

*“A thousand years ago, this was a land of beauty and magic. Then came **THE CATAclysm** which blotted out the sun and ripped open the gates to the land of the dead... The sun is gone and the only things that shine... are the blades in the dark!” —Jared Logan, Haunted City Podcast*

Before the shattering of **THE ISLES**, the world was a bright and gleaming place, rich in magic and wonders beneath the light of a golden sun. Then, the Cataclysm cast the world into shadow and decay.

THE MATERIAL WORLD

The **SUN** has splintered. Its embers gleam weakly in the sky at dusk and dawn. At all other times, darkness reigns. The **MOON**—by the year looming ever closer—occasionally refracts and creates dimmer sisters as though it’s being seen through a fractured, crystalline surface. Stars whirl strangely in the sky.

The **VOID SEA** that separates the Shattered Isles is no longer water but something else, an opaque, inky liquid in which points of light can be seen dancing beneath the surface.

BEINGS OF THE MATERIAL WORLD

- ❖ **HUMANS:** All that remains of the multitude of races from before the Cataclysm.
- ❖ **HULLS:** A human being’s spirit trapped in a metal automaton body and forced into servitude.
- ❖ **HOLLOWS:** A living body without a spirit, usually dim-witted and easily controlled.
- ❖ **VAMPIRES:** Sustained by feeding on the life essence of the living, Vampires are dead bodies animated by a possessing spirit.
- ❖ **DEMONS:** Immortal, soulless embodiments of primal forces and dark desires. They stalk the material world, some aping human form and speech.
- ❖ **LEVIATHANS:** Thought to be the greatest of demons, these massive creatures live in the Void Sea. Their blood is the fuel mankind burns to keep the darkness at bay.

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

lightning barriers — electricity — alchemy — spark-craft — spectrology — phonographs — levitation
clockwork gadgets — volatile chemicals — electroplasm — quicksilver — potions — essence — bombs
grenades — drugs — poisons — oils — spirit lamp — lenses — electric arcs — tesla coils — siphons

THE IMMATERIAL WORLD

“You heard the secret voice calling in the darkness. You obeyed. You are its instrument—and the world shall bow before its glory, or burn.” —Core Rulebook

The world has been suffused by what people call the **GHOST FIELD**—an omnipresent fuzz of spectral energy always just at the corner of the mind’s eye. For reasons unknown, the power of true sorcery faded.

It’s not well understood *how* living beings are connected to the ghost field. After death, their **SOULS** linger, leaving an imprint. Often, these imprints, or **GHOSTS**, are vengeful entities.

Mankind processes Leviathan blood into **ELECTROPLASM** as an energy source. Notable also is that **GHOSTS** are made up of semi-solid electroplasmic vapor.

THE SHATTERED ISLES

The known world is an archipelago of islands varying in climate and indigenous human ethnicities. Most of the isles are covered in **DEATHLANDS**—seared wastelands inhabited by wrathful ghosts and strange beasts. While living in the Deathlands is *possible*, it's incredibly dangerous.

NATIONS OF THE SHATTERED ISLES

- ❖ **AKAROS** is the seat of the Immortal Emperor who has reigned for a millenia.
- ❖ The **DAGGER ISLES** are home to corsairs and merchants, wild and exotic.
- ❖ **TYCHEROS** is a semi-mythical place, far away across the Void Sea. Its inhabitants are rumored to have demon blood in their veins.
- ❖ To the southwest are the plains of **SEVEROS**, and the nomadic, ghost-hunting horsemen that dwell there.
- ❖ In the south lies **IRUVIA**, a land of desert kingdoms that deal openly with demons.
- ❖ Oppressed by the Imperium, **SKOVLAN** was subjugated only recently.

THE IMPERIUM

The cities of the Imperium are connected by electric railways, carrying train cars of goods and passengers at high speeds through the Deathlands. Ruled from the Imperial City by the **IMMORTAL EMPEROR**, the Imperium rose after the Cataclysm. The most recent province of Skovlan was added to the Imperium at the end of the bloody **UNITY WAR**, after which many Skovlan refugees were displaced.

THE CITY OF DOSKVOL

- ❖ Daskvol sits on the northern tip of Akaros. From its port launch gargantuan **LEVIATHAN-HUNTING SHIPS** that prowl the northern Void Sea for precious Leviathan blood.
- ❖ **ELECTROPLASM** is processed from the Leviathan blood and shipped to every city of the Imperium by rail. The city is protected from the blighted Deathlands by crackling, electroplasm-powered **LIGHTNING TOWERS**.
- ❖ Over the centuries, Daskvol has grown up rather than out since it cannot expand.
- ❖ The city is also home to a large number of **FACTIONS**, all interested in either protecting what they have, taking what belongs to others, or some combination of the two.
- ❖ That's where you come in: at the bottom, hungry for more. It's time to carve out your own turf.

WORLD BUILDING & STARTER QUESTIONS

Making the *Blades in the Dark* setting your own is an important part of the game. Think about the ways in which your world works. Ask your players questions to build the world together.

- ❖ Is the Immortal Emperor really immortal? How did they rise to power?
- ❖ What is a ritual or tradition common to Skovlan? Is it respected or forbidden in the Imperium?
- ❖ **FORGOTTEN GODS** are ancient and cruel beings of immense power. Is there a punishment for worshipping them in the Imperium?
- ❖ What is a famous tale from the desert kingdoms of Iruvia involving a deal with a demon?
- ❖ Are there stereotypes about Tycherosi in the Imperium? Are the rumors about demon blood true?
- ❖ It's said that those native to the Dagger Isles live without lightning barriers. How do they manage that?