# The Setting of Slaðkirk

Quick Summary

The town of Slaðkirk is one of the few settlements to survive The Collapse: An apocalyptic event approximately 60 years in the past that plunged the world into an eternal winter. The town is centered on a magic generator which keeps the cold pushed back enough for survival; however, the generator needs to consume a steady supply of magic items to continue running. You are residents of Slaðkirk, adventurers whose job it is to scavenge the snow-covered wastelands for magic items from the former world to keep the generator running.

Themes and Mood

Much of the aesthetics of Slaðkirk are derived from the late '90s / early 2000s. Tech from the lost world includes cassette and CD players, cell phones, and digital pets. There is a heavy emphasis on survival, wilderness exploration, dungeon crawling, and potentially city building.

This campaign will use the Old School Essentials system, or Basic/Expert D&D. If you are not familiar with this system, don't worry! It's quite a bit simpler than 5e, and I'm happy to teach as we play!
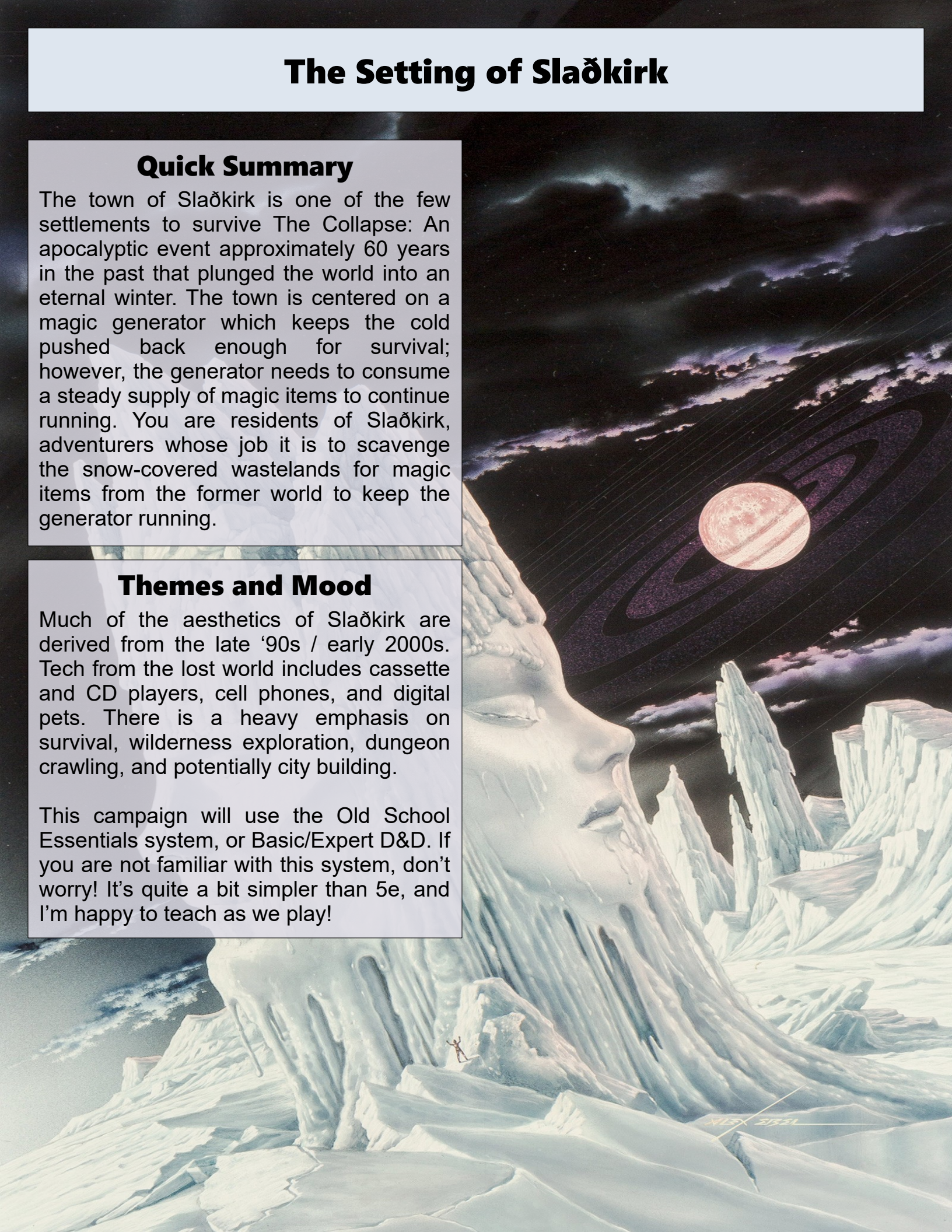
The World of Yesterday

Prior to The Collapse, the country of Arcadia was prosperous. Not one of the superpowers which dictated the course of humanity, but developed enough to enjoy the benefits of modern technology. Shopping malls and city downtowns were crowded with teenagers with bright-colored hair, torn jeans, and headphones plugged into cassette or CD players. Adults held business meetings over portable telephones of both the "brick" and "flip" variety while sitting on park benches made of the finest recycled plastics. An all of this marvelous technology integrated seamlessly with the spellwork studied by the numerous colleges, trade schools, and indie spell developers who pushed the boundaries of innovation.

The Collapse

No one living in the town of Slaðkirk knows what caused The Collapse. Presumably, it was something to do with one of the superpowers at the time either testing a new weapon or technology. What is known is that The Collapse occurred approximately 60 years ago, though the specifics of the date are a matter of debate. Without the arrival of Spring and Summer, few survivors keep close count of the passing years. The world which emerged after The Collapse was almost unrecognizable. On the night of The Collapse, the entire population of every major city disappeared in an instant, leaving only the rural towns and villages to deal with the sudden and permanent winter which followed. While most such villages quickly died out in the face of this deep freeze, a few such as Slaðkirk found ways to survive. In the case of Slaðkirk, an old train engine was repurposed into a magic generator which could devour objects infused with arcane energy to keep the fierce cold at bay.

The Cosmology of Slaðkirk

Slaðkirk does not exist in a multiverse and does not connect to the myriad planes of most D&D settings. While there may be some who cling to a belief in heaven or hell, there are only two worlds generally believed in by most people: The Mundane World and the Spirit Realm. The Spirit Realm is a plane of eternal twilight that is overlaid on top of the Mundane World; occupying the same space but existing and operating beyond the ken of most mundane beings. Most people know of the Spirit World, though few have ever traveled to it, and fewer still have returned.

The State of Technology and Magic

Because the populations of all major cities disappeared during The Collapse and the remaining towns were forced into a subsistence living to survive the apocalyptic cold, very few people now survive with any real knowledge of how the old technology or the old magic works. A few have taken it upon themselves to try and learn how these things work in recent years, but two forces work to halt these ambitions: First, regarding the study of technology, the scarcity of these items makes them difficult to replace, and thus risky to disassemble. Second, regarding the study of magic, Slaðkirk has survived only by keeping the magic generator running, and thus the town has historically needed to keep a tight

hold on all objects invested with arcane energy as a fuel source. There are still plenty of people who use ancient technology on a daily basis, but the ability to manufacture most of these items is largely lost.

The Region Around Slaðkirk

The areas around the town of Slaðkirk are largely unknown to the citizens of the town. The area within 3 miles is known well enough, though there is little enough to know about it. The area is made up of frozen tundra, broken up occasionally with a long-abandoned farmhouse. About two miles east of town is one of the only landmarks in the valley: a lake lying below 3 or more feet of ice, known to the locals as The Silent Mere. Beyond the 3 mile radius, there are plenty of stories about a cave "just over the horizon" or a forest "just on the other side of those hills," but none are spoken with much confidence. Until recently, the people of Slaðkirk avoided wandering too far from town, lest they be taken by the cold or the creatures which dwell within; however, with the town's final reserves of magic items running low, they must finally send brave souls out into the wider wilderness in search of more magic to feed the magic generator.

The System

This campaign will use the Old School Essentials ruleset, which is a reproduction of the Basic/Expert D&D rules. No previous knowledge of the system is required before joining; the system is fairly simple to learn and can be picked up primarily during gameplay. The main things to keep in mind with this system are:

1. The system tests players, not characters. You will get much further by thinking about clever solutions to problems and avoiding unnecessary risks than by trying to approach everything directly.

2. Death is a real possibility. While I will not be attempting to maintain a certain level of lethality or a certain regularity of player character deaths, this system does naturally make death a real possibility that can occur with little warning.

3. If you want to try something, ask! This system is very open to trying almost anything (though that should not be confused with saying that everything is *likely*)

Playable Races

The world which Slaðkirk inhabits was exclusively inhabited by Humans in the time before The Collapse; however, in the past 60 years, several distinct strains of Humans have joined the general population. These alternative forms constitute a small minority of the population, but are not so rare as to draw much attention from most people. These alternative Humans generally take one of the following forms:

Dwarves – Dwarven children are often not identified as such until puberty, as in childhood they are barely distinguishable from baseline Humans. Once grown Dwarves tend to be fairly short, rarely over 4' tall. They tend to grow impressive facial hair regardless of sex, though some female Dwarves shave

regularly in an effort to fit in. Dwarves who choose to embrace their gifts make excellent fighters, but are also highly resistant to magical effects.

Elves – Sometimes a child is born in Slaðkirk which possesses a deep and special bond with the enigmatic Spirit Realm and its native spirits. Elves are understood to exist with one foot in two worlds, and those who choose to embrace their natural talents will find themselves capable of enhancing skillful swordplay with potent spellcasting. Elves are generally identifiable due to their pointed ears and strange markings which are unique to each Elf and seem to be somehow connected to the Spirit Realm. *For the Race-as-Class option, this class uses the "Half-Elf" class.*

Gargantua – Much like Dwarves, most Gargantua do not discover their nature until puberty. A full-grown Gargantua is generally between 7 and 7-1/2 feet in height, and can weigh as much as 500 pounds due to being relatively sturdier than smaller baseline Humans. Gargantua who teach themselves to use their physique to its maximum effectiveness are capable of wielding two-handed weapons in a single hand and hurling rocks with the effectiveness of a trained warrior using a javelin.

Orcs – The Orcs of Slaðkirk are generally Human in appearance, but usually have a feature or two which betray their bestial side, such as a pig's snout, large tusks, or thick hog's fur over part of their body. Orcs are unfortunately the most likely of the alternative Human forms to experience hostility despite being no more prone to mischievous behavior than any other Human. Due to the suspicion cast on them, many Orcs have had to survive by cultivating exactly those traits which draw suspicion, leading to many Orcs being proficient with stealth and picking pockets, while being more sturdy than a typical Thief. *For the Race-as-Class option, this class uses the "Half-Orc" class.*

Playable Classes

The following Old School Essentials classes are available for player characters:

- Acrobat
- Arcane Bard
- Assassin
- Barbarian
- Druid
- Dwarf (Race-as-Class)
- Fighter
- Gargantua (Race-as-Class)
- Half-Elf (Race-as-Class)
- Half-Orc (Race-as-Class)
- Illusionist
- Magic-User
- Paladin
- Ranger
- Thief