

THE WORLD OF CALYDORN



When an adventurous mind sweeps aside the familiar, threadbare curtain, that backdrop of mediocrity framing our world - for want of the unknown, for craving of a lofty quest, for hunger of a world where steel and magic clash - one's imagination passes into the realm of Calydorn. Here glitters a world with foundations sunk deep in ancient lore, where heroes rise and fall with each passing breath, but if you live long enough to savor the blood caking your brow and the sweat stinging your eyes - in that precious moment nursing wound and setting bone - you may well take your first step on the path of the Godquester.

Only fools and fanatics dare face the ravaging forces that shape Calydorn's mountains, sound her rivers or gust her sands; only desperados and heroes would dare challenge the empires, deities and horrors which inhabit her vibrant lands of legend. Their memories are but fleeting; their names not worth a whisper. Yet for some, whose footsteps are trod in the eternal sands of myth, there shines glory upon glory to challenge even the gods themselves.

The world of Calydorn is the stage upon which plays the epic drama of Godslayer; a bronze-age world of sword and sorcery; steeped in the ruins of ancient civilizations, where the borders of myth and reality blur. Classical empires clash, spear and shield, in contest for cultural dominance; brutal barbarians command the skies astride the backs of giant avians while slave-caravans wend their way across endless deserts with their cargos of the conquered.

Flying ethership galleys deliver legionnaires of the macabre Mortan Empire to do battle upon the floating skylands which crowd the heavens. Halodyne Hoplites trudge through steaming jungles of giant flora, seeded from the land of the gods, to combat creatures from a time the world forgot.

Mystical druids seek to master the secrets of celestial alignments built into the stone-circles which predate recorded history, and which hold clues to a cataclysmic enigma. Dwarves of Nordgaard and their human Skannfyrd allies battle terrifying Shadow-Trolls upon the arctic ice to control mountain-chains which constitute immense runes of cosmic power.

All the while, sinister forces muster on the outer continents, including menaces such as the graceful, haughty and cruel Malentians, who once enslaved the world and humbled the gods; the savage and bestial abominations called Banebrood; and cold, sinister demons born of an alien cosmos.

Calydorn is a world of wonder, where cities of living stone are molded by the will of their denizens, and where sacred groves awaken with sentience in the face of an undead blight that sweeps the world, devouring great swathes of nature's verdant glory.

Calydorn is a world of doom, where demons and wicked gods cavort amid the thunder of errant magic-storms which level entire cities in their path; and beyond reality the Arch-God of Entropy manipulates a thousand puppet-strings to unravel the cosmos.

Calydorn is a world of untold promise, where heroes quest to uncover ancient arcane lore or to discover and consume the divine anima of the dead Mother of the Cosmos - thereby elevating their own souls to the stature of deities.

Calydorn is a world of moral ambiguity, where tortured anti-heroes wage ceaseless war on sinister enemies; where evil is a matter of perspective, and where even the brightest champions are scarred with dark character flaws.

Calydorn is a world of towering tragedy and epic drama, unfolding across fifteen continents and across fifty millennia, yet defined by the momentous events of the here and now.

Like the stacked pages of a manuscript, the lands of Calydorn are packed with multitudinous layers of buried history. Sifting through the topsoil, we exhume the foundations of most current civilizations, laid during the Blessed Age when Mortals restored a measure of humanity's former greatness.

Yet deeper we uncover the ruins of Archaic-Age fortifications, when valiant Mortals struggled to rebuild the foundations of civilization amid a world of horrors. In the stratum below, one finds naught but the remains of bones and stone tools, for this was the 3,000-year Dark Age which followed the cleansing of the world by the gods.

Deeper still, one uncovers the remnants of the Halcyon Age, the period of Mankind's greatest might, when four unique empires battled for mastery of the entire world: the sun-worshipping Theocracy of the Sacred Flame, the Wu-Wei Sorcerers of the East, the crystal-tech mystics of the Gnostic Cabal and the hordes of Kassobari sky-nomads led by their god-king warlocks.



Digging deeper we unearth the fractured power-lances of the Everkill War when men fought for their race's very survival against the immortal Malentians and their occult, alien gods. The exquisite jewelry and dream-crystals of the Lotus-Eaters lie one strata below; the remains of the worldwide Dreamspinner culture; perhaps the highest civilization ever to have graced the cosmos.

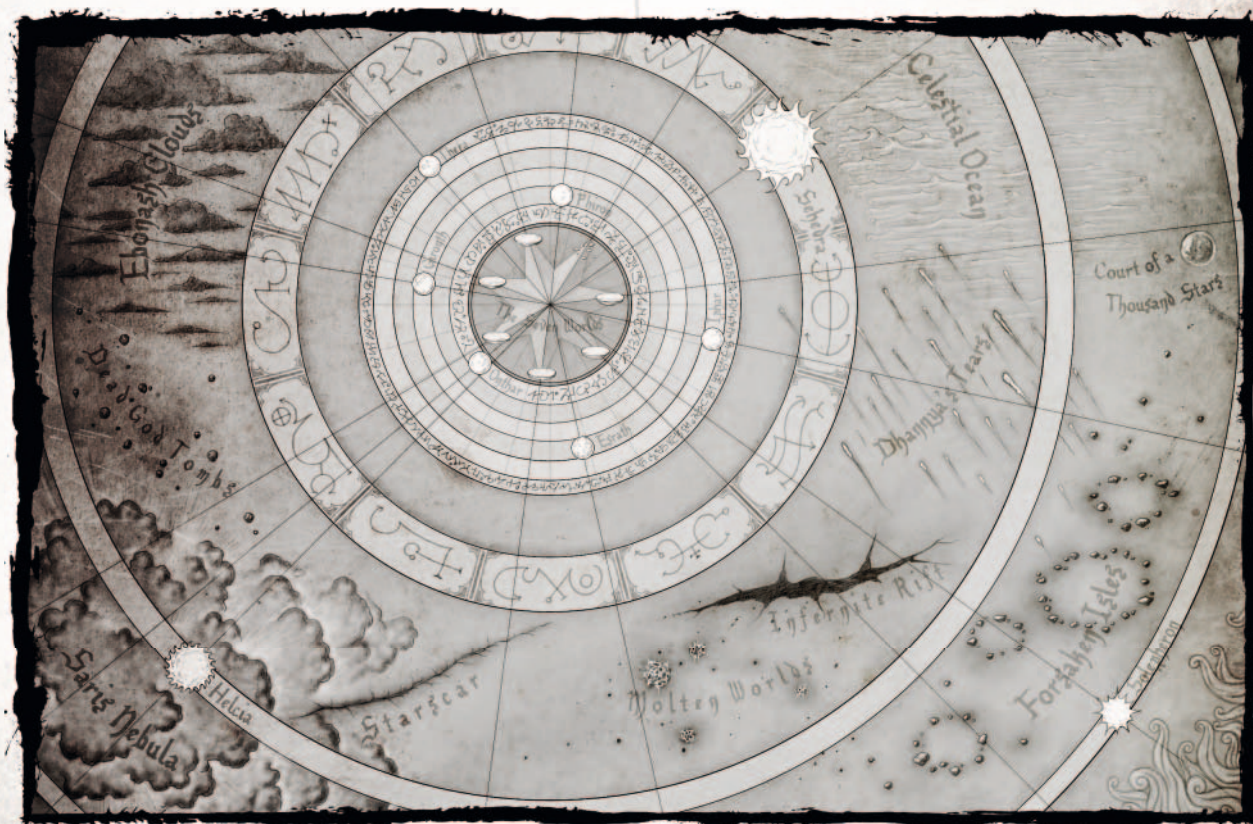
Our shovel removes yet more of the sands of time to reveal a layer soiled with the taint of evil, for this was the age when demons tore their way into the cosmos, and when Mortals were first crafted as a tool to defeat them. Yet even now our dig has barely scratched the surface, for another 30,000 years of history lies beneath our feet, falling away into an age of myth and horror.

The world of Calydorn is endowed with unique and colorful cultures - conquering empires on the rise, disintegrating cultures in decline, and decadent nations wallowing in memories of their erstwhile glory - from the sinister society of the Mortan Empire with its legions, necromancers and alchemists to the noble culture of the Halodyne pantheists and their city-states; from the nature-worshipping Wyldfolk dedicated to the resurrection of The Goddess to the wild berserkers of the Nordgaard's Earth-God worshippers.

Six cultures are detailed within the factions section of this book, but forming the cultural backdrop of Calydorn are a dozen further fascinating civilizations. From the sun-worshipping Karkhos Nomads of the deserts to their rivals, the bedouin White-Horse animists; from the splintered fragments of the Kassobari Khanate to the metropolis ports of the Hedonite Coast, Calydorn is an exotic garden in which each culture has grown organically in the fertile soil of history. Breathe deep and savor the exotic fragrance this sensual world.

THE 21 WONDERS OF CALYDORN

- **The Scarlet Coast** - where tornados of fire break upon southern coast of Volturna.
- **Inphalla Clouds** - eternal black clouds of smoke traveling back and forth, sometimes engulfing entire Skylands.
- **The God-Mirror** - a lake of liquid bronze in southern Notara.
- **The Sighing Wood** - a forest of iron trees upon Zephyr.
- **Mountains of Morpheia** - in central Volturna a mountain range which grows day by day. For a century it grows into a specific animal, then reforms into another shape, revolving through 12 incarnations. Currently it is nearing the end of the Manticore-phase.
- **Magmara's Forge** - on the northern island of Lyngv is the ancient forge of the Asrae; a skyland-volcano which has flipped over, and from which drips a slow-stream of magma.
- **The Rainbow Stairs** - The remains of the rainbow bridges which linked the Nine Worlds located in Frostmark and the Ashlands.
- **The Stygian Shroud** - an aurora curtain of silver-streaked darkness in the Eastern sky, seen when the Obsidian Moon is full.
- **Glacier Domes of Euphys** - icebergs floating above the Northlands of Ghorn.
- **The Shattenstair** - at the heart of the Troglodyte Graythrone Empire of Krutsk is a stairway which ascends into the gray skies, emerging within the elemental Plane of Shadow.
- **The Dire Sea** - wherein fire burns eternally beneath the waves.
- **The Tunnels of Gargarond** - in Zholmin storms rage beneath the ground, carving and re-carving an underworld labyrinth.
- **The Ephemeral Isles** - an archipelago which travels the oceans.
- **The Celestial Ocean** - an entire ocean suspended high in the atmosphere between Calydorn and the world of Asraedia.
- **The Silent Sisters** - three mountains in central Zephyr which rip themselves out of the ground at dawn each day.
- **The Flaming Sands** - in the Karkhos Desert, fire bursts from the ground and burns for days.
- **The Stromvale** - where balls of lightning form above the ground at Sunset.
- **The Crystal Sea** - where water rains from the surface upwards into the sky located between Ghorn and Volturna.
- **The Drake's Mouths** - in Velyr a series of volcanoes spit out clouds of snow and huge chunks of ice.
- **The Weeping Widows** - a group of 11 low-altitude skylands above Nubitra from which pour fountains of water to the surface of Ghorn.
- **The Ocean Realm of Khalpis** - a world of air on the ocean floor a thousand leagues in Diameter.



WORLD OVERVIEW AND ASTRONOMY

Like the world we know, Calydorn possesses a patchwork of forests, deserts, swamps and seas, but there exist also unfamiliar types of terrain such as the towering plateaus called Godlands, and floating lands called Skylands, both of which are fragments of the shattered world of Godangar, which once sat 150,000 miles above Calydorn. Bizarre alien landscapes occupy some portions of the world (being the legacy of a magical cataclysm), and giant plants fallen from the world of the gods form expansive forests.

Unlike the world we are familiar with, Calydorn is a flattish plate of rock, roughly oblong in shape when viewed from above. Because of its relative flatness, there exists no clear, rounded horizon; and so the most distant sight is usually the next range of hills or trees. Scanning across the vast open plains, the distance simply stretches into a hazy blur.

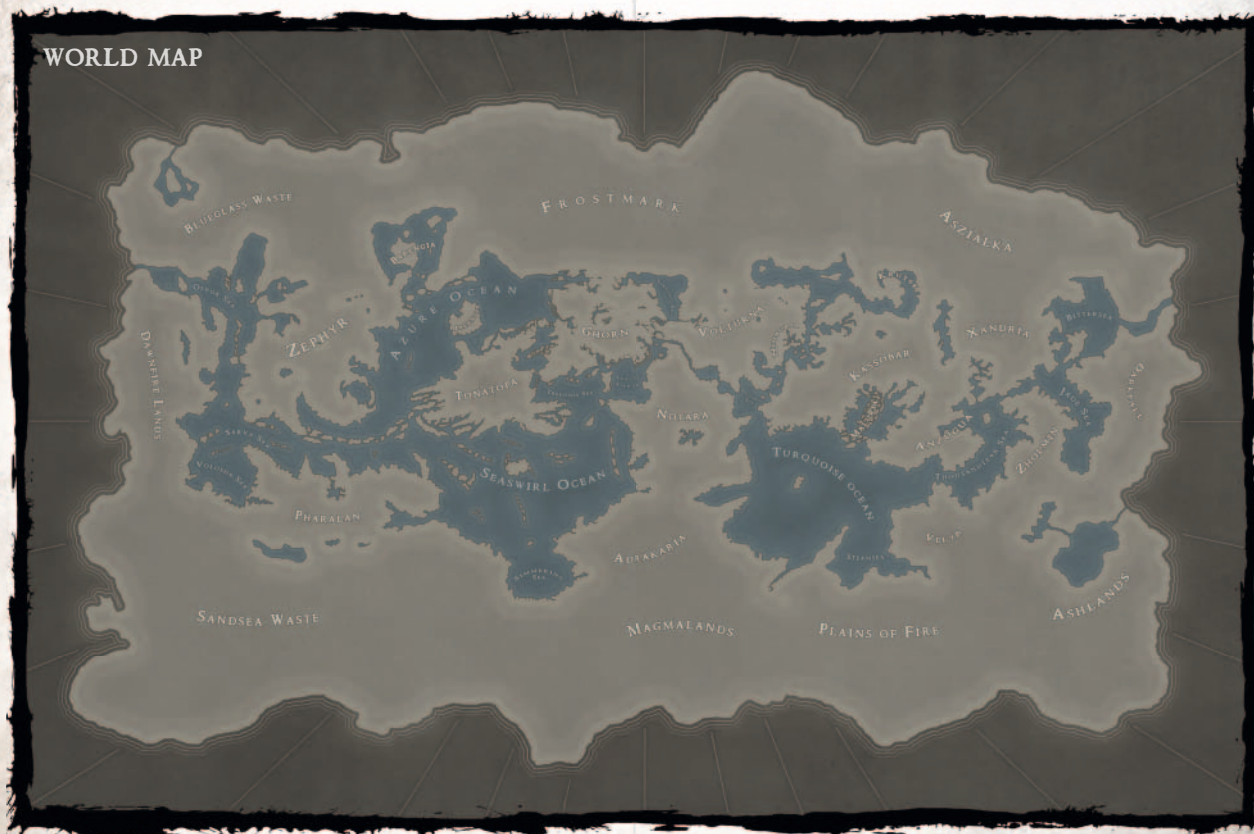
From the ice-towers of the frozen arctic to the magma seas of the Southern Wastes, the world of Calydorn extends 30,000 miles north to south. Following the trade-winds east to west, the world stretches some 55,000 miles from Darkfall to the Dawnfire lands.

Annotated maps predating the Dark Age suggest that the world of Calydorn is some 10,000 miles deep from top to bottom, and the underside is said to be permanently shrouded in darkness. The Red Sun, named Sehedra rises in the west, awakening from her nightly sleep, and traverses the sky to the East, where she stills herself into darkness for the night. In accordance with the Solar Compact between Fire and Shadow, Sehedra sleeps throughout the hours spent circling below Calydorn, displaying only the faintest of embers.

The sun's path through the heavens traces a direct line across the middle of Calydorn during the entire year, and this path is known as the equator. Like our world, Calydorn experiences pronounced seasons: Earth, Fire, Wind, Shadow and Ice. The changing of seasons is caused by the waxing and waning of the four elements as they impinge upon the world. During Fire Season, the red sun Sehedra is invigorated and sleeps less, causing the days to lengthen, but during Ice Season she is weakened, requiring more time to recuperate, thus resulting in shorter days.

Many climates on Calydorn are outwardly similar to those of the world we know. The frozen ice-plains of the far north give way to tundra, then cool pine-forests as one travels southwards, followed by deciduous woodlands and plains. Further south the land consists of wide belts of prairie and warm, dry plains. Arid steppe and wastelands confront one next, fading quickly into desert. South of the desert belt the landscape mostly turns to savannah, followed by tropical rain forest. Now we have reached the equator, and here the similarity with our world ends.

As we cut through the jungles into the southern half of the world, we emerge in another belt of savannah, but warmer than the northern band, and likewise the deserts of the south are larger and hotter than their northern counter-parts. Beyond them exists only a small band of warm, fertile lands and no mild, temperate region; instead the terrain now warms continuously as we move southward, shifting into dustbowls, deserts, and steaming seas. At the furthest reaches lie endless parched wastes where not even desert creatures can survive. Myths say that the southern edge of the world consists of charred plates of land several miles wide floating upon a sea of magma, and beyond that, lays only the Great Lava Ocean which stretches around to the underside of the world. No Mortal has ever trod upon the underside, but it is believed that the Stygian creatures of the new element called Darkness dwell there.



THE SIX MOONS

Onthar - The Obsidian Moon

Phiron - The Sapphire Moon

Gironth - The Amber Moon

Esrath - The Emerald Moon

Iphar - The Pearl Moon

Thera - The Amethyst Moon

The intense heat warming the southern half of the world emanates from the elemental Plane of Fire which encroaches upon the Great Wastes; conversely the elemental Plane of Ice affects the arctic north. At these two extremities billow dozens of immense tears in the fabric between the two elemental planes, each hundreds of miles wide. Through each weeping wound the elemental forces gush into Calydorn, accounting for the world's temperature differences. The inner core of Calydorn is composed of solid rock not of magma, but pockets of liquid rock do exist where the barrier around the Plane of Fire is weak; here the rock becomes super-heated, bubbling to the surface, forming volcanoes.

Because the world's climates are caused primarily by the elemental influences at the north and south of the world, the climatic differences are more pronounced in the northern and southern temperate zones. The equator and the tropics enjoy more consistent temperatures than the temperate zones and more direct sunlight, resulting in an expansive girdle of jungle, desert and savanna 10,000 miles wide.

Life thrives most verdantly in the northern half of Calydorn, greening the nine northern continents that are separated by a scattering of oceans and seas. Each landmass possesses its own flora and fauna and unique history of civilization. Ancient bridges and tunnels form the nervous-system of trade, linking some of the continents at their closest points, while an archaic and fractured network of portals, called the Worldways, enables thousands of miles to be traversed instantly across some portions of Calydorn.

These gateways are both a blessing and a curse, for such trade-routes have at times become the warpaths of invasion. Despite these few surviving portals, most transportation still involves lengthy caravan treks and perilous sea voyages across vast distances between the Worldway portals and to the ports of destination.

Calydorn is a world no longer entirely intact, for the reality-fabric composing scores of lands was shattered in ages past, thereby interchanging sections of the world with pieces from the outer planes - known as the Aethernatos Realms. This intensely magical otherworld is inhabited by enigmatic fey beings and overgrown with extraordinary vegetation, both of which came to Calydorn involuntarily upon the backs of these trans-located lands.

Two other features unique to Calydorn are the so-called Godlands and Skylands. Scattered across the surface of the world are thousands of giant rock plateaus hundreds of miles wide, which crashed down upon the world during the Halcyon Age.

These are the remains of Godangar, one of the Nine Worlds of the cosmos which was utterly shattered during the Everkill War. Unlike meteors, these fragments collided at low velocity, driving their mass into the ground and remaining largely intact.



Such lofty plateaus are known as Godlands because they constitute chunks of the world upon which the gods had dwelt. Not all of the fragments reached the surface; tens of thousands were halted in mid-course and now hover hundreds of yards above the surface. These are the Skylands of Calydorn.

Many of the Skylands and Godlands which plummeted from the heavens bore giant plants from the world of the gods, and over the following centuries this flora spread to the surface of Calydorn forming a forest-cloak of towering plants.

SEASONS OF CALYDORN

Sannoth

Prevailing Element: Earth
Weather Pattern: cool, wet, calm

Ashkar

Prevailing Element: Fire
Weather Pattern: hot, dry, calm

Surmani

Prevailing Element: Wind
Weather Pattern: hot, wet, balmy

Tagil

Prevailing Element: Shadow
Weather Pattern: cool, wet, windy

Vinnron

Prevailing Element: Ice
Weather Pattern: cold, dry, calm

THE MATERIAL PLANE

Beyond Calydom stretches a vast cosmos filled with untold dangers and adventure.

According to ancient sky-charts drawn by the Ethernaut-Pilots of the Gnostic Cabal, this Material Plane through which the worlds and suns traverse, could be likened to an orb of immense proportions, inflated by an ocean of air.

Called The Heavens, this cerulean sea of winds is streaked through by veins of violet nebulae extending thousands of miles across. Across the heavens sail the Nine Worlds (of which Calydom is one) as well as the Six Moons.

Because air is universal in the Material Plane, flight between worlds or moons is a practical possibility, although such journeys require months since the nearest worlds are at least 150,000 miles apart.

The atmosphere is densest at ground level upon each of the heavenly bodies, becoming progressively thinner up to an altitude of 30,000 feet. Above this point, the air filling The Heavens retains the same average density and is sufficient for survival (though uncomfortable) for humans.

Tornados and hurricanes routinely cross the celestial skies, and pockets of low pressure lurk in random locations, making the heavens a menacing challenge to navigate. Water vapor permeates the celestial sky in the form of clouds, seeping in from the elemental Plane of Ice, and falling upon the heavenly bodies as rain.

How the Gnostic Cabal charted the complex celestial dance performed by the moons around the Nine Worlds seems miraculous to the most lauded scholars of today. The ignorant Mortals of our age have all but forgotten this ancient wisdom, and suppose the moons to be supernatural entities or manifestations of the gods, but the Gnostic Cabal knew well that the six moons are solid matter similar to the worlds, but whereas the moons are spherical, the worlds are flattish plates of rock around 30-50,000 miles across and average 10,000 miles thickness.

A force emanating from the elemental Plane of Earth which men call gravity holds objects firmly on the ground, both upon the topsides and undersides of the Nine Worlds. Raising one's eyes up to the heavens above Calydom reveals the distant worlds floating in the skies, staggered in a grand corkscrew formation, rather like stepping-stones of the gods

THE NINE WORLDS

Prothenus - World of the Elder Races

Thalon - The Shattered World

Myrghond - World of Elemental Races

Aetheria - Wasteland of the Aetherions

Ellythimon - Destroyed

Asraedia - Celestial Home of the Asrae

Godangar - Destroyed

Calydom - World of Mortals

Azrathul - Infernal World of Demons

THE NINE WORLDS

PROTHENUS - THE FIRST WORLD

Home to the Jotuns, Dragons and Elder Races. Prothenus is the largest of all the worlds; a verdant wilderness, containing expansive mountain ranges and forests, filled with hulking, primordial monstrosities.

THALON - THE SECOND WORLD

Once the home of the Elemental Races, this world was charred and fractured into a million chunks of igneous rock during the Everkill War. In the millennia since, life has returned, and many of the remaining "worldlets" have been re-settled by the Elemental Races. Some Mortal cultures maintain small colonies here.

MYRGHOND - THE THIRD WORLD

Inhabited mostly by Elder races and Elemental Races, Myrghond is a markedly moist world with many inland seas and vast continents of forest and jungle. Zones of raw elemental force dotted across the world create a patchwork of incongruous climates.

AETHERIA - THE FOURTH WORLD

Former home of the Aetherions (see Denizens of Calydom section below). Aetheria is now a wasteland of ancient ruins inhabited by wretched Aetherion nomads; exiles in their own devastated homeland, struggling to survive in a world now dominated by demons. Once a luxuriant paradise, Aetheria is now a ravaged and arid world with a scattering of small seas eclipsed by expanses of desert, steppe and savannah. Its indigenous insectoid creatures reach towering proportions, adding to the woes of the fallen Aetherion survivors.

ELLYTHIMON - THE FIFTH WORLD

Previous home of the Vanitan gods (deities of the elements), this world was utterly vaporized during the Everkill War and nothing of it remains.

ASRAEDIA - THE SIXTH WORLD

This resplendent world is the current home of the Asrae gods, who are the primary deities worshipped by Mortals. Asraedia is sealed by dimensional wards which have shifted the world out of phase with the rest of reality. This is a world of bliss and plenty, blessed by the grace of the gods. Legions of worthy deceased mortals are mustered into the Heavenly Host - the celestial army of the Asrae.

GODANGAR - THE SEVENTH WORLD

Formerly the home of the Asrae, Godangar was smashed during the Everkill War. The broken pieces of Godangar crashed down upon Calydom, forming the Godlands and Skylands of that world.

CALYDOM - THE EIGHTH WORLD

Though Mortals were once the dominant people of Calydom, now they struggle for survival against many other races. Nevertheless, it is the primary world on which the mortal races of Humans and Ogres live, and the focus of Godslayer.



AZRATHUL - THE NINTH WORLD

Inhabited predominantly by demons and monsters; the Asrae sealed Azrathul with dimensional wards, turning it into a prison for the infernal hordes. During certain stellar conjunctions these wards weaken and may be temporarily breached, enabling small bands of demons to escape.

THE THREE SUNS

A trio of fiery suns orbits the centrally clustered worlds and moons; of the three, the closest is Sehedra. The immense disk of this red sun appears five times larger in the sky than the sun we know, and her daily journey is divided into 20 hours of 100 minutes each. The second Sun, Helcia, circles at a great distance and provides only a meager light to the heavenly bodies, while the blue sun, Solepheron, traces a path around the circumference of the Heavens and from Calydorn appears as merely a bright star.

THE THREE SUNS

Sehedra - The Red Sun (formerly Sindaron)
Solar Radius: 5.2

Helcia - The Yellow Sun
Solar Radius: 0.59

Solepheron - The Blue Sun
Solar Radius: 0.21

THE FORSAKEN ISLES

Laying half way to the edge of the Material Plane, but well within Solepheron's orbit, are the Forsaken Isles - rings of shattered worlds from previous cycles of time, many of which are inhabited by forgotten gods and perishing species. At the edge of the Material Plane, reality diverges into two distinct forms - the five Elemental Planes and the innumerable Aethernatos Realms.

THE ELEMENTAL PLANES

Traversing one of the magical gateways from the Material Plane into an elemental plane, one enters a border region reminiscent of the Nine Worlds but more extreme in nature. The gates at the south of Calydorn open onto the elemental Plane of Fire where vast deserts of sand and ash spontaneously burst into flame and where angry volcanoes the size of continents paint the sky crimson and black. The arctic gates lead into the Plane of Ice where tsunami waves of snow crash against the frozen cliffs of iceberg-mountains. Windy vortexes in the skies above Calydorn funnel hapless flyers into the Plane of Air, where towering tornados spin among floating worldlets and cloud nebulae are illuminated by permanent sheets of lightning. Beneath the surface of Calydorn run tunnels like the arteries of the world, delving endlessly downwards, and extending into the elemental Plane of Earth where there exist caverns so large, they contain small suns and moons, forming entire hollow worlds.

Plants thrive in these elemental borderlands, akin to those of the Material Plane, but enhanced with a greater degree of their respective elemental essence. They include such flora as: fire-flowers, shadowy murkweed, floating puff-foliage, snow flowers, coral bushes and stone-bark trees adorned with metallic leaves. The elemental races abound upon their home-planes: Dwarves, Sylphs, Firedrakes, Niads and Longshadows. Undisputed overlords of these border regions are the Dragons, each of which is aligned to one of the five elements.

Each of the four cardinal elemental planes is bordered by two others, giving rise to unique phenomena. Where the planes of Ice and Earth conjoin lay the Shattered Vales, within which glaciers stab deep into the rock, the tips melting into silt-laden rivers which have carved-out the Countless Caverns. Iceberg-islands sail across the firmament at the conjunction of Ice and Air, surrounded by floating seas and rivers akin to waterfalls flowing in three dimensions. Where Air meets Fire, billow the Blackash Cloudbanks punctuated by firestorms of flame-rain. Finally, at the border of Fire and Earth, stretch the Lava Swamps of Arg-Fyrstinn, in which rivers of molten rock churn between blackened towers and structures of solidified magma, many of which are carved into dwellings and fortifications.

Each of the four cardinal elements is diametrically opposed to one of the others (Fire and Ice, Earth and Air), but these inimical enemies are each separated by the other two elements. Regions composed of the neutral fifth element of Shadow occupy the hubs to each side.

Spiraling deeper toward the centre of each plane, one finds the nature of existence warping, revealing landscapes bizarre and unnerving to mortal minds. On the Plane of Ice, glacial-moons skirt across a tortured puzzle of fractured ice-spires, interspersed with geysers of flame-like frost. The Elemental Plane of Earth becomes ever denser as gravity multiplies toward the centre; seas of liquid earth crash against cliffs of iron while silver mountains rise to meet moons of gold. Within the sky plane, Air solidifies, forming a coral-like material used to construct the cloud-cities which dot the skies, while opposing gales are used to form walls of wind as hard as stone. Upon the plane of fire, the volcanic Mount Pyrothis erupts, spitting new suns into the sky every few years, while ancient suns glow dully overhead. Here the atmosphere is prone to explode spontaneously, and all objects radiate light. Deep inside these inner planes the purified forms of each element abound - Terryte, Etheyte, Aquanite, Pyrite and Styganite - formed into islands, cliffs, towers and mountains.

Plants grow here but only those composed entirely of elemental material and animated by elemental force. The primary inhabitants of these inner-plane regions are elemental spirits; some tangible and humanoid, others insubstantial or barely classifiable, and most are ruled over by the Primordial Elementals.

Around the core of each plane, the elements become so concentrated that they are continuously reforming under arcane forces. Dozens of white hot suns orbit a central orb of pure pyrite at the core of the Plane of Fire, while the centre of the Plane of Ice is a vacuum of absolute zero within which floats a massive cosmic snowflake of pure Aquanite surrounded by rings of Aquanite dust. At the hub of the Plane of Air swirl maelstroms capable of crushing entire worlds, each linked to a central vortex that constitutes an Ethernite globe of impenetrable standing-hurricanes. Beneath strata of super-thick granite, the center of the Plane of Earth consists of metal compacted so densely that it exists as a liquefied ball of multiple layers, each floating upon a heavier one beneath, all the way down to a kernel of pure Terryte.

None but the Vanitan Gods and their servants can survive at the elemental cores, and what lies at the ultimate heart of each plane is beyond all knowledge, however many believe that each holds a well-spring that cascade forth pure elemental substance.

THE AETHERNATOS REALMS

Existing contiguously with the five Elemental Planes, but upon a tangent of reality unable to interact with them, are the Aethernatos Realms. For all the vastness of the Material Plane with its worlds and heavens, it is still but a mere point at the heart of the cosmos. Girdling it like the layers of an onion are the Aethernatos Realms, forming thousands of mirror images of the central plane.

Resounding like an echo through the chasms of existence, these dimensions are said to stretch all the way to the edge of the cosmos, where reality meets infinity, though no mortal has ever returned with his sanity intact to confirm or deny such.

From esoteric parchments of the Wu-Wei Empire, one may glean a primary tenet of sorcery: that anchored equidistantly around the reality shell of the cosmos are the twelve Grammata - mystical nodes radiating the very fabric of existence itself. The twelve powers emanated by the Grammata are called the Keraunoi, and where these emanations converge, realms are woven into being. The ephemeral outer realms, formed from just two strands of Keraunoi, manifest as vague and mercurial existences; while toward the core of the cosmos, where many of the twelve powers have bonded, solid realms of reality take shape. Shimmering at the centre of the cosmos is the Grand Conjunction - the Material Plane - the glorious combination of all twelve Keraunoi, so finely interwoven that the individual powers can be sensed only by powerful sorcerers.

The Material Plane drinks in the twelve radiated powers, blocking each one of the Keraunoi from passing through it, and thereby creating individual zones of shadow for each of the twelve powers. These shadow-regions surround the Material Plane and each resembles the central plane closely, for these neighboring realms all lack but one of the twelve mystic powers. These twelve realms appear almost as mirror images of the Material Plane but possess a dreamlike, insubstantial quality. They are known as the Mytherion Realms to their denizens or as the Otherworld to superstitious Mortal races.

Mortals strut out their insignificant, three-dimensional lives upon the stage of a single Plane, oblivious to the walls of their prison; walls which to Immortals represent mere veils through which one may slide with ease. Towering above Mortals are the gods and devils, which by their very nature, tread the skies of countless dimensions simultaneously. Conversely, the ghosts of the dead are beings struggling to manifest in merely two or three dimensions. Within the Aethernatos Realms, and especially within the inner twelve Mytherion Realms, live a wide range of creatures men call Fey, ranging from tiny fairies to exotic humanoids named Aetherions. Born of the ephemeral realms, these beings possess a partially ethereal nature, and are innately immortal.

In some manner, the Aethernatos Realms bestraddle the elemental planes, rather as light may exist simultaneously with sound; so that the elements and the Keraunoi are two independent forces which cannot ordinarily interact. In fact, the Material Plane is the only place where the twelve Keraunoi and the five elements preside together.

Those able to channel the powers of the Keraunoi are called Sorcerers, and they understand unequivocally that the 12 Keraunoi gave birth to the five elements. Those who wield the power of the five elements are known as Mages, and conversely, the dogma of elemental Magicians asserts that it was the five elements which combined to form the Keraunoi. Some philosophers ancient and modern maintain that both are equivalent forces forming the woof and warp of existence.

In the West the great mystic-masters of the fallen Gnostic Cabal sought to comprehend the entirety of existence, and they theorized that all matter consisted of combinations of elemental atoms. They believed that the five types of atoms were bound together by the 12 Keraunoi and that the various combinations of atoms and Keraunoi formed all the unique solids, liquids and gasses of the Material Plane.

THE COSMIC PUZZLE

It is common knowledge among sorcerers and mages that the elements and the Keraunoi cannot interact with each other directly, and perhaps the most ancient and potent secret of all the cosmos' mystic arts is the esoteric process enabling these two independent forces to be combined.

Several of the firstborn Jotuns are said to have been taught this reality altering magic by the Mother of the Cosmos at the dawn of time. Vast and prolonged rituals are required to shift both forces into a third, mutually interactive form of power; most of these rituals require months or years, and at any point the entire process can be ruined by a misstep. At the culmination of the rites, sacred symbols are inscribed which activate the enchantments. These symbols are known as the runes.

Immense runes built in the form of mountain-chains regulate the flow of the twelve Keraunoi within the Material Plane, guiding the currents of power into a branching pattern - a system conceived of as a cosmic tree (which the Jotuns call Yggdrasil). According to the myths of the Elder Races, The Mother of the Cosmos scatters the fruits of Yggdrasil among a field of stars, re-growing the cosmos anew at the beginning of each cosmic cycle. Within the branches of the Yggdrasil rest the Nine Worlds and the Six Moons, and the continued existence of the cosmic tree is imperative for their future survival.

The cosmos is not eternal, nor indestructible. It has many times suffered disintegration followed by agonizing rebirth, and each of these periods of existence constitutes a separate cycle of time. Mortals refer to the end of each cycle as the Omegalypse, Armageddon, the Antima-Yuga, Ragnarok and by many other names. During these cyclic cataclysms, the force of anti-existence lying outside the shell of reality floods in, annihilating matter and spirit.

In the most recent cycles, some parts of the cosmos have escaped obliteration, and in fact, the gods believe the core of the cosmos has survived destruction within the protective branches of Yggdrasil for the last dozen cycles of time. However, due to the cataclysmic meddling of both Demons and Mortals during the current era, the current cycle of existence may herald the ultimate end of eternity.

DENIZENS OF CALYDORN



All of the races within the cosmos may be classified into one of five general species. The first group comprises the Elder Races, which according to their own myths, were created near the dawn of time by Dhannya, the Mother of the Cosmos herself. Many of these races are akin to animals in form, resembling humanoid-shaped foxes, badgers, beavers, mongoose and others. Despite their animalistic appearance, the Elder Races are sentient and follow the path of the Animist - nature-bound worshippers of Dhannya. Mightiest of their kind were the Jotuns, who ordered the mountains and seas according to the will of Dhannya; beings so mighty that they were feared by the gods. From their lofty heights as kings of the Nine Worlds they are fallen - their yew-tree crowns burned and their mountain-thrones usurped - and are today a mere stunted shadow of their former stature. Once the most numerous (and only) people on Calydorn, the Elder Races have suffered many defeats at the hands of later settlers and have long since been relegated to dwelling in the wilderness tracts of Calydorn. Many of the Elder Races claim to follow the Triqetra Path, honoring the circle of life, safeguarding nature, and facilitating Dhannya's eventual resurrection.

Born of the five planes are the Elemental Races which include such creatures as the Earthfolk called Dwarves; the Niad Waterfolk; the Firedrakes; the Airfolk named Sylphs and the Shadow-folk known as Troglodytes. Their wondrous kingdoms were numerous on Calydorn for millennia but their mastery was at last broken by the Halcyon Age empires of Mortals. Nevertheless, they still dominate several continents and are rulers of two other worlds. Wreathed in magical force and extremely long-lived, the Elemental Races comprise many types of beings, from non-sentient creatures to enlightened peoples. In contrast to Mortals, the people of the elemental races possess spirits not souls, and upon their deaths these spirits transcend to the plane of their origin. Elemental creatures are innately connected to their respective plane and exhibit unique abilities, for example Firedrakes can bathe in flames; Sylphs are able to fly; and Niads possess gills. Despite their elemental nature they are very much flesh and blood for their physical vessels were created upon the Material Plane by the Vanitan gods.