

Strands in Weird Places

In theory, Stranded World is composed of “Strands” which make up the connections of every thing and being to every other thing and being; certain people can see, manipulate, or read the Strands but they come into existence and eventually fade away on their own in a constant cycle of renewal.

In practice, the Strands that strand-workers read/manipulate are like you took a page full of the very lightest pencil lines going everywhere and then added just a few bright marker lines: strong connections between people or between a person and an animal/plant/thing.

For instance: I have a very strong connection with my husband, a rather strong connection with my cats, and rather strong connections with my grandparent’s house/farm. Compared to my connection to the guy sitting across from me on the bus, the cat I saw at the winery the other week, the apartment we lived in for a couple months when I was 20, those connections are going to be thick and easy to pick out.

Sometimes, you end up with “Weird” connections:

People who met for three minutes at a bus stop who form a Strand so thick it pulls them back together, so that they reinforce that strand, so that it pulls them together again.

A place that takes on so much of its own character that it holds on to connections; not only do people remember it for a long time, but *it* remembers them, and so the strands are no longer dependant on living memory.

A moment in time will, on very rare occasion, create connections, which form a line between all of the people experiencing that moment and anchor people *to* that moment. In some cases, it makes time warp strangely around it, such that even thinking about it for too long can create wrinkles much later on.

Sometimes you end up with places, or animals, or plants that somehow not just form strands — since everyone and everything can do that to some degree — but manipulate them.

There’s a tree in the middle of a forest that likes to loosen some bonds and form others, and you never know until you climb up into its branches which might happen.

There’s a cat who wanders the suburban evenings tangling strands up, leaving a wake of small chaos behind her and caring about as much as she’d care about a ball of yarn.

And there are *events* which are so tangled up from their very creation that just moving towards them — Burning Man, but only sometimes, for instance; certain marches on certain places; certain prayer circles and certain parties — changes the person moving, for better or for worse.

Cybernetics in the Bear Techno-Empire

The Bear Empire in the era of Found Down below has, notably:

Nanobots! So far these have been mentioned but not *used*, so I can ignore them for the time being.

Cybernetics.

Magic.

Cybernetics fall into three categories:

Implants (provide computer read-outs, boost a sense, change a neurochemical balance)

Prosthetics (replace or cover a limb or an organ)

Add-ons (essentially prosthetics but with a decidedly cosmetic function: animal ears, tail, etc.)

The technomancer in OT3 has all three.

Implants are the most risky and require the most medical knowledge and skill (as they are often placed in your skull and thus must work with your existing brain and nerves very carefully). I don't know enough brain science to know exactly how they work, so expect a bit of handwaving here. The best ones have memory storage as well as providing enhancements and all of them are programmable.

Of course, to a technomancer, that means all of them are also hackable.

Prosthetic limbs (or digits, or organs) replace an extant body part that has failed or been amputated; they work (with varying degrees of success) with the nervous system and provide feedback (again, with varying degrees of sensitivity). They can also be loaded with gadgets enough to make Inspector Gadget jealous.

Our technomancer, for instance, has a finger which shoots lasers. All of the other fingers do something else, most of which have not been revealed in the story so far.

Prosthetic parts can also be implanted *into* limbs or to replace perfectly good parts, although this is generally done only by the hard-core.

In addition, one can, say, get a cybernetic tail or fox ears or horns. These can hold their own gadgets (and/or weapons), although I haven't yet have someone have an umbrella pop out of their ears. They can also be an extra limb, or serve as part of a general combat buff - horns attached to a reinforced skull and spinal system so that you can effectively skewer your opponent with a headbutt, for instance.

On the other end of things, you could get fox ears which provided your own light show and music, so that you could be a one-person rave wherever you went.

None of these are cheap, even with black-market street mods, and they all run the gamut in terms of efficacy, durability, longevity, and side effects. And none of that stops a huge portion of the population from sporting them.

Fairy OddPowers

The mark of a royal^[1] in Cali is generally considered to be threefold, with a fourth not widely acknowledged but no less real.

First: gray eyes. This is a more reliable marker than the second, as you will almost never find a royal without gray eyes, although the particular shade varies from almost colorless to nearly blue, nearly green, or nearly violet.

Second: red hair. As mentioned, this is not quite as reliable a marker, because even among the royalty of California, even among the children of Danu, red hair is still a recessive gene. The specific red, like the eye color, varies, in this case from strawberry blond to a dark auburn. Use of this as a marker is also muddled by the fact that red hair dyes are the most popular color - for some reason - in California.

3rd, and most importantly to today's TIRtalk, is a power. This power^[2] typically include things such as: telekinesis and other -kinesis powers - pyrokinesis, electrokinesis, and so on; emotional control, mind control, elemental controls (including weather control) - which, of course, dovetails with some of those -kinesis powers; illusory effects, invisibility and other visual/light powers; clairsentience, clairvoyance, clairsaudience, and so on; and healing - generally considered a subset of boy modification.^[3]

Of these, healing is already an oddity, but it is considered by most people to be part of the common set of royal powers, inasmuch as people discuss the royal powers, likely solely because of its sheer use & usefulness. A good healer can replace a limb. A very good one can replace an organ, an eye, part of a brain.

[Sudden urge to put these on a normal distribution.]

Excluding healing, the above listed powers cover 85% ($\pm 5\%$) of Royals born and raised in California.

What then, are the "odd powers?" What are the 15%?

I'm glad you asked, or we wouldn't have much of a talk here today. These powers include one easily-sorted category and several which defy classification and, in some cases, even belief (Yes, even in the world of California, where magic is discussed in talks such as this.).

The easily-sorted category includes the aforementioned healing and shape shifting: those things which change either your body or someone else's. Body multiplying is a particularly rare (one known case) version of this category.

In addition to that, some of the "odd" powers found in the remaining 15% of the royal population include: consciousness (soul?) swapping, teleportation, animal speech/control, and mob influence.

This is very likely traceable back to something which is not spoken of in Californian society, not even in a talk such as this: the origins of the bloodline.

For that, stay tuned to find out if I have gotten clearance to discuss such matters.

[1] For the purposes of this talk, we will be using "royal" to refer to a specific set of bloodlines, not to a title or a status with in California law.

[2] In California, the "psychic power" as it is most widely known, is called by such a wide variety of names that we cannot begin to list them in this format.

[3] The fourth is longevity - in a range from 10-100% longer than the average of the non-royal population when excluding deaths by accident or violence.

Thus concludes my thread for #worldbuildingWednesday - #Worldbuilding in the world of Tír na Cali.

I am now taking questions! Be sure to speak clearly into the microphone; this TIR talk is being recorded.

Kunama asked:

How did the children of Danu become royalty?

Ah, an interesting question from the left there. Okay. The children of Danu are royalty because they declared themselves such.

And that is a documented fact, so I'm not risking myself in any way with this question.

The children of Danu came here - to California, to North America - when hundreds and thousands of other people were immigrating here, and they found a place where they could lay claim.

Their powers weren't as strong back then as they are now, but "in the land of the blind" and all that. There's no indication in historical records of any specifics, but considering what Queen Larissa is *known* to be able to do, one can extrapolate backwards to what her ancestors may

have been able to do, and a woman with the ability to, for instance, read her opponents' minds or convince them to do what she says, convince them to love her, convince them that she is the proper person for a position or simply blackmail them very effectively.

Again - there is no proof or even written suggestions that the early Queens and Duchesses of Tír na Calí used any of those powers on anyone. None of the contemporary histories mention anything of the sort - the women of Danu's children of that era were immensely charismatic, and that *is* documented and also unsurprising. Many women of the Danu today are also very charismatic.

But they created the nation and, in doing so, they created the hierarchy and the positions and titles which made them royal. And thus they are royalty.

And that is the story that the history books tell, and that is the story that I'm going to tell up here.

Dragons and Other Critters Next Door

Okay, today's #WorldBuildingWednesday topic for my worlds is: critters in Dragons next Door.

Dragons Next Door is an urban fantasy setting which leans heavily on the fantastic. SENTIENT creatures include:

Dragons & ogres, pixies & Tinies & gremlins, centaurs & harpies. Magic using humanoids are Dweomers. I haven't done much with non sentient critters & am open to new ideas.

Taking a page from Shutsumon's book: ask me some questions! What would you like to know about beings in this world?

For #worldbuildingWednesday, LilFluff asked how common communities like Smokey Knoll were around the world.

Smokey Knoll, where our stories are centered, is a Creature community on a human city. It is considered massively experimental; there may be maybe 4 or 5 more in the world by the point of our stories.

Most creatures* live either single species groupings away from human civilization (which is correspondingly smaller in numbers in this world) or in 2-4 species groupings.

* Tinies and Gremlins are the exceptions to this, as most of their communities (such as they are) have grown up within human communities.

Belatedly for #worldbuildingWednesday, @smallsees@social.dropbear.xyz asked if there were symbiotic relationships within the creatures of #DragonsNextDoor

Yes!

Tinies live off of human leavings and by doing such, make human places cleaner - and deal with small pests who are LARGE pests to Tinies.

"Storks" (not quite our storks) work with dragons to aid in dragon reproduction - I wrote a whole post on that one -

<http://www.lynthornealder.com/2012/01/21/encyclopedia-draconis-a-survey-of-reproduction-met-hods-in-dragons-next-door-dragons/>

I have a suspicion that harpies and pixies have a close relationship too.

Shutsumon asked if Dragons Next Door had any sentient waterfolk.

I don't think I've ever determined!

I'm going to say that DnD definitely has merfolk. There are... deep-ocean folk and shallow saltwater folk, bay folk and freshwater folk (but only in large lakes and inland seas; they naturally prefer very large ranges.

If the city of DND is in a bay, which it might be, it likely has two small populations of merfolk.

The Aunt Family

Eseme asked: *Much of their magic seems to be craft based, and involves implying magic in items. Does this only work on handmade objects?*

I imagine if you were sitting at a mechanical knitting loom or fabric loom and putting all of your magic and will into it, you could probably imbue magic into its creation as well, but I think that's not as easy — it takes more concentration & attention to the magic - than doing it the "old-fashioned" way.

Imbuing an object that you haven't made at all with magic - a trinket from the store - would require a lot more power, and thus would usually be part of some sort of ritual, generally involving several casters at once.

@SamTTC on Twitter asked: *Is there any relationship between calorie cost to the caster relative to the energy output of a spell?*



That's a good question. I've definitely done that in other settings - Fae Apoc, Tír na Calí for sure.

In Aunt Family, I'd say that there IS a relationship, but the ratio depends on the strength of the caster and the strength of the connections she has to pull on.

That is, the same spell and effect would take much more physical energy for a weak caster with no family (or family land) to draw on, than for one of the Aunts of a Family, especially if she was on family land - running a marathon vs. walking a mile, for a bit of an exaggeration.



Potions And Normal Life

#WorldbuildingWednesday - TootFic Edition #1

SO my "Potions and the Apocalypse" world has been worldbuilt in much the way that I've done much of my #Worldbuilding - i.e., I came up with a concept and tacked on bits as needed. Since it's all written in toot-fiction, it's got a pretty limited set of worldbuilding - only so much you can fit in a 200-word story, after all.

That being said. I generally have pictured pre-apoc magic in this world being similar in popularity to, say, macrame or making your own granola were in the late 80's. Some people know how to do it, some people are *really* into it, and a lot of people either have never heard of it or think it's some sort of weird fad.

That means maybe your cousin or your weird aunt or your parents' strange friends might know how to make potions and sometimes, when they had no idea what to get you for Christmas, you might end up getting a potion of, say, Shining Health or Improved Concentration.

Or maybe you just always knew that a certain place was *safe*. You never skinned your knees as a kid at your local park, and sometimes that weird friend of your parents' would walk three times widdershins around the park on the full moon while chanting in something that never sounded quite like a real language. Your school was strangely bully-free after one incident your sister got into. YOUR campus never, ever got meningitis. And all this when that friend/Aunt/cousin happened to do their chalk-a-few-letters, say-a-few-words while visiting you.

The thing is, the way things went, a lot of people - at least, say, 1 in 20 kids of your given age, had a weird friend/aunt/cousin of that sort. So *most* schools might have something like that, or most playgrounds would have some protection ruins written around the edges. Several practitioners might visit the same playground and work their own version of the same spell around it, layering protections. Someone might ask "is there a doctor in the house" and that one person might answer, "no, but I have a basic Maintain Life potion that'll hold the patient for the time being."

(And, possibly more notably but then again, I HAVE been watching House, the doctor or the EMT wouldn't necessarily say "you idiot" but would instead ask a few questions about the potion — school of the caster, the grimoire it came from, and so on).

Et Voila. Pre-apocalypse magic in my Potions in the Apocalypse 'verse.