

DH V1.2

DELTAHEART

When a group of estranged friends reunite in mourning their lost friend, they realize they may be closer to home than they first thought.

Designed by Michael Tabares

COMPLEXITY RATING: • •

THE PITCH

Read this section to your players to introduce them to the campaign.

When your close friend, your old gamemaster from when you were kids, goes missing, you and your old friends return home from college to mourn, remember, and reconnect.

Although distant because of your own personal struggles, when you visit the places you used to laugh in, something feels... off. Familiar rooms twist in on themselves, warped by emotion and time. The shadows here don't just follow you, they remember you.

What begins as a return home soon turns into something far stranger. A story about grief, growth, friendship, and what happens when memory refuses to fade.

TONE & FEEL

Mystery, Whimsy, Melancholy, Playful, Nostalgia

This is a world about duality: childhood and adulthood, light and shadow, nostalgia and healing.

TOUCHSTONES

Deltarune, Undertale, Omori, Kingdom Hearts

OVERVIEW

If your group decides to play this campaign, give your players the following information before character creation.

Settlehaven is a small, quiet town, mundane in almost every way. Nothing extraordinary ever seems to happen here. People are born in Settlehaven, grow up in its winding neighborhoods, and often return when life elsewhere fails to take root. The town grows on itself, like ivy on old brick. Generations have passed down their stories, routines, and homes. Everyone knows everyone.

The town is surrounded by a coursing lake and a thick forest. All students attend the same school, forging bonds, or rivalries, that shape their youth. Among them was a group of kids who grew close, setting aside their differences to embrace a newfound friendship. Their imaginations turned cardboard into shields, sticks into swords, and firecrackers into spells. They were inseparable.

As the group grew older, it expanded, welcoming outsiders, misfits, and dreamers. Together they built memories: stacking too many pancakes at the local diner, falling asleep during long sermons at the tiny church, challenging each other at the gym. But life pressed on. School became overwhelming. Family situations grew tense. Hearts broke. What once was fantasy evolved into tabletop games, weekend cookouts, and petty arguments.

Then something shifted. A rift. Some members stopped speaking. Others drifted apart. There was a betrayal, or several. One by one, the group fell away. Still, one member, the anchor, begged them to stay in touch. But eventually, even that faded. Everyone left to find their path, college, work, purpose. All except one.

Corvin.

Corvin never left Settlehaven.

They reached out now and then. A call. A text. But responses came slowly, if at all. Then, nothing.

Months passed in silence, until one day, each former friend received a call. Corvin's parents, voices cracking with grief, asked them to return home, for a memorial.

Corvin had vanished. No messages. No trail. After a year of searching, their belongings were found abandoned in a familiar place, along with their phone and keepsakes from the group's childhood. The hope Corvin might come back finally gave way to mourning.

Settlehaven felt different upon return. A quiet, nostalgic town now empty and gray. The memorial was somber, the rain unrelenting, the silence full of ghosts.

Then came the place.

A place known only to the group. A spot of shared memory. Corvin's last known location. Drawn by sentiment or guilt, they went.

Something was wrong.

It wasn't just rainy, it was dark. A strange fog hung low. And in the center, something glowed faintly.

No one else had seen this? Or had they forgotten how?

Compelled, the group stepped closer. The world shifted. The fog swallowed them.

They awoke in a dark world. Their clothes had changed, now robes, armor, cloaks. Mundane objects became enchanted: a pencil turned blade, an eraser turned bow. This strange land brimmed with distorted magic. And within themselves, the characters felt echoes of the heroes they used to imagine, the roles they used to play.

At the edge of this dreamlike realm waited a shadowed guide: Virnoc, a figure eerily similar to Corvin.

With Virnoc leading them through the first of many darkworlds, the group must rediscover their bond, confront the ghosts of their past, and uncover the truth behind their lost friend, and the rising darkness that threatens not just Settlehaven, but reality itself.

COMMUNITIES

Your community represents who you were when you lived in your hometown. Instead of it being what social status you held in a fantastical world, it is a much smaller scale showing the type of kid you were growing up. Other communities can be picked, but if you choose to do so speak with your GM about how to properly include them in this campaign setting.

- **Loreborne** - Curious, imaginative, and nerdy kids. Lived in books, games, and dreams. These are kids who grew up with their noses deep into books, or focused on their classes. They may be very smart and educated, but this could have led to a struggle in making many friends or connections.
 - Why did you prioritize your books so much, was there a specific genre you loved?
 - Which material did you study the most of? Math, science, arts?
 - Did you choose to pursue academics for yourself, or in someone else's name?
- **Highborne** - The wealthy or privileged. Expected to succeed, but often isolated. These are the kids who grew up in the wealthy expansive lands. They had every commodity and everyone in the town knew their status. This lifestyle can oftentimes feel isolating leading to a large range of kids and upbringings.
 - You grew up rich, but rich with what? Did your parents sell a million houses, own a large company, or run a political agenda?
 - You are held to high standards, do those burn you out or weigh on you at all?
 - You grew up with everything you wanted, or so others think. How did this effect the way you made relationships?
- **Slyborne** - Labeled troublemakers or delinquents. Unfairly judged or truly chaotic. These kids may have struggled a bit more in their hometown. The trouble makers, class clowns who might have had more going on at home.
 - You grew up judged for your actions. Were you always a crazy soul, or did something else push you in this direction?
 - If your friend got in trouble, would you take the blame for them?
 - You probably didn't have the easiest time growing up. What incident would you rather choose to forget from your childhood?
- **Orderborne** - Disciplined, structured, maybe even militaristic. Joined programs like JROTC. These are the kids that knew they wanted to become law enforcement or first responders early on. They lived by a code since they knew what codes were. The issue with codes is they aren't always perfect, just like you.
 - You live by a moral code, what made that influence on you?
 - You were a member of a club or group, scouts, JROTC, Robotics even. What led to you developing this bond or discipline?
 - You can often be labeled as a stick in the mud, how do you feel about this when it comes to making friends?
- **Wanderborne** - Lost, unsure, or in transition. Always searching for identity. These are the kids who had a million hobbies growing up but nothing stuck. They may still be struggling coming to terms with just who they are. These kids have the most creative souls

and often are the ones who always wanted to do more, even if it burns them out.

- You have creativity for days, in what ways did you channel it growing up?
- You have so many goals and so little time, if you had unlimited time and money to yourself what would you prioritize doing?
- Some call you driven, others aloof. How does being unsure of your future leave you within your closest relationships?
- **Wildborne** - These kids were scouts. They made the forest their personal playground. Sticks became their swords, leaves their capes. The natural world is their best friend and for this reason they tend to pick paths in environmental care and awareness.
 - You grew up in the comfort of nature, what lead you to loving the great outdoors?
 - Animals are honestly better than people, are their any animals you are or were particularly close to?
 - The woods can be kind, but also deadly. How did your natural skills carry into the way you protect yourself/ others?

ANCESTRIES

- **Humans**
Rare, but powerful. Each human possesses a **special soul**, defined by a single powerful emotion (e.g. *Determination, Regret, Kindness, Spite*). Your soul grants a unique narrative flavor and may affect how NPCs and darkworlds respond to you. Humans often feel out of place here, even as the world tries to pull them in.
- **Monsters**
The most common inhabitants of this world. You may take on any ancestry as long as it's reframed through a monstrous lens. Whether you're a draconic axe-wielder, a frost druid faun, or a healer Firbolg, lean into being strange. **Monster souls appear upside-down**, symbolizing a connection to the dark worlds.
- **Humanoids (Elves, Dwarves, Orcs, etc.)**
Rare and not native to this setting. If you'd like to play one, work with your GM to reframe them as monsters, hybrids, or humans who take on monstrous traits.

CLASSES

All classes are available, but they behave differently depending on the world you're in.

- **In the Lightworld**, your gear is mundane: your sword might become a paintbrush, your armor becomes your hoodie, and your bow might become a slingshot. You function as a level 1 character regardless of actual level.
- **In the Darkworld**, your class awakens. Full powers return, and your fantastical nature manifests.

Your **heart** is a symbol of your class and personality.

- Its color is the result of blending your two chosen domains.
- Monster hearts are upside down. Human hearts are upright.

Your **primary item** (weapon, focus, etc.) is deeply personal and symbolic. The GM will work with you to define it during Session Zero.

PLAYER PRINCIPLES

ACTing

Combat isn't always the answer. Many encounters can be resolved through:

- Teasing, Comforting, Joking, Listening, Negotiating. The GM will describe the adversary to you and based on their traits offer you options of ACT's you can take. You can also offer to form your own actions which will require you to make some sort of skill roll.

Each monster has a **RECRUIT Score**, which is equal to their challenge rating.

ACT Outcomes (subtract from Recruit Score):

- Success with Hope: -2
- Success with Fear: -1
- Failure with Hope: 0
- Failure with Fear: +1

Once a creature's Recruit Score hits 0, it can be spared or recruited.

TIRED

When an enemy reaches one remaining Hit Point, they are considered TIRED and can be spared. Most enemies when spared will be considered pacified. Solos and Leaders will require a successful ****presence**** roll against their difficulty.

Reputation System

You have two reputation tracks:

- **Personal** - How others perceive *you* based on your decisions.
- **Group** - How your friend group is seen by the town and beyond.

These scores affect NPC behavior, available quests, and dialogue. Each time you recruit an adversary both your personal and group Reputation will shift by the stress score of the enemies.

If player 1 takes down an enemy with a stress score of 1 they receive a -1 to their reputation and -1 to their group reputation. If player 2 spares an enemy of stress 4 then their player reputation would get a +4 as well as their group reputation. After this encounter player 1 would have a Rep of -1, player 2 would have a rep of 4 and the party as a whole would have a rep of 3.

Make sure to mark these on your character sheets so you don't forget your REP. The GM may ask for your rep which will determine the way adversaries react towards you.

Absence and Soul Strength

If a player cannot make it to a session, that's okay. Their soul simply lacked the strength to enter. They were not ready. Darkworlds can be explored with any number of players, even just one. Some may be better suited to specific characters based on their abilities, but there is no penalty for missing a session.

No one is ever excluded because they "ran out of power." Your real-life availability is the only thing that determines whether your soul can travel. Let the world wait for you until you return.

GM Principles

DISTINCTIONS

Lightworld Rules

- You are always Level 1 in the Lightworld.
- Problems here are social, emotional, or mundane.
- You can't rely on magic or class abilities.
- Your reputation and community ties matter most.

Darkworld Rules

- Darkworlds are alternate realms formed by intense memory or emotion tied to a real-world space.
 - Each one has different rules, terrain, and aesthetic, reflecting the person who unlocked it.
 - Powers return, your true form manifests, and enemies take symbolic shapes.
-

Creating a Darkworld

Throughout the campaign, players will revisit the hometown locations to investigate, reflect, or advance the story. When entering a Darkworld, the GM recalls the traits and memories that were recorded for that place. Then, each player must name one object, symbol, or feature that was important to that location, both in the past and in its present-day state.

For example, if an old arcade was converted into a laundromat, the players might mention a washer and a pinball machine. The GM will combine these into a short theme, ranging from a single word to a full sentence. In this case, "coins" might be the theme, as both machines require them. If the GM needs help generating ideas, players can collaborate.

Once the Darkworld forms, all players regain their abilities and power for the duration of that world. Each Darkworld expresses itself with a unique tone and aesthetic. For example, the arcade-laundromat hybrid might become a neon island surrounded by swirling water, filled with spinning lights and flashing signage. Players may receive world-appropriate attire

to match the theme, pirate costumes, glowing techwear, or gear based on arcade icons.

Objects and memories players contributed will populate this world as denizens. A washer might transform into a water-spitting construct. An arcade cabinet might become a jumping automaton or a barrel-throwing gorilla. The GM can present vague or surreal descriptions, for example, "a loud and imposing figure steps forward", and then invite the players to define specific traits: "they have a green shell, spikes, and breathe fire."

Example: The Huskborne Forest

1. **The GM names the space** (e.g. "Old Treehouse").
2. **Each player offers a word or object** that symbolizes that space (e.g. "sketchbooks," "hive," "bug catching kit," "princess toys").
3. **The GM builds a world** from these pieces:

A land of wooden towers ruled by Princess Bee, locked in war with the necromancer NET and his army of reanimated beetles.

Darkworlds are rare and deeply personal. They cannot be opened just anywhere. They should be only available in locations of high significance established through session 0, or updated among players and GM.

Player-Specific Variations

If a specific player is the one who opens a Darkworld, that world shifts to reflect their personal ambitions, flaws, or emotional state. A greedy character might find the arcade-laundromat filled with falling coins, buried treasure, or golden machines. A lonely character might find it empty, hollow, and echoing with familiar music.

You are encouraged to let creativity lead you. The world reacts to the player's emotions and their soul's shape. If you ever feel stuck, revisit that player's character questions, goals, or backstory for inspiration. Let those details shape the tone of the world they open.

Darkworld Time Limit

Players can only remain in a Darkworld for as long as the real-time session lasts. If the session ends, whether to order pizza or because the night wraps up, the players are pulled back to the Lightworld.

If this happens mid-combat, the battle is reset the next time the Darkworld is entered. Progress is lost, but memories linger.

To return to a Darkworld, the same player must reopen the portal by creating an impact on the ground using their chosen item. If a different player opens it, the Darkworld will shift again to reflect their soul. Even if the themes remain similar, the layout, tone, or denizens may change entirely.

Character Distinctions (Required)

Answer the following during character creation:

- Who amongst your friends did you fall out with
- Why did you leave this town, what drove you to get out
- How did you meet your lost friend? When did you meet everyone in your group.
- What memory do you hold most dear in this town?
- What's changed in you since college?
- How do you feel about the friend who vanished?

Shared Hometown (Session Zero)

As a group, create your hometown:

Creating the Town

Grab Monopoly pieces or draw tokens to mark the location of everyone's house on the map. Think about how this relates to your community. What were the distances between you? Who lived closest to whom? The more scrappy the paper map, the better.

Next, each player must come up with a location the group used to frequent as kids or teens, an arcade, a cinema, a diner, even a cemetery. One by one, players announce their location aloud and place a token on the map. Then, all players contribute one significant feature of that place, something nostalgic or traumatic, tied to a personal memory. The GM records these details, which will influence how the

location appears in the Lightworld, how it relates to the players, and how it transforms in the Darkworld.

You should aim for around 8 to 12 total locations, though the number can vary based on player interest. Not every location must become a Darkworld, but all of them carry the potential depending on the narrative.

Creating the Hometown's Denizens

Together, the group creates a cast of fictional characters who live in the town. Each player contributes several NPCs and assigns a significant trait to each one. These characters can be as absurd, whimsical, or sincere as you like. Make them large and stoic or small and cutesy. They should be monsters, but that definition is flexible, play with the concept.

If you're struggling for ideas, think of your favorite childhood toys, action figures, cartoons, or imaginary friends. Think of heroes or villains you once admired. Absurdity is not a problem here. You should aim for 10 to 16 NPCs by the end, though how important they become depends entirely on how much meaning the players assign to them.

By writing down these locations and characters together, you establish the emotional architecture of the world. Relationships should feel personal to the players, even if they're nonsensical or strange.

Death and Checkpoints

- Players can die. It should feel impactful.
 - **Combat is meant to be dangerous**, especially in dark worlds. Adversaries in the dark world should be scaled slightly above the party so it is a genuine challenge you can fail at.
 - Death isn't the end, you return to the last **Checkpoint**, losing some resources.
 - Checkpoints are frequent, but so are adversaries. Beware of your time in the dark world.
-

Denizens of the Darkworld

Enemies are built from the materials and memories of the space:

- Playing cards become royal knights
- Dog food becomes a horde of spherical puppy monsters
- A chandelier becomes a waltzing light elemental

You can re flavor any adversary in the *Daggerheart* rules or make your own.

Encourage frequent encounters and monster recruitment.

THE INCITING INCIDENT

You can use the prompt below to start your campaign, or create your own

You grew up in this small town. Everyone knew everyone but your connection to this group of friends was special. Once inseparable, for one reason or another you all separated and followed your own paths in life. Some pursued college, others straight into the workforce, and some everywhere in between.

You all have your own paths, until you receive a call. Your friend who used to run your game sessions growing up and stayed home has gone missing. Whether cold and distant to one another, or excited for your reunion, you all come back home to comfort his family and mourn.

That is until you chose to reunite together at one of your many old hangout spots, but something is off. The place is dark and filled with growing shadows, of which consume you. You are all transported into a dark world, a manifestation of the traits, features, and memories which made this place so unique to you as kids.

In this world you all receive the magical powers you used to get when you'd play pretend as kids. With your new abilities, you realize there is more to this mystery than you might have first thought.

Every memory brings you closer to the truth, and every choice changes how the group comes back together... if it does at all.

SESSION ZERO QUESTIONS

Ask any of these questions to your players, or make your own.

How did you meet this friend group?

What led to you wanting to move far away from your hometown?

How did your friends react when you left, how about your family?

What was your personal favorite hangout spot in the town? Do you ever think about visiting that spot again?

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DH V1

DaggerHeart Homebrew Setting - Welcome and hello

If you have any feedback please feel free to reply in discord or DM me, I'll be more than happy to hear you out!

DeltaHeart

When your close friend you used to play ttrpgs with suddenly goes missing. You and your old group of friends return from college to comfort the family and remember him. Yet when you visit your old hangout spots, something seems off about them. Something dark... yet darker.

Designed by Michael Tabares, Joseph Tejada, Isabella Pena

The Pitch

Read this section to your players to introduce them to the campaign

Tone and Feel

Mystery, Whimsy, Melancholy, Playful

Touchstones

Deltarune, Undertale, 13 Reasons Why, Omori

Overview

If your group decides to play this campaign, give your players the following information before character creation.

Communities

Loreborn (Nerdy Kids)

Highborn (Rich Kids)

Slyborne (Juvi Kids)

Orderborne (JROTC Kids)

Wanderborne (Unsure)

Ancestries

Some ancestries are not available for a Deltaheart campaign. As needed provide the information below for the players.

Humans

Extremely rare. Humans offer a special soul that typically harnesses a particular emotion. This soul represents the defining trait of your human and what makes them unique. The world is often kind to your for being different, but yourself not so much.

Monsters

Most ancestries fall under the monster category. As long as its within reason, your players can pick an ancestry that gives them unique monstrous traits. Whether it be a Drakona axe slaying warrior, a Frost Druid Faun, or a Firbolg Healer, the options are yours.

Humanoids

Humanoids are not expected to live in this world (elves, dwarves and orcs as a couple examples.) Not because they are flawed in any shape or form, but because this campaign setting emphasizes the uniqueness of humans in a monster filled world. Speak to your GM about your human potentially possessing some of the abilities of your favorite ancestries if you don't want to miss out on their flavoring. Or on the other end, exaggerate their traits until they are so monstrous that no one would dare call you a human!

Classes

All classes are available but present a unique mechanic within this setting. Your special class abilities can only be used while in a dark world. Outside of the dark worlds your armor becomes your clothes, your weapon may become a pencil or a hairbrush, and your staff may become a ruler instead. When picking your class, prioritize picking one that fits the dynamic you want your character to have, or don't, the contrast might make it more fun! All your items become household items that could fit in a back pack once in the light world. Your main weapon will be an item of importance to your player which you and the GM will come up with together.

Player Principles

If your group decides to play this campaign, give your players the following information before character creation.

Pacifism

A unique trait about this setting is not every fight needs to end with violence, heck most don't have to. You can choose to solve problems by charming your enemies, teasing your foes, and laughing with your quarries.

Darkworlds

Instead of always having all your abilities active in the light world, you stay as a level one character the entirety of the time in the lightworld. Your community and approach to problem solving matters a lot more in the lightworld. Darkworlds manifest themselves in places of intense emotions or significant memories. When they manifest they take the traits of the room which the darkworld was composed of, making the world always unique.

When making a dark world the GM and players will work together to make the location unique, with the one one who opened it having the greatest influence on the darkworld. The GM will mention what the room is that is being entered with a basic general idea of the room, with the players then coming up with one word or item they feel that would appear in a room of that trait. These words will be combined together to make the space of the darkworld.

Example - Childhood Treehouse

Wooden and lightly painted. Covered in foliage from age.

Player 1 - Old drawing books - sketches come to life here and many things are origami

Player 2 - A bee hive - Bees could play a significant role in this world with maybe a major location being a hive

Player 3 - Old bug catching collection - Dead bugs which oppose the bees liveliness

Player 4 - Box of Toys mimicking Princesses and Knights.

GM Compiling together - A magical land of wood and foliage ruled by a queen bee. The queen is trying to prevent an uprising from a necromancer by the name of NET who has been using his army of dead bug soldiers to take over the queen.

Not every room can be a dark world as they manifest in areas of great remembrance and emotion.

Create a shared hometown

What is the name of the hometown? This is meant to be a small town where everyone knows each other. Each player will bring up ideas of NPCs they would like to meet. An old butcher who loves baking, a cat lady who likes cleaning houses for the sake of it. An old man who only says

mead (an old language where he shares beautiful wisdom.)

With each player bringing up 2 to 4 characters the GM will have more NPCs to play with to build a dynamic. Think of locations that your players would have grown up hanging out in. These you will scatter on a map together building your own unique hometown which you will know close and dearly and which you will explore.

Reputation

Your actions and decisions to fight, pacify and spare will significantly impact how others perceive you. You will have a self reputation and group reputation. Your murder hobo ally may develop a bad reputation where others fear them, while your goody two shoes friend might get everyone they encounter to adore them. Nonetheless these are all factored together into how (and who) treats you with kindness back!

GM Principles

Players can die

Make combat encounters harder than the intended level. You have checkpoints where you will save your progress and be able to recall back to. If they die they will come back but might lose some resources.

Players are encouraged to replay their way out of encounters. Each monster will have a unique RECRUIT score which will be equal to their difficulty

Outcomes of ACTing on your turn. These recruit points subtract from their difficulty score until they are at 0 which they can then be pacified and recruited.

Success with Hope 2 points

Success with Fear 1 point

Failure with Hope 0 points

Failure with Fear -1 Points

Denizens of the Dark World

They are composed of materials you would find in that darkworld. A deck of cards may become a group of knights. A collection of crystals may become some crystal dwarves. Some dog food may become a cute round dog that when grouped together make a giant beast dog. The creativity is endless. Reflavor creatures in the adversaries chapter as reframed for the context of your story and feel free to throw adversaries consistently to let your team recruit them as often as they would like.

Distinctions

How did you fall out from the group? How did your upbringing effect your dynamic in the group? Why do these locations hold so much value to you? What struggles do you deal with now as college students who left hometown?

The Inciting Incident

Friend goes missing, brings back your old friend group together to try to find out where they went. Leads you all to finding clues together by going to places you bonded as kids unlocking and finding darkworld with each one piecing together more clues to their disappearance and potential whereabouts, all while reconciling (or further ruining) your once estranged relationships.

Tab 3

