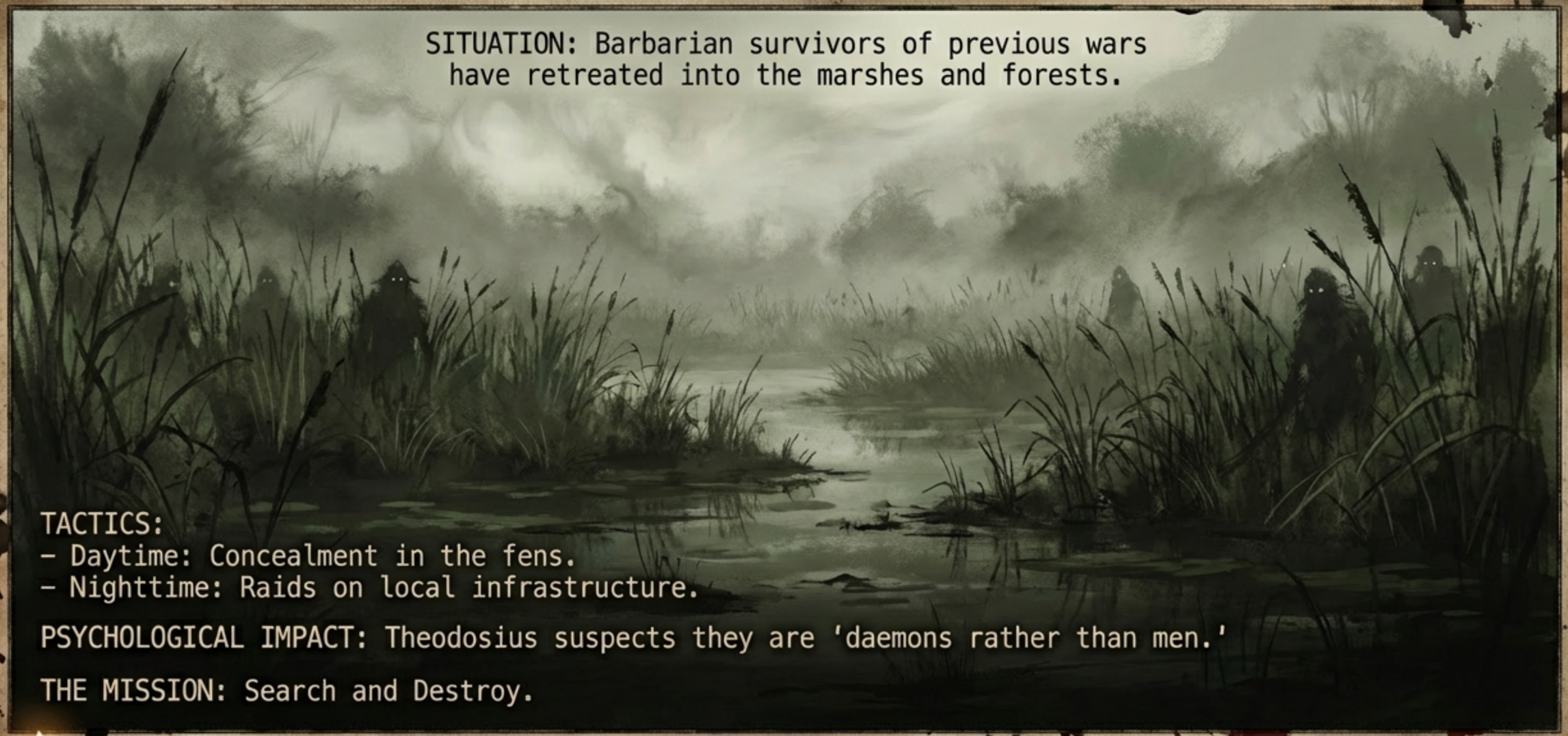
OUTCOME:
Delivered to the common executioner.

QUOTE:
“Torn from his imperial throne...' he received due punishment.”

SOURCE: ZOSIMUS

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The Invisible Enemy (Macedon)



SITUATION: Barbarian survivors of previous wars have retreated into the marshes and forests.

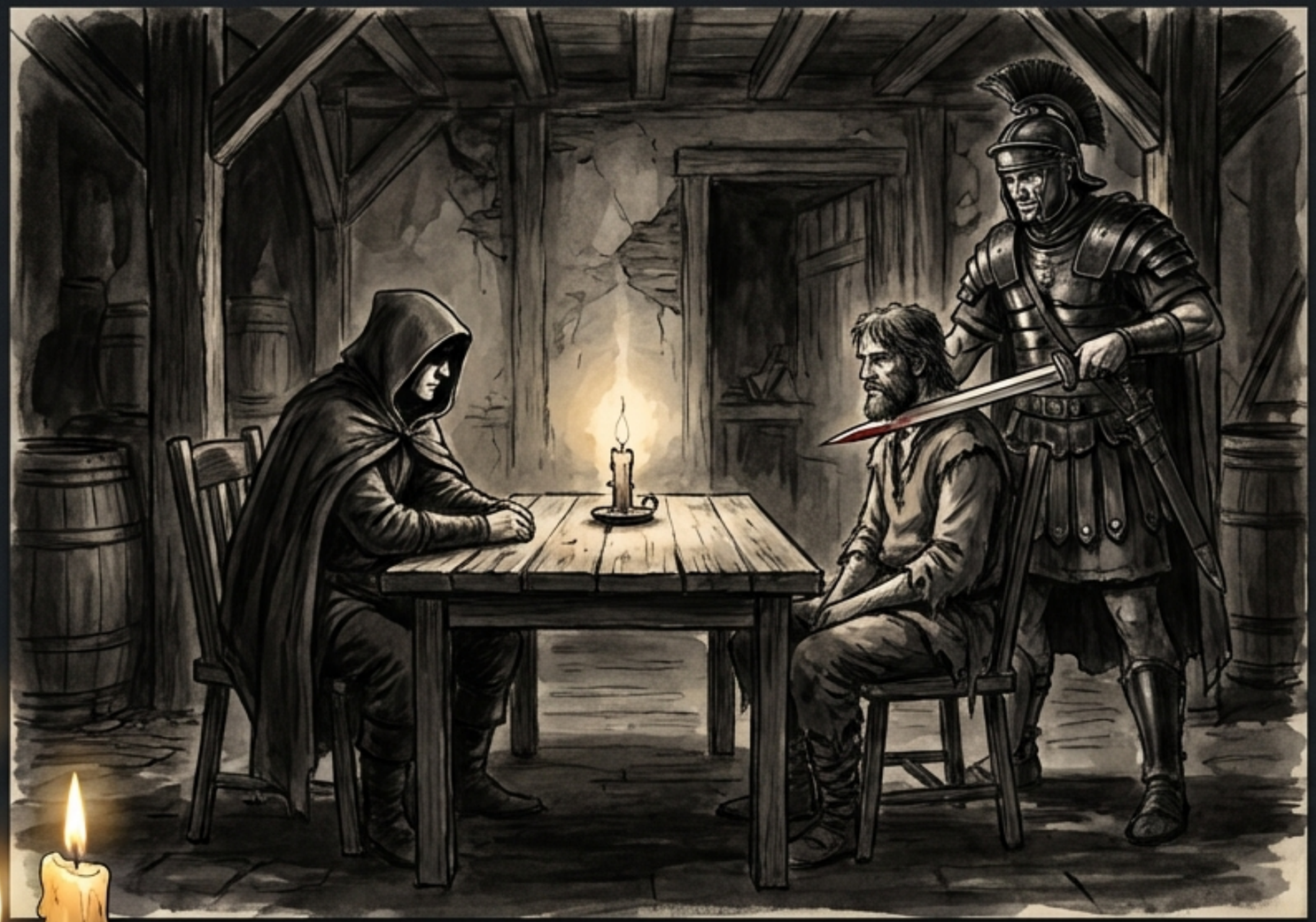
TACTICS:
- Daytime: Concealment in the fens.
- Nighttime: Raids on local infrastructure.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT: Theodosius suspects they are 'daemons rather than men.'

THE MISSION: Search and Destroy.

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HUMINT: THE SPY IN THE INN



THE NARRATIVE: Theodosius travels incognito with 5 horsemen. Stops at a rural inn.

THE ENCOUNTER: An old woman hosts a silent guest who "walks where he pleases" by day and returns exhausted.

INTERROGATION:
- Theodosius demands identity. The man remains silent.
- ACTION: "Prick him with swords."
- CONFESSION: The man is a spy for the Barbarians in the fens.

RESULT: Coordinates extracted. Spy decapitated immediately.

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THE MARSH SLAUGHTER



SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

1. ASSAULT: Romans drag barbarians from the water; massive kill count.
2. THE MISTAKE: Timasius orders a halt for refreshment. Soldiers get drunk and fall asleep.
3. THE REVERSAL: Surviving barbarians counter-attack the sleeping legions. Theodosius nearly killed.
4. THE SAVE: General Promotus arrives last-minute to slaughter the counter-attackers.

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CIVIL WAR II: THE PAGAN LAST STAND

COMMAND STAFF:
- Theodosius
- Timasius (Master of Soldiers)
- Stilico (Master of Soldiers)
- Allied Commanders: Gaines, Saulus, Bacurius (Armenian)

THE PAGAN REVIVAL:
- Eugenius (The Figurehead Emperor)
- Arbogastes (The Frankish General, The True Power)



LOCATION: THE FRIGIDUS RIVER (THE COLD RIVER)

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The Frigidus: Day 01



ATMOSPHERICS: Zosimus records a solar eclipse.
"A nocturnal battle during the day."

TACTICAL FAILURE: Theodosius sends his barbarian allies (under Bacurius) in first.

CASUALTIES:
- Allied forces: Total annihilation.
- Commander Bacurius: K.I.A.

OUTCOME:
Eugenius believes the war is won. He distributes prize money and orders his troops to rest.

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THE FRIGIDUS: DAY 02

THE TURN:
While Eugenius's troops "reclined on the ground," Theodosius launches a dawn raid.

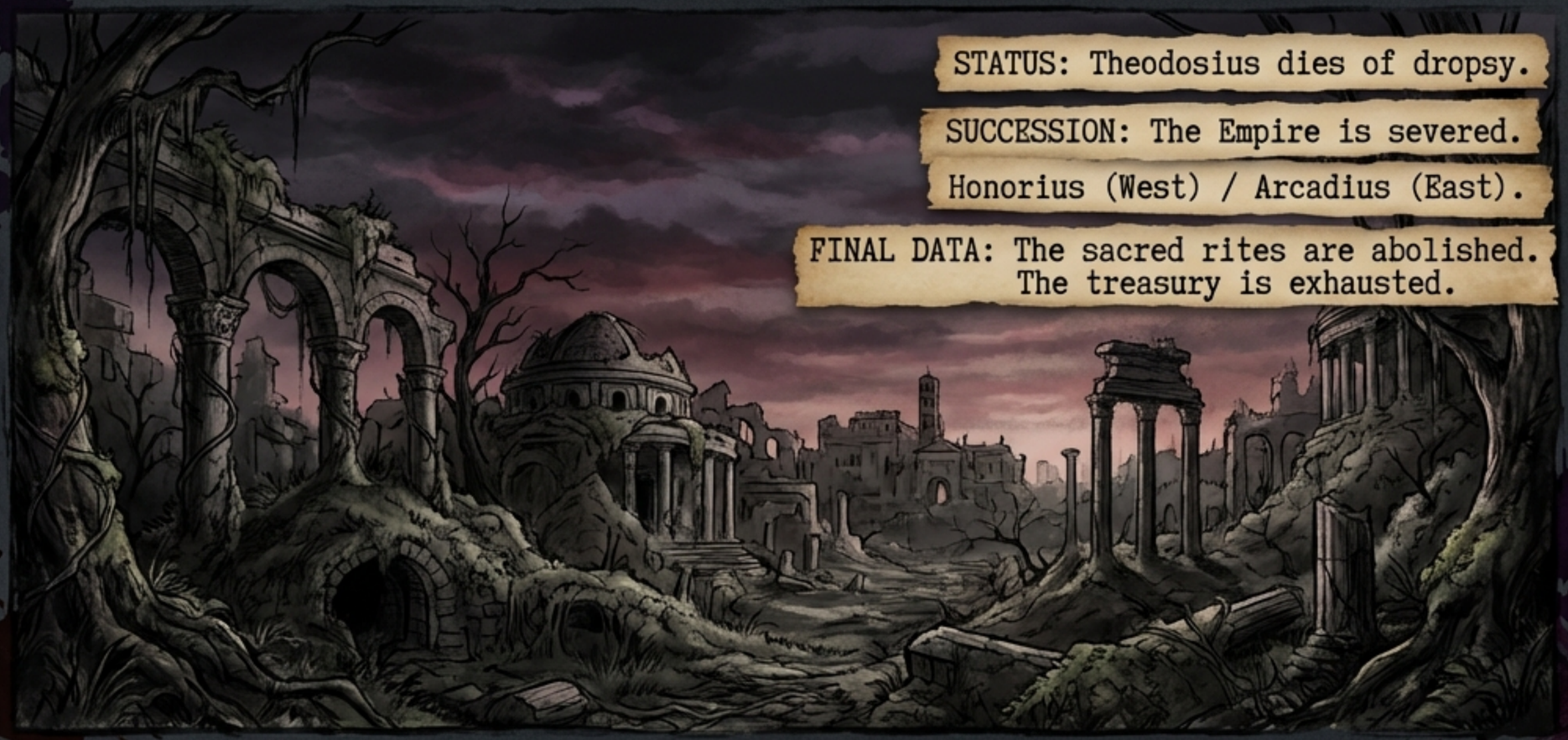


PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE:
- Eugenius captured and executed.
- THE SPEAR: Eugenius's head paraded around the camp on a lance.

RESULT: Enemy troops defect to Theodosius upon seeing their leader's head.

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THE AFTERMATH: 395 AD



STATUS: Theodosius dies of dropsy.

SUCCESSION: The Empire is severed.

Honorius (West) / Arcadius (East).

FINAL DATA: The sacred rites are abolished. The treasury is exhausted.

"The Roman empire.... is reduced to such a form, that no person can distinguish where its cities formerly stood." – Zosimus.

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