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**Realm Sculpting:**

**Cthon Enduring**

# **Overview**

An attempt to write a setting, for the joy of writing it and/or for tabletop roleplaying games. A place that I would theoretically like to visit in some form or another.

# **Goals**

1. Have enough of a setting to play games in.
2. Something to stuff jokes and things that I like into
3. Something that I could one day share with folks.

# **Setting Boundaries**

1. Magic exists and is common enough to be known, uncommon enough that it's rarely fully understood. Each culture finds their own ways of accessing magic.
2. The World is ancient, the civilizations are relatively new. History has been measured in scant hundreds of years of records.
3. There's almost too much space. Except for certain material demands, there is usually more than enough land for everyone, though there are always other reasons for conflict.

**Races/Cultures I’ve got so Far:**

*Above:*

Perunci - Boreal Divine Warriors - Perfect Warriors grown from Fir Trees for a War that no longer Exists.

Tectics - Steel Obsessive Crafters - Four Armed Stoney Salamanders with a Penchant for Metallurgy and Smithing.

Ketzls - Avian Desert Nomads - Stealthy desert dwelling bird folks who follow desert crabs and domesticate weeds.

Bónd-Vatn - Aquatic Agrarian Ruralists - River and lake dwellers that build aquaponic islands for farming.

Adnātu - Stranded Survivor City-States - Mesopotamian Humans, city-state builders and learned-society.

Cloudvine Elves - Flying Isolationist Gardeners - Floating Enclaves of Super Gardeners with Symbionts.

Dragons - Draconic Cosmic Colonialists - Invaders from a sister planet, masters of their own domains.

Hive Fairies - Insectoid Fae Pranksters and Illusionists

Karac Orcs - Gunpowder Toting Tribal-Confederacy -

Ixcha - Innocuous Mercantile Chinchilla-People -

Sikuqti - Large Frosty Survivalists -

*Below:*

Kobolds - Dragons Reshaped Regenerations - The regenerated chunks of Dragon Invaders, Independent.

Dwarves - Bearded Eager Miners - Overly Eager Miners and Smiths that are extremely focused on not being focused.

Coruncrysts - Crystalline Ancient Uniters - Telepathic Individualist Crystals seeking a better world.

The Worms Below - Horrors in the Dark - Ever Hungry worms whispering madness from the darkness to enthrall.

**Cthon: The World of Caverns**

Cthon, once a rogue planetoid, meandered through the endless void until it was ensnared by the celestial dance of the twin stars, Aretia and Soteria. This pair forms an eclipsing binary system, with Aretia, the larger blue-white luminary, and Soteria, the smaller but radiant white-yellow subsidiary star, dictating the rhythm of life on the captured planet.

Cthon itself is a gigantic karst world, approximately 2.25 times the size of Earth, boasting a vast network of interconnected caverns. These sprawling subterranean mazes were carved during its eons as a frozen orb, enduring the loneliness of the void. A planet-wide lattice of these caverns crisscrosses the world, weaving an intricate, unseen web beneath the surface.

The surface of Cthon is a spectacle of rugged, alien beauty, simultaneously inspiring awe and trepidation. Towering mountain ranges pierce the sky, their jagged summits veiled by swirling clouds which dance through the planet's dense, turbulent atmosphere. Deep chasms and snaking river valleys cut their way through the rough terrain, while titanic spires of glittering crystal and obsidian reflect the harsh light of the binary stars.

Aithar is the lone moon accompanying Cthon, the remnants of an exceptionally large asteroid blasting a portion of the frozen world into orbit with its impact. With a stormy red atmosphere,

Life has found a foothold on this harsh world, transforming the surface of Cthon into a testament of its tenacity. Vibrant forests and lush meadows sprawl across the landscape, their vivid hues creating a stark contrast against the barren, rocky terrain. The planet's ample water supply, originating from melting glaciers and subterranean rivers, provides the lifeblood for both the planet's inhabitants and its diverse array of flora and fauna.

Towering mountain ranges partition the surface into numerous valleys, each fostering its own unique microclimate. This has led to the development of an astonishing variety of ecosystems ranging from arid deserts and rocky valleys to verdant plains and deep, primeval forests. Saltwater oceans feed into massive whirlpools, nourishing extensive subterranean seas. These waters seep through the various layers of caverns, migrating from one underground sea to the next before slowly resurfacing, filtered by the rock, in the form of bubbling springs.

However, life on Cthon's surface is a constant test of endurance. The planet's dense atmosphere spawns violent storms and gale-force winds, threatening to topple even the most resilient of structures. Colossal dust storms, stirred by the planet's vast deserts and barren wastelands, can blot out the sky for days at a time, making travel treacherous if not outright impossible.

Geological anomalies present additional dangers. The landscape is riddled with sinkholes and caverns, the result of millennia of erosion and underground water flow, while seismic activity and volcanic eruptions can occur with little to no warning.

The day-night cycle on Cthon is elongated compared to Earth's, primarily due to its extended orbit around the twin stars. However, periods of twilight linger longer due to the binary stars' unique celestial choreography. Tectic Timekeeping is commonly adopted as the system used by most of the mercantile nations of Cthon, though cultural variations exist.

**1 Tick** = 210 seconds (about)

**4 Ticks** = **1 Hemioct** - 13-14 minutes, about a quarter of an hour for us.

**8 Ticks** = 1 **Oct** = 26-27 Minutes, what we would refer to as a half hour.

**16** **Ticks** = **2 Oct** = 52-54 Minutes, about an hour

**64 Ticks** = **8 Octs** = **1 Och** = 3-4 Hours

**512 Ticks** = **64 Octs** = **8 Ochs** = **1 Ocre** = 24-32 Hours

**8 Ocres** = **1 Folli**

**8 Follis = 1 Aureus,** One Year of 448 Days (Ocres)

The 448 Ocres of the year are split into seven months (Aurora, Sator, Vesna, Helis, Demet, Chysanthe, and Nyx) with 8 Folli (weeks) of 8 Ocres (days).

Aretia's occasional solar storms are largely negated by a vast asteroid belt known as the Field of Lost Worlds. These remnants of failed planetoids orbit between the twin stars and Cthon, providing a magnetic shield against the potentially devastating solar winds.

However, the Field of Lost Worlds offers scant comfort to those aware of its protective presence.

Errant meteorites occasionally break free from the asteroid belt, crashing into Cthon's surface and leaving behind an array of malign influences within the craters they form, unleashing hidden horrors upon the world.

Cthon has been scarred by countless meteoric impacts, presenting a pristine canvas for life to take root. Once the icy grip of its former existence began to thaw under the warming embrace of Aretia and Soteria, life indeed began to bloom on this otherworldly orb. The planet’s surface now displays a complex tapestry of life, each thread woven by a species that has adapted to survive and thrive in the planet's harsh conditions.

The ecosystems across the planet exhibit an astonishing level of diversity, each uniquely adapted to its particular environment. The massive mountain ranges that divide the surface of Cthon into a variety of valleys, each forming their own biome and weather patterns In the deep forests, towering trees with bark as tough as iron reach for the sky, their broad leaves painting a canvas of color against the backdrop of the cavernous sky, certain species evolving to utilize the wider variety of wavelengths of light emitted by the binary stars, . Creatures adapted for life in the dim light scuttle, flit, and prowl, their eyes glowing with their own internal light.

In the arid desert regions, hardy succulents store precious water within their thick, waxy leaves, and burrowing creatures avoid the blistering heat of the day by emerging only during the cooler twilight hours. Dunes shift and change with the fierce winds, hiding and revealing abandoned structures, caverns, or dangerous sinkholes with capricious abandon.

The towering mountains and deep valleys provide a rugged home to hardy creatures and plants. Sure-footed beasts navigate the treacherous peaks, while winged creatures soar on the powerful updrafts. Plants cling tenaciously to the rocky slopes, their roots delving deep into the mountain stone for nourishment and stability.

Beneath the surface, the vast network of caverns and tunnels host a world of life all their own. Bioluminescent fungi illuminate the darkness, while a variety of strange creatures have adapted to the pitch-black environment. In this world of eternal night, sight is often secondary to other senses such as hearing, touch, or even echolocation.

Life on Cthon, while abundant and tenacious, did not evolve in isolation. At least three distinct species, known collectively as the Gatebuilders, discovered the means to bridge the cosmic expanse and make their way to this rugged world. Despite the blind leaps their journeys necessitated, these pioneering peoples managed to transplant not only themselves but also elements of their native ecosystems to Cthon, bringing along an assortment of flora and fauna from their homelands. These transplanted species faced the ultimate test of survival in this harsh new world, their fates bound to the unforgiving laws of Cthon.

The stalwart Dwarves were among these Gatebuilders. A people of sturdy resilience and enduring spirit, they emerged from their gateway into the rocky landscapes of Cthon, finding a semblance of home in its towering mountain ranges and expansive underground caverns. They brought with them the hardy vegetation and wildlife of their native lands, species accustomed to the dark recesses of the earth and the chill of the mountain air.

Then came the Adnātu, humans with cultural roots reminiscent of Earth's ancient Mesopotamian civilizations. They arrived during what would have been their Bronze Age, bringing with them their sophisticated knowledge of metallurgy and complex societal structures. The flora and fauna that accompanied them were species adapted to the arid climate of their homelands, hardy grains and resilient livestock, all of which had to adapt, thrive, or perish in the unique environment of Cthon.

Lastly, the Cloudvine Elves, a graceful and enigmatic people, found their way to Cthon. With an inherent affinity for the natural world, they found solace in the verdant forests and sprawling meadows of their new home. Their native flora and fauna were as otherworldly as the elves themselves, including the ethereal Cloudvines, a species of airborne plant life that became synonymous with their name. These, like all transplanted lifeforms, underwent a rapid and brutal natural selection upon their arrival on Cthon.

In spite of the challenges, the Gatebuilder cultures, each unique in its own right, established thriving civilizations on Cthon. They adapted to the climatic and geophysical conditions, and their presence added yet another layer of diversity to an already teeming world. Cthon Enduring, as it came to be known, is not merely a testament to the resilience of life, but a monument to the indomitable spirit of survival, adaptation, and the enduring quest for sanctuary in the vast cosmos.

**The Coruncrysts; Silicate Life and Careful Watchers**

The Coruncrysts, the crystalline sentinels of Cthon, were the first stirrings of consciousness on the planet. Born from the cavernous crystalline hearts left in the wake of celestial impacts, these entities initially existed in a state akin to dreaming, silently watching as the frozen world around them slowly blossomed into life.

Over countless eons, these unified consciousnesses, dreamers in the dark, began to experiment with division. They birthed individual minds from the larger gestalt, each a unique facet of the whole, capable of interacting with the world in ways previously unimagined. And so, the Coruncrysts began to take form, each one a distinct manifestation of crystalline beauty.

Each Coruncryst is a marvel to behold, their forms composed entirely of a variety of crystal structures, giving them an almost ethereal appearance. Some are transparent, others opaque, some smooth, others jagged, each one unique in their makeup. Despite their solid appearance, their bodies are lighter than they appear, allowing them to move with an unexpected grace and swiftness. Their long, slender limbs culminate in delicate, near-translucent appendages, and their elongated heads feature large, multifaceted eyes, capable of perceiving their surroundings in a near-360 degree spectrum.

Absent of mouth or nose, their sustenance and survival do not rely on consumption or respiration. Instead, they sustain their crystalline forms through absorption of minerals during ritualistic baths in guarded springs and waterfalls rich in necessary nutrients. The residue from these baths can be inhospitable to organic lifeforms, but the Coruncrysts, ever mindful of their cohabiting species, ensure these remnants do not pose a threat. These nutrient-laden waters, drawn from the very bones of the planet, provide the essential minerals for growth and self-repair, nurturing their crystalline bodies and maintaining their radiant health.

The Coruncrysts, being deeply attuned to the natural rhythms and splendor of their subterranean world, live in harmony with the caverns they inhabit. They show great respect and reverence for the inherent beauty of their environment, and their approach to altering their surroundings is one of minimalistic intent. Rather than forcefully carving their abodes from the rock, they gently smooth stones and etch their language's intricate runes onto surfaces. These alterations are often so subtle that they appear as a natural part of the caverns, a testament to the Coruncrysts' desire to live as an integral part of their environment rather than imposing themselves upon it.

Communication among Coruncrysts is an intricate dance of telepathic vibrations and pulses, a language of light and resonance that carries complex meanings and emotions. They have cultivated a form of short range telepathy to allow for easier communication with the other races of the world as well as warding off creatures in the tunnels below. Their society is structured around experiencing the unique experiences of the world, and allows for individuals to find their place to help their communities, which tend to be mixed.

Their collaboration with the Dwarves and Kobolds brought forth an era of unprecedented innovation, merging the expertise of each race to craft technologies and structures that were greater than the sum of their parts.

As the primordial children of Cthon, the Coruncrysts have taken upon themselves the role of guardians, viewing their younger siblings with a watchful, protective gaze. Their efforts led to the formation of the Cthonic Coalition, a symbol of unity and mutual protection among the subterranean races of Cthon.

The Kobolds; Clever Trapsmiths

The first organic life to grace the world of Cthon arrived in a storm of fire and scales. Adventurous colonizers from a neighboring world, the gargantuan Dragons, braved the treacherous void of space, their eyes filled with visions of unclaimed territory ripe for dominion. A perilous journey claimed most, their colossal forms lost to the chilling void. A scant few endured, their landing upon the surface of Cthon a cataclysmic event that forever altered them.

Their forms, ravaged by the journey and impact, clung desperately to life. Their blood-magic, intrinsic to their regenerative abilities, began the slow process of recuperation. Portions of their shattered bodies, now imbued with a spark of independence, morphed into the first Kobolds of Cthon. These diminutive lizard-like beings began to explore their new home, the labyrinthine caverns of the planet, their existence unknown to their recovering draconic forebears.

Dragons, once recovered, found their regenerative abilities spent but their ambitions undimmed. They sought to assert their authority, either subjugating the defiant Kobolds or crushing those who resisted. Yet the Kobolds, born from the dragons themselves, held a resilience that belied their small stature. They managed to carve out bastions of defense in the face of the dragon's might, utilizing their nimble forms and cunning tactics to hold the fortresses against their draconic oppressors.

Kobolds, agile and lightweight, eschewed direct combat. They honed the arts of guerrilla warfare, trap-making, and alchemical weaponry, using poisons and acids to great effect. The spoils of their hard-won victories against the dragons bolstered their armory. The fallen dragons' remains were repurposed - their sinewy tendons transformed into high-tension slingshots, their scales into resilient shields.

The protracted warfare gradually wore down the dragon population, leading to a reluctant cessation of hostilities. The dragons withdrew to lofty mesas, crafting their own petty kingdoms while the Kobolds fortified their defenses against any potential draconic resurgence.

The Kobolds' perseverance drew the attention of the Coruncrysts. This crystalline race observed the Kobolds' mining and tunneling activities with a patient curiosity, slowly decoding their language and studying their societal structures. Sensing potential allies, the Coruncrysts initiated contact, leaving tokens of precious minerals and gems near the Kobolds' mining sites as gestures of goodwill.

This cautious diplomacy blossomed into a symbiotic relationship. The Coruncrysts shared their intricate knowledge of Cthon's cavern systems and mineral resources, and in return, the Kobolds lent their mining prowess. Their bond strengthened over time, with both races relying on each other for survival within Cthon's harsh subterranean environment. This mutual interdependence formed the bedrock of the Cthonic Coalition, a union between Coruncrysts and Kobold communities that would endure the tests of time and conflict.

**The Cthonic Dwarves; The First Gatebuilders**

With the draconic wars receding into the annals of history, the denizens of Cthon turned their attentions towards exploration and expansion. During this era of peace, the Cthonic Coalition stumbled upon an unexpected neighbor—the Dwarves.

Nestled deep within the bowels of Cthon, the Dwarves had been industriously expanding their mining fortresses, their existence seemingly unbeknownst to the surface's tumultuous past. These steadfast miners, having only known the darkness of their subterranean homes, were both surprised and elated at the discovery of fellow cave-dwelling sapients. Their own historical records were vague about their arrival on Cthon, but their lives were defined by their unchanging routine—expand the mines, tend the hearths, and protect their fortress-homes.

Enthused by the prospect of trade partners and shared exploration of the depths, the Dwarves eagerly joined the Coruncryst and Kobold alliance. Their inclusion marked the formation of the Cthonic Coalition, an enduring council of races that coordinated their efforts against mutual threats and maintained control over the vast cavern systems spanning Cthon.

The Dwarves brought with them their distinctive style of warfare—highly regimented formations combining poleaxes, polearms, and robust shields to form impenetrable shield walls. Their repeating crossbows rain death upon their foes while their robust defenses hold the line. Their mastery of the terrain allows them to launch unexpected ambushes, turning the caverns themselves into weapons. Solo Dwarves are no less formidable, armed with an assortment of blades and bludgeons, they embody tenacity itself.

They extend their defenses by constructing hidden fastnesses—emergency caches brimming with weapons, armor, and food supplies. These hidden holds served as rallying points for combat expeditions and safe havens for subterranean hunters seeking refuge from the lurking monsters in the dark. The duty to maintain these holdouts fell upon all Dwarves, and any misuse was met with severe community backlash.

To mark their territories and honor their lineage, the Dwarves carve larger-than-life effigies of their historical figures into the tunnel walls. The watchful eyes of their ancestors eternally push them towards greater heights.

The Dwarves of Cthon are culinary masters, basing their rich food culture on the unique flora and fauna of their underground ecosystems and the blending of the native flora they brought from their original world. They are adept hunters, fishers, and foragers, innovating unique cooking and preservation methods suited to their environment. They utilize Cthon's natural resources to their advantage, using salt deposits for preservation, cold cavern pockets as refrigeration chambers, and karst-driven winds to dry and smoke their food.

Their brews are legendary, made from the pristine underground springs of Cthon and aged in charred oak barrels to impart a unique flavor. The Dwarves also boast impressive distillation skills, creating a variety of spirits from subterranean fruits, mushrooms, and herbs.

The Dwarves' craftsmanship is as legendary as their brews. Expert miners and metalworkers, they created intricate art and architecture from the precious metals and gems harvested from Cthon's depths.

Religion holds a significant place in Dwarf culture, with the pantheon of deities representing craftsmanship, mining, and the earth being revered. They believe these divine entities watch over them, providing strength and knowledge for their survival in the underground realm. It is rare for outsiders to be included in the highly insular rituals of the Dwarves, the personal gods of individual clans kept quietly in the family.

**The Ketzls; The Nomads of the Great Red Sand Sea**

In the Northern Hemisphere of Cthon, an expansive, seemingly barren desert stretches out, hemmed in by towering mountain ranges. This desert, known as The Great Red Sand Sea, is an undulating expanse of red sand, punctuated by jagged mountain ranges and towering dunes. The terrain is treacherous and ever-changing, with frequent windstorms and extreme temperatures making travel a perilous endeavor. However, within this harsh environment thrives a hidden civilization – the Ketzl.

The Ketzl are a race of large, bipedal avians who are remarkably adapted to the harsh interior of the desert valley. These raptorial beings have bodies covered in a light downy coat of feathers that insulates them against the desert weather. They supplement this natural protection with loose-fitting silks, cultivated and crafted in hidden burrows. The Ketzl's talon-like hands and feet allow them to grip branches, tools, or weapons when needed. When airborne, they make use of compact shortbows to rain arrows upon their foes. They can cover tremendous distances on foot, propelled by their powerful, compact legs, and when the opportunity arises, they glide through the air using woven kites and sail-cloths.

The Ketzl are nomadic, traversing the Great Red Sand-Sea, which is cradled within multiple mountain ranges. They burrow into sand dunes for shelter and maintain a close trading relationship with the Tectics, who provide them with metal products. Their culture is deeply connected with the natural world, with a strong emphasis on herbalism and healing. Their society is matriarchal, with females holding significant positions within their communities. Intricate artwork, featuring vibrant colors and designs inspired by nature, is a significant aspect of Ketzl culture.

The ecosystem of the Great Red Sand Sea is heavily influenced by the movements of the Nomad Shells, massive groups of crustaceans that scour the desert depths. These creatures grow to remarkable proportions over time, earning the reverence of the Ketzl as "Living Mountains". They carry entire oases on their backs, serving as essential sources of water and life in the arid desert. The Ketzl view the Nomad Shells as the "carriers of life", integral to the desert's ecosystem.

In Ketzl culture, a pantheon of spirits represents different aspects of nature, life, and the cycle of existence. They believe that these spirits can influence worldly events and outcomes. Shamans act as intermediaries between the spirit world and the physical world, performing rituals and ceremonies to honor the spirits and seek their blessings. The Ketzl also believe in the Greater Flow of Existence, a cycle of life and death that nourishes new life.

The Ketzl use pieces of Nomad Shell chitin to reinforce their burrow structures, ensuring stability even during harsh sandstorms. The usage of Nomad Shells as a building material is also seen as a tribute to these vital creatures. These dwellings can be quickly dismantled for relocation, allowing the Ketzl to follow the migrations of the Nomad Shells. More permanent structures exist around the edges of the mountain ranges, where the Ketzl store surplus materials for trade with the Cthonic Coalition and their Tectic neighbors.

The Ketzl have also domesticated Stormsailers, a species of tumbleweed that produces valuable silk. This silk is highly prized for its strength and light weight. They have developed farming methods for Stormsailers, providing them with steady moisture to encourage silk production. As one of the few sources of durable cloth in the Great Sand Sea, Ketzl maintain a monopoly on the production of Stormsailer Silk and trade it only with the Ixcha, who consistently attempt to create a presence in the market.

The Ketzl also have come to rely on Dunetwist, a slow-growing cactus found along the edges of the Great Sand Sea, plays a crucial role in Ketzl culture. The Dunetwist has long tendrils that allow it to climb the sheer rock faces of the valley walls in search of moisture and sunlight. It produces a fruit that is highly prized by the Ketzl people, who use it to create their renowned Sandveil liquor.

Sandveil is a luxury liquor that is crafted by fermenting the fruit of the Dunetwist cactus. The fruit is meticulously harvested and then fermented in thick green bottles that are buried deep in the cool depths of the sand, in hidden caches. The bottles are left to age with the cactus fruit inside, allowing the slow fermentation process to intensify the flavors over time. This results in a smooth, complex liquor with a rich, emerald-green hue.

Sandveil is considered a true delicacy among the Ketzl people. Its usage is typically reserved for religious holidays, and it is highly sought after by liquor connoisseurs. Even in the harsh environment of the Great Red Sand Sea, the Ketzl have managed to cultivate a vibrant and intricate culture centered around the resources provided by their desert home.

**The Ixcha; Traders of the Great Red Sand Sea**

The Ixcha are an intriguing juxtaposition of adorable appearances and shrewd commerce, navigating the treacherous waters of trade and politics with deft skill. They have adapted to life in the Great Red Sand Sea and have made their homes within the towering dunes and rocky outcroppings of the desert. Their communities, known as warrens, are often hidden beneath the sands, providing protection from the harsh desert conditions and prying eyes. Each warren is overseen by a family matriarch or patriarch, who is responsible for the wellbeing of their kin and the prosperity of their business ventures.

The Ixcha are experts in desert survival and their clothing reflects this. They favor lightweight and breathable fabrics to protect against the sun's harsh rays and the desert's biting winds. Many of these garments are adorned with intricate embroidery, often featuring designs that represent the Ixcha's family history and trade specialties. They have a keen eye for quality and appreciate the craftsmanship that goes into the creation of fine goods.

Despite their charming exterior, the Ixcha possess a sharp intellect and a keen understanding of business and politics. They have cultivated an extensive network of contacts and are often aware of events and news before they become common knowledge. They use this information to their advantage, manipulating markets and influencing political decisions to favor their interests.

There has always been a dark rumor regarding the fates of those who cross the families of the Ixcha and attempt to swindle their race; constant tales of quiet shadows and quick lethal blades.

The Ixcha maintain a complex relationship with the Ketzl, as both cultures inhabit the Great Red Sand Sea. While they are often competitors for resources, the two cultures also recognize the benefits of cooperation. The Ixcha value the Ketzl's knowledge of the desert's flora and fauna, and often trade goods for this information. They also appreciate the Ketzl's ability to navigate the shifting sands of the desert, and often hire them as guides and scouts for their trading caravans.

**The Perunci; The Warriors of the Forest**

The Perunci, by their origin, are a testament to the unpredictable nature of existence, molded for a divine purpose that was never realized. Stranded on the burgeoning world of Cthon, they were forced to adapt to a new purpose, with the focus shifting from their intended function as warriors to caretakers of the lush boreal forests that they now call home.  
  
Originally created as weapons for a divine war that never happened, they were stored away on the drifting form of Cthon as it passed through the expanses of space, expected to remain forever in the icy grip of the rogue planet.

Their lives are intrinsically tied to the ancient woods, which they revere and protect with steadfast dedication. When Cthon warmed in the glow of the dancing stars, the seeds of the Perunci forests began to grow, eventually producing the Perunci themselves directly from the wood. The Perunci indeed possess a rather unique physiology that reflects their origins and their relationship with the natural world. Standing tall and imposing, their bodies are lean and muscular, a testament to their warrior lineage. They have elongated limbs and digits, an adaptation that not only gives them an animalistic, uncanny appearance but also enhances their agility and dexterity, aiding them in their survival in the harsh wilderness.

Their skin is of a bleached pale hue, almost like the bark of a birch tree, contrasting sharply with the pure black of their eyes. These eyes, devoid of visible irises, give them an enigmatic, somewhat intimidating gaze that seems to pierce through the darkness of their forested homes.

Perhaps the most peculiar aspect of the Perunci physiology is their sap-like blood, a characteristic undoubtedly stemming from their tree-like origins. This blood, a vibrant yellow in color, courses through their veins, providing them with a regenerative ability that is nothing short of remarkable. Wounds that would be fatal to other species heal quickly in Perunci, making them incredibly resilient and difficult to kill.

However, their tree-like nature also comes with a vulnerability: they are susceptible to fire. This susceptibility goes beyond mere physical harm. Fire, a force of destruction and renewal in nature, poses a significant threat to the Perunci's way of life, their homes in the ancient boreal forests, and to their very existence. It is a vulnerability they are acutely aware of, a constant reminder of their origins and their unique place in the world.

They have developed a deep understanding of the forest and its ecosystems, and they harness this knowledge to ensure its continued growth and vitality. They exist in harmony with their environment, using sustainable practices to extract resources and maintain the health of the forest.

Despite their fierce warrior roots, the Perunci have developed a culture that values honor and respect above all else. Their society is built on the principles of courage, integrity, and responsibility, and they hold each other to these high standards in all their interactions. They have developed a unique form of combat known as the "Dance of the Storm," which incorporates their knowledge of thunder and lightning, bestowed upon them by their creator deity, Perun. It is both a martial art and a spiritual practice that helps them connect with their divine heritage and their innate warrior nature.

The Perunci have a hierarchical society, with the most respected warriors and craftsmen at the top. These individuals are seen as the embodiment of Perunci values and are often consulted on matters of importance. Positions of leadership are earned through demonstration of exceptional skill, wisdom, and integrity, and those who hold them are revered and respected.

**The Bónd-Vatn; Farmers of the Rivers and Lakes**

The Bónd-Vatn are an intriguing blend of aquatic and terrestrial characteristics, forming a race that harmoniously coexists with the land and water. Resembling humanoid otters, they are relatively small in size but are robustly built for their semi-aquatic lifestyle. They boast a covering of sleek fur that helps insulate them in cooler waters, webbed feet for efficient swimming, and sensitive whiskers that aid in detecting changes in their environment.

Their settlements, often found near rivers and lakes, are a testament to their ingenuity and adaptability. Utilizing sturdy dams and floating platforms, they construct their homes and farms directly on or near water bodies. These structures, while functional, exude a certain rustic charm that reflects the Bónd-Vatn's connection to nature.

Living in harmony with their environment, the Bónd-Vatn have developed a symbiotic relationship with the aquatic world. They rely heavily on the resources of the water and the land, farming in ways that sustain their communities without depleting the natural richness of their surroundings. Their webbed hands and feet not only aid in navigation but also prove beneficial in their farming practices.

The Bónd-Vatn are renowned for their resourcefulness, ingenuity, and craftsmanship. Using materials like wood, stone, and bone, they craft tools and structures with a finesse that rivals even the most skilled artisans. Their talent for dam construction allows them to shape the waterways to suit their needs, enabling efficient irrigation and transportation.

Trade is an integral aspect of Bónd-Vatn society. They trade raw ores, metals, and surplus food with the Dwarves and Tectics, utilizing their expertise as master portagers to transport these goods through Cthon's river systems. While they possess the skills to build small smelters, they find it more efficient to trade for the bulk goods produced by the industrious Dwarves or Tectics.

However, their trade relations aren't devoid of principles. The Bónd-Vatn prioritize interactions with cultures that respect the water and the land, shunning those they deem wasteful or destructive. These values occasionally challenge their relationships with the more industrious races, but the mutual desire for sustained trade often tempers any potential excesses.

Rooted in tradition, the Bónd-Vatn culture venerates their ancestors who braved and mapped the flooded cavern systems of Cthon, gaining unprecedented access to the world's secrets. Celebrations, feasts, and festivals mark significant events, with a rich oral history passed down through the generations preserving their collective wisdom and experiences.

One notable aspect of their belief system is the reverence they hold for the Flow of Water through Cthon. This perpetual flow, which connects each relatively independent valley, symbolizes the interconnectedness of life and the world, a concept deeply revered by the Bónd-Vatn.

**The Adnātu; City-building Men of Bronze and Walls**

The Adnātu, deriving their name from the Akkadian term for "The People," are a race of humans who arrived on Cthon from another world. Fleeing from a devastating plague ravaging their home world, they journeyed through a magical portal constructed by ancient Mesopotamian Gatebuilders. Their arrival on Cthon was a leap of faith, an act born out of desperation with no knowledge of what awaited them on the other side.

Once on Cthon, the Adnātu established fortified cities as their new homes. Gradually, these cities expanded, evolving into a series of city-states, each a testament to their resilience and adaptability. The Adnātu are an educated people, their knowledge encompassing ancient medicines and mathematics, skills that have been instrumental in their survival and progress on this foreign world.

In their exodus, they brought along livestock and animals from their home world. Horses, goats, cats, dogs, sheep, and potentially other creatures favored in Mesopotamian cultures found a new home on Cthon. Over time, these animals have adapted to the Cthonic ecosystem, contributing to the planet's biodiversity.

The Adnātu are deeply connected to their Mesopotamian roots, an attachment reflected in their language, customs, and traditions. However, their society has not remained static; it has evolved over time, shaped by the unique challenges posed by life on Cthon. Despite their initial reticence, the Adnātu have slowly established diplomatic relations with some of the other races, a sign of their growing integration into the global society of Cthon.

A significant aspect of the Adnātu mindset is their paranoia and fear of extinction, a lingering psychological imprint from the near-cataclysm they escaped. They are fiercely protective of their cities and people, and have developed a strong tradition of fortification and defense. Their skill in constructing walls and other monumental structures is renowned, a testament to their determination to safeguard their existence at all costs.

**The Cloudvine Elves; Cultivators Among the Clouds**

The Cloudvine Elves, or "Gardeners of the Sky," are a race of long-lived humanoid beings who sought refuge on Cthon to escape a cataclysmic event that threatened their original world - the fall of Paradise. Their original home was an unending, vibrant forest where they served as careful custodians, nurturing the enormous biodiversity that flourished within its bounds. Over thousands of years, they developed a unique symbiotic relationship with a plant species, embedding its seeds into the brows of newborn elves. These seeds would grow, encircling their skulls, and eventually blossoming into impressive wooden horns. This symbiosis not only extended the already impressive lifespan of the elves but also granted them a profound connection to the natural world and its arcane energy.

Their tranquil existence was disrupted when the very forest they tended turned against them. The very flora and fauna they had nurtured began attacking their gardeners, and their symbiotic lifestyle was threatened by an encroaching corruption. Their population dwindled, and facing the prospect of being consumed by the once-beloved gardens, they constructed a magical Gate, caring little for where it led as long as it offered them sanctuary.

Arriving on Cthon through their massive Gate, several hundred years after the Adnātu established their city-states, the Cloudvine Elves scattered across the diverse valleys of the planet. Establishing hidden enclaves, they began cultivating special trees capable of drawing vast quantities of mana from Cthon's waters. These efforts resulted in the creation of large, root-bound islands that floated high above Cthon's surface. These monumental trees could siphon minuscule amounts of mana from the clouds surrounding the enclaves, replenishing the power they channeled to maintain the islands' levitation. They also cultivated crystals that propagated the magic sustaining the enclaves aloft, drawing energy from the extensive root systems of the trees central to each enclave.

Each Cloudvine Elf enclave is a unique, awe-inspiring spectacle, characterized by its distinct flavor and style. However, common features unite these floating havens. Central to each enclave is a colossal tree, known as the "Skyroot," around which the enclave is built. The Skyroot is not merely a tree, but a magical construct developed by the Cloudvine Elves, capable of absorbing and storing vast amounts of mana. Its complex root system extends throughout the enclave, tapping into the ambient mana of the surrounding environment and drawing it back to power the enclave's magical requirements, thus maintaining its lofty position above Cthon.

As expert gardeners, the Cloudvine Elves cultivate a dizzying array of plants within their enclaves. Each plant serves a specific purpose, from exhibiting magical properties to providing food or medicinal resources. The enclaves are a riot of colors and textures, with plants adorning every conceivable space, from building walls to rooftops.

The buildings within the enclaves are designed to accommodate their floating nature. They are lightweight, flexible structures that can adjust to the wind's movements. Bridges and walkways connect these buildings, suspended high above the ground, creating a network of aerial pathways.

Despite their affinity for arcane energy, the Cloudvine Elves are gardeners first and arcanists second. Their deep botanical knowledge is employed to create and maintain their floating islands. Haunted by the memory of their near-extinction on their original world, they are fiercely protective of their enclaves, guarding against any potential contamination of their precious plants or themselves.

As a society, their cultural traditions revolve around their horticultural expertise. Although they can sense and maintain connections with magic, they are uncertain about fully utilizing or tapping into Cthon's mana flow. As a result, they have developed unique methods of capturing and storing it.

Cloudvine Elves have a natural elegance and ethereal beauty, reflecting their deep bond with the natural world. Their attire, crafted from natural fibers and materials, blends harmoniously with their surroundings. Jewelry adorned with flowers and leaves is commonplace, underlining their botanical heritage.

In their role as renowned cultivators, the Cloudvine Elves maintain a special relationship with a species of native bees from their homeland. Measuring 3-4 inches in length, these bees possess iridescent wings that shimmer in sunlight, and their exoskeletons are a radiant, reflective blue. These bees are highly valued for their ability to extract nectar from the rarest flowers, producing a rich, opalescent honey imbued with magical energy.

The hives housing these bees are colossal, resembling massive, crystalline geodes. The exterior is cloaked in a thick, protective layer of wax, impervious to the harsh atmospheric conditions of the upper atmosphere. Within the hive, delicate, crystal-like structures form chambers and passages, serving as storage for honey and breeding grounds for young bees. Specially trained Cloudvine Elves tend to these hives, ensuring the bees are well-nourished and that the honey is harvested at optimal times to maximize its magical potency.

The Cloudvine Elves' cultivation skills extend to a wide array of fruits and vegetables, resulting in an expansive culinary repertoire. Their variety of fruit wines and herbal liquors are sought-after trade goods, prized for their unique flavors during occasional interactions with other races.

**The Worms Below; Madness in the Darkness**

The catacombs of Cthon resonate with a dread frequency, the echoes of a nameless terror known as the Worms Below. Sealed within the crushing darkness, these gargantuan beings have consumed and eroded the bedrock of the planet for countless millennia. They are titanic entities, grotesque amalgamations of coiling muscle and gnarled scales, stretching for miles and illuminated only by the luminescent fungi and the occasional flicker of arcane energy. These nightmares of scale and flesh culminate in a monstrous maw, a gaping abyss filled with rows of serrated teeth, capable of grinding stone and metal to dust.

Their alien consciousness, evolved over eons of isolation and hunger, has acquired an ominous gift - the ability to whisper into the minds of the weak and desperate. These insidious whispers shape the psyche of those susceptible, bending their will and transforming them into loyal servants. Hence, the Cult Below was born, a faction of thralls and outcasts from various societies, brought together under the influence of the Worms' sinister whispers.

The Cult Below, their minds consumed by the Worms' influence, operate as the hands and eyes of these subterranean horrors. They venture out of the depths, launching assaults on the settlements of the Cthonic Coalition. Their actions are driven by a singular purpose: the expansion of the Worms' domain and the subjugation of all that live within the tunnels and caverns of Cthon.

The Worms Below are not simply creatures of violence and conquest, however. They are ancient beings, their existence intertwined with the very fabric of Cthon itself. Their movements shape the caverns and tunnels, their hunger reveals new veins of ore, and their residual energies can spur the growth of arcane crystals and other unique phenomena. They are a natural disaster, a moving earthquake that reshapes the underground landscapes in their wake, yet they are also an integral part of the planet's life cycle.

The Cult Below, however, is far from a natural phenomenon. These lost souls, compelled by the Worms' whispers, have forsaken their former lives and identities. They have become the tools of the Worms Below, their minds filled with dark promises and commands. They act as the forward troops, infiltrating and undermining the efforts of the Cthonic Coalition, sowing chaos and despair in service of their monstrous masters. Over time, the corrupting influence of the Worms Whispers begin to corrupt even the flesh of the Cultists, who begin to grow foul chitinous scales similar to their masters and grotesque bladed limbs.

The Worms Below and the Cult that serves them are a constant and insidious threat to the hard-won peace of Cthon's underground societies. Their presence is a reminder of the planet's hidden horrors, lurking in the depths and waiting for the opportunity to consume and conquer.

**The Hive Fairies; Hidden Watchers of the Forests**

The Hive Fairies of Cthon are an intriguing blend of humanoid, bee, and wasp traits, resulting in an ethereal race of tiny beings that buzz and flutter amidst the colossal flora of the world. Their bodies are primarily humanoid, but they have the wings and antennae of insects, granting them the capability of swift flight and heightened sensory perception. Despite their small size, they are not to be underestimated, as they are capable of crafting and using weapons and armor derived from chitin and other insect materials.

Hive Fairies live in organized colonies, each ruled by a queen. However, contrary to most insect societies, the Hive Fairies are egalitarian, with every individual free to choose their contribution to the community. This constant balancing act between individualism and collective responsibility is a central part of the Hive Fairy society and shapes the internal struggle each Fairy experiences.

Their connection to nature is profound, and they are expert foragers, using every part of the insects they fight and consume. This respect for nature extends to their interactions with other races as well. Their primary mode of interaction with larger races is through avoidance, choosing to hide and observe rather than engage directly. However, they are known to engage in trade on rare occasions, offering goods made from chitin, unique insect-derived substances, or their meticulously gathered resources.

A distinctive characteristic of Hive Fairies is their innate ability to use illusion magic. They use this ability to keep their hives hidden from potential threats and to maintain their distance from the other races of Cthon. However, this ability is also used for amusement, as Hive Fairies are known to be quite the pranksters. Mischievous and playful, they delight in creating harmless illusions to confuse or play tricks on the other races, adding an element of unpredictability whenever they are around.

Despite their whimsical nature, Hive Fairies also serve as vigilant observers, their tiny size and quick flight allowing them to easily escape notice. The wealth of knowledge they gather from their observations aids them in their survival, allowing them to remain one step ahead of any potential threats or changes in their environment.

**The Karac Orcs; Masters of Cannon and Jezzail**

The Karac Orcs are a formidable and tenacious race that reside in the inhospitable rocky wastelands of Cthon. Ancestral lore suggests they were driven to this harsh region during the early Dragon wars, and their centuries-long residence has instilled in them a resilience and resourcefulness that is characteristic of their kind. These grey-skinned, muscular humanoids are taller and broader than humans, their rugged facial features marked by distinctive tusks reminiscent of wild boars. Their coarse hair, thick skin, and robust physiology equip them for survival in the extreme climate of their homeland.

The Karac Orc society is an intricate confederation of tribes, bound together by a common culture and shared values of strength, loyalty, and ingenuity. Each tribe is led by a Kagan-Karac, a title translating to "Leader of the Rocky Badlands", who is revered as both a warrior and a statesman. Some tribes are based around oasis dwellings, led by Kagan-Kurans, whereas the exiled Orcs are led by Kagan-Kuris. Irrespective of their specific designations, the Kagans hold immense power and bear the weight of their tribe's welfare.

These orcish tribes have not only survived in their punishing environment but thrived, owing much to their technological prowess, particularly in the field of gunpowder weaponry. The Karac Orcs are accomplished metallurgists, blacksmiths, and engineers, their unique cannons and rifles coveted across Cthon. The significance of gunpowder transcends warfare in their society, its applications extending to hunting, mining, and the crafting of personal Jezzail rifles – weapons adorned with tokens of victory, each reflecting the individual accomplishments of their owner.

Their society, while valuing physical strength, agility, and endurance, also appreciates craftsmanship and innovation. Honor, defined by loyalty to the tribe and the sanctity of one's word, is another deeply ingrained virtue. A tarnished reputation can lead to severe consequences, including social ostracization and exile.

The Karac Orcs are deeply spiritual, venerating a pantheon of gods and goddesses. Their rich oral tradition, transmitted through stories and legends, nurtures their cultural heritage, while their unique music - throat singing accompanied by the morin khuur, a two-stringed fiddle - adds a distinct flavor to their cultural tapestry.

Contrary to popular belief, magic does exist among the Karac Orcs. While it may not be as prevalent as in other races, the Orc Mages strive to support their tribes and the broader Karac society in their unique ways. This diversity in their approach to magic is a testament to the Orcs' adaptability and resilience.

Finally, the Karac Orcs are skilled camel herders, their understanding of the beast and the terrain conferring them superior mobility. Whether in battle or migration, the Orcs employ this knowledge to their strategic advantage, enhancing their reputation as a formidable force in Cthon. Despite the harshness of their environment, the Karac Orcs have developed a resilient and dynamic society, their technological advancements compensating for their limited magical abilities.

**The Sikuqti; Masters of the Northern Ranges**

The Sikuqti, often dubbed "Frost Giants", are a hardy and resourceful race from the icy Northern Expanses of Cthon. Although their imposing stature contributes to their title as "giants", they share a closer resemblance to humans, albeit with several adaptations for survival in their subzero environment. Possessing an amalgam of agrarian and hunter cultures, the Sikuqti have learned to thrive in their unforgiving homeland, fostering a pronounced sense of self-sufficiency.

Physically, the Sikuqti are a picture of resilience, their strength and endurance honed over generations of surviving their harsh homeland. Their skin is thick and robust, serving as natural insulation against the chilling cold, while their voluminous hair and beards offer additional warmth. The pale blue or grey of their eyes mirrors the icy landscape they inhabit. Equally adept as hunters and fishermen, the Sikuqti are capable of procuring sustenance even under the most severe conditions.

Community and family are the cornerstones of Sikuqti culture, shaping their collective drive for survival amidst extreme adversity. Their deep-rooted connection to the land and its fauna is reflected in their agrarian traditions. During the biting winter months, the Sikuqti dwell in sturdy loghouses, congregating in rugged towns to safeguard their supplies and permanent establishments, such as forges and public granaries. As the temperature rises, they adopt a semi-nomadic lifestyle, hunting caribou, moose, and other cold-adapted animals. Every family contributes to the communal stockpile by gathering meat, leather, sinew, and other useful materials.

The Sikuqti have developed a unique expertise in working with cold-attuned metal ores, particularly the ice stupas that materialize in rapid glaciers during the colder months. These stupas exude minerals from the quasi-marshy environments, mirroring the bog iron formation process. The resulting cold iron and copper are fashioned into wrought iron and bronze, forming the basis of their weaponry and armor. To supplement their resources, the Sikuqti export timber from the taigas they inhabit, selling the wood as a byproduct of their forest management efforts. Trade with other races, such as the Dwarves and Tectics, enables them to obtain rare cold-attuned metal ores.

The Northern Expanses are a vast and unforgiving region of the world, stretching across thousands of miles of frozen tundra, glaciers, and icy mountains. The climate is harsh, with long, dark winters and brief, cool summers. The landscape is dotted with frozen lakes and rivers, as well as vast fields of snow and ice.

**STRAY IDEAS**

Creatures of shadow that only exist when the right sort of moonlight is cast.

Flooded Cavern ceiling Covered in dense mists, creatures living in both the water above and below.