**Introduction**

As the planet slowly recovered from Ziuth’s Dark Age, seeds of live began to thrive once again. Oceans refilled as the ash clouds settled and the planet warmed. A few furtive organisms found safe haven at the deepest ocean basins, and from there life diversified and spread quickly. Somewhat arable dirt still existed on the supercontinent dominating the planet. Once the ash was washed deeper into the ocean, plantlife took hold and soon covered all land. Animal life evolved soon after, a common feature being flexible but strong exoskeletons. Land life did not lose their exoskeletons, keeping them while forming interior bones as well. The exoskeletons grew thinner, but remained as the cut and pierce resistant properties were very useful on otherwise weak areas.

Still, this exoskeleton limited the size of organisms. No real megafauna explored the landscape. Instead, ecosystems composed entirely of insect-like beings are heavily featured. From large grazers, to solo and pack hunters, and stalwart decomposers--small, segmented, and carapaced organisms found numerous niches. Eusociality appeared relatively quickly, and very ant-like organisms formed thus.

The precursor to the Neran were one of these species, with small colonies that were preyed upon by lumbering grazers. A shift in the climate towards hotter temperatures reduced the grazer numbers, especially in the center of the continent, as desertification spread. The Neran then speciated from the ancestor species, growing larger as the amount of oxygen in the atmosphere grew. Their hierarchies evolved as colony populations exponentiated and zones of influence expanded. A turning point was when a caste of the hierarchy devoted to upkeep of the queens began preparing food for them. At first just pre-digesting the food, they began to mix foods together and even perform primitive cleaning and cooking of food by splashing it with water and heating it with their bodies. This allowed queens to grow much more massive, and populations grew even further. The caste of food-preparers grew as well, and soon all Neran were feeding upon hyper-efficient food.

Once the Neran began to eat highly efficient food, their progress exponentiated. They grew even larger, drones becoming dog-sized and queens becoming elephant-sized. Colonies began to disappear, as the massive sizes of the queens required extremely large chambers. Thus, the species began moving aboveground. The queens still required protection, however, and though a caste of warriors was briefly formed, the queens themselves began to grow thick armor and became even larger. Their sheer size and defense threatened predators, but their immobile state was still a weakness. The queens began to form multiple, smaller organs to incubate young, instead of one large chamber. Dedicating divisions of the body to this, and spreading it out over their large form allowed their legs to come out of vestigiality. With movement, increased mandible size, and a near-constant swarm of drone-workers and food-preparers flying in and out of them, the queens became mobile colonies of vast sizes, towering over most other species on the continent. The largest behemoth queens would rise 300 feet tall, more than 1000 feet long, and house thousands of drones.

**Communication**

Along with cleaning and cooking of food, language will be a massive step in Neran evolution. This could start as a switch from pheromones to auditory communication. One species will begin using clicking, buzzing, and snapping sounds to communicate much more rapidly and over longer distances than the others. Some basic proto-concepts will be “Enemies are here”, “Food is here”, and “Nothing is here”. This will quickly evolve into a proto-language, and as this species’ coordination improves it will dominate its local area.

**Oxygen**

Oxygen is supplied additionally by specialized worker drones that take water into their bodies and electrolyze it using primitive Elemental powers of lightning. They then send the gasses to another specialized drone that rapidly cools the hydrogen and oxygen, again using Elemental water powers. The hydrogen is let off as the oxygen liquifies, and then brought back to temperature and inserted into the behemoth queen. Many dozens of drones do this to each behemoth, removing her need to willfully breathe.

**Brains**

Neran brains grew with their body size; with the queens and her tenders growing more than drones. Interestingly, at a certain point on the track from armored queen to behemoth queen, brain size growth slowed down, stagnated, and actually reversed. A few specialized tenders living within had begun to directly manipulate the queens’ brains, and worked together efficiently enough that queens no longer had to dedicate energy to growing large brains. Eventually, these tenders grew their own massive brains, and the queens developed sections to house them. The tenders became organlike, together functioning as three to five neural centers that could communicate and make decisions on how to control the queen.

**Civilization**

The supercontinent spanning the planet housed many hundreds of Neran colonies, the queens roaming to resource-rich areas and infrequently clashing. Not all of the colonies would clash, though. Amicable relations began by just not immediately fighting. The drones would bump into each other while gathering resources and end up sharing information. Their languages were different, but close enough to understand. This led shortly to trade, as some behemoths carried different amounts of resources. With trade came further differentiation of culture, and crafts. Soon, ranges of confederated behemoths were strictly defined, and mostly amicable relations ensued. Thinkers would meet when the behemoths crossed paths, trade information and interlink, even trade drones and other tenders.

**Technology**

The switch from competition to cooperation enabled more varied use of Elemental powers. The Neran soon expressed great control over the Elements. This power was used for myriad purposes, most commonly signaling over long distances and artistic expression. The invention of various machinery was a defining point in Neran civilization. Not only did it revolutionize how Neran society was structured--Greatly reducing the number of drones needed to transport and process resources within the behemoth queen--But also creating a massive divide culturally.

**The Fracture**

One faction of Neran embraced technology, but saw complete replacement of drones as dangerous. They defined themselves with complex tools specially made to help drones complete tasks. Another faction defined themselves with complete automation where possible. Their behemoth queens hummed with numerous engines, and their drones greatly decreased in number. Great scrapers would hang from the behemoth, dragging up resources to be processed en masse. A final faction shunned technology outright, instead embracing genetic modification through selective breeding. This was assisted by their notably shorter lifespans, and complex writing system. Their food processors became gigantic and embedded in their behemoth, having many stomachs to process food in different ways. Chemist thinker Neran of this faction produced many different forms of processor drones, all creating complex chemical mixtures for use in supporting the behemoth.