

Liminal

Basics

Liminal has no sapient native life, though people who live there will often refer to groups that've been there a while as 'native.' The world populates itself by stealing people from other worlds. Liminal is similar to ideas of Faerie, and you wander into it by being in a liminal space and time. Being lost increases your chances of entering the world, and it will sometimes snatch groups of people if they all get lost together. Examples of typical liminal spaces include: the deep woods, deserted rest stops at midnight, empty parking lots, city sidewalks that are normally bustling but currently empty (especially late at night), deserts, badlands, etc. Typically you'll wind up somewhere similar to where you left from. It's easiest to get lost in the wilderness currently, since that makes it simpler for Liminal to find a match. The most common time to get lost is roughly between midnight and 3am. Visual discontinuity with your surroundings (e.g. looking at your phone, having your nose in a book) also increases your chances; Liminal doesn't like being *noticed*, and most people don't realize right away that they're in the wrong world.

Geography is a series of islands of reality floating in the formless void, connected to each other by leylines. Geography within the islands themselves is frequently non-Euclidean, especially on more remote islands, since space-warping magic exists. The world has every possible biome/terrain combination from the contributing dimensions on some island. The number of islands is an unknown but high number, and new islands are occasionally discovered. The islands vary in size dramatically, from a couple hundred square feet to entire continents.

Space warping magic takes a variety of forms, like a valley that looks small from the air but is massive from the ground. It's also possible to bend space such that for instance a large rectangle has straight sides of all different lengths, but still has right angles. Space that loops weirdly is also possible. It's easier to make something that doesn't appear to violate physics unless you think about it - a house with an extra internal room and slightly-too-high ceilings would be easier than a mansion in a tiny shack. Underground mansions are fairly common, since people don't tend to compare ceiling heights to the shape of the mountain, nor think too hard about "could this actually stay up."

Liminal magic is contagious - magics that can be used by everyone in their world of origin are spread by interacting with a person who can use that magic, unless there's something odd going on (e.g. dnd arcane magic requires access to a specific plane; only people within range of that plane can access it, and liminal is weird about 'range'). Reading/writing books counts as interacting. This only applies within Liminal; if someone brought a book on magic back from Milliways, the magic isn't guaranteed to work.

Ley Lines

Leylines are functionally like the scifi concept of hyperspace, navigable by magic ships called ley-ships. Leylines are semi-real, and being in them will feel or look bizarre to most ways of perceiving magic. The only way to navigate ley-lines is through magic sense and an experienced navigator. There are lanes within the leylines that're safer and faster, similar to currents, that the ships usually travel within.

Leylines also flow over the larger islands, but are weaker and more sporadic. They function similarly to tradewinds, and over islands tend to flow where there's water or consistent winds. Deserts are notorious for having wild leyline

It's theorized that a large enough ley-ship could jump into the Void, and from there reach other dimensions. The nation of Bajilda is the main force driving research into better ley-ships, especially void-ships.

The edges of the islands tend to end abruptly in cliffs surrounded by air or water, which fades into a multi-hued mist. The ley itself *tends* to look like you're on a moving, iridescent ocean in the middle of fog or a storm, with the air populated by 'frozen lightning' (which will destroy any ships that touch it, but which is far to the sides of the lanes) and small flecks of light being blown by the wind. The nature of the flecks of light is unknown to the characters, and they're far enough up and sideways towards the Void that no one's caught one to study.

Ley Islands

The ley-islands are pockets of reality in the formless void, connected to each other by ley-lines. New islands are discovered occasionally, at a rate of roughly one notable island a year. The vast majority are deserted and small, usually with a single biome. A handful are larger, up to the size of continents. Newly discovered ley-islands are either named by the locals (if there are any) or by the discoverer.

Ley-islands that are close together, generally within a day's hop of each other, are referred to as being part of an archipelago, especially if they're all small. The closer ley-islands are, the more likely they are to be similar. Islands sometimes have different day-night cycles, seasons, and even suns. However, the length of a year is the same from place to place, though it's thought that a far enough ley-island might be different.

So far, the farthest ley-island that's ever been discovered was seven months from its neighbors - nearly half the upper limit of time that the absolute best exploratory ships can spend in ley. Most

known ley-islands are within a few days or weeks of each other. Sometimes clusters are a few months from each other, usually no more than four.

The People

Time periods that people get pulled from are neither consistent nor in chronological order - someone might get yanked from the 2000s and run into someone from the 1600s who was pulled after them from the same world. The majority of people are pulled from preindustrial societies (given that's when the majority of people lived).

New transplants are generally called first-gens (short for "first generation," as in "first generation immigrant"). Places vary in their response to first-gens appearing in their nations. Some ignore it, some trust Liminal's selection process and will give you automatic citizenship, some will direct you to what's essentially an immigration office (generally to be given some level of help acclimating).

Most people are humans or humanoids, though there are also a large number of intelligent animals, spirits, and other species.

The population of the known world is about two billion, with 1.5 billion on the continent-islands, and the remaining half a billion spread over thousands of smaller islands

Species

Humans

The most common/ prominent species, mostly because Liminal is fond of stealing from realms with humans. Most are descended from alternate Earths or Earth-like worlds.

Spirits

A catch-all term for various odder creatures, usually natural shapeshifters whose native forms are various animals, or magical beings associated with landscape features, most commonly rivers and lakes. Animal spirits are generally referred to by which animal they resemble, e.g. fox-spirits, cat-spirits, etc. Land spirits are referred to by the type of feature they're tied to - river-spirits, mountain-spirits, tree-spirits. Almost always extremely talented with magic, especially the native magic, especially illusions. Typically considered untrustworthy.

Elves

A catch-all term for a number of different but similar species. Applies to species that're significantly taller on average than humans, but are otherwise human-like. Almost always have pointed ears, though how much varies. Typically they have better hearing, sometimes better eyesight. Usually long-lived - ranging from 'a few centuries' to 'immortal.'

Dwarves

A catch-all term for several species. 'Dwarf' is applied to species that're noticeably shorter on average than humans, but otherwise human-like. There are four main species referred to as dwarves.

Umexalim

A mostly nocturnal humanoid species found originally on the continent of Omaven that have since spread elsewhere. They're a sizable minority in Madeza. Generally taller than humans, most have hair in shades of green or brown and golden, green, or rarely blue eyes with slit pupils. They're natural shapeshifters. They have two main genders, that mostly map to male and female.

Seleiyan

A humanoid species mostly found on the continent of Omaven. They're non-gendered, though they have two reproductive modes that they can switch between over months (they have almost no sexual dimorphism). They lay and hatch from eggs, and children are usually raised communally. They're shorter than humans on average, with large eyes. They're semi-amphibious (do very poorly in dry areas, can hold their breath for almost a day, can see fine underwater), and usually stick to Omaven's wetlands.

Incusai

A small, winged humanoid species with three main genders, on the continent of Omaven. Their sexual dimorphism is in their skin and hair color. Purple and pink ones are male, white, cream, and grey ones are female, and blue ones are neither. Hair is generally a few shades darker than

skin. They're born green, and choose their color by the end of puberty - they can shift colors throughout. A few choose to stay green, though this is considered a somewhat controversial choice (and is the equivalent to being agender, though genderfluid incusai will also often stay green). They live in the tops of trees.

Akest

A reptilian species mostly located on the continent of Shras, spread between the nations of Bajilda and Zisk. They're single-gender, and when dealing with other species present themselves as all-female.

Major Reality-Islands

Continent Sized

Omaven - second largest reality island, bigger than north + south america, but sparsely populated
- population 178 million

Shras - population 60 million

Gatsar Delkhi - largest reality-island - population 690 million

Egoa - population 43 million

Brinath - population 13 million

Ealamia - population 186 million

Okeawas - population 79 million

Kivrin - population 260 million

Major Nations

The two largest political powers are Bajilda and Madeza, followed by Frisland.

Bajilda

Bajilda is co-ruled by a king and queen, who're considered to have separate spheres. A desert nation on Shras, one of the larger ley-islands (roughly the size of Australia, plus some surrounding ocean and actual islands), which shares the continent with two other nations (Zisk and Oten). Bajilda's population is 40 million, and the population of the continent is 60 million.

The capital city is Elgadzhi, the oldest (known) continuously inhabited city in Liminal. Elgadzhi is famed for its university, hospitals, and public gardens. Elgadzhi has a population of around 125,000 people.

There's a second university in the city of Khamar, population 60,000, that focuses more on architecture and engineering.

They have a larger military than most ley-islands, primarily because they don't get along with Oten, and are within invading range along the ley-lines of some old enemies. It's still smaller than an equivalent Earth nation's army, though.

The continent's fauna is dominated by large reptilian creatures, with very, very few recognizable as similar to Earth animals.

Madeza

Madeza is ruled by a Great Speaker, who is elected for life by the Council. Each major noble house has one seat on the Council. Cities are ruled by lesser Speakers, also elected in a variety of ways. Legally, anyone can be elected as a Speaker. In practice, Great Speakers are almost always descended from previous Great Speakers. Speakers can be of any gender, but until recently (in the main timelines) the Great Speaker has always been male. The current Great Speaker is female, the daughter of the previous Great Speaker, who supported her as his heir over his nephew; the vote was split between her and her cousin, and Madeza is currently rebuilding from the resulting civil war.

Madeza is located on the largest known ley-island, Omaven, a continent larger than North and South America combined, with enough ocean surrounding it that Madeza has both a ley and a maritime fleet. Most of the continent's peoples aren't organized at anything more complex than the tribal level. Madeza maintains trade with the other peoples and defends the continent, but is disinterested in conquest. The population of Madeza is 31 million.

Madeza mostly maintains a token army. The bulk of the nation and continent's defense actually relies on ritual magic, that's carried out by the entire nation - participating is a citizenship

requirement (and part of the local religion), though it's extremely easy to get a religious exemption.

The capital city is Amadahni, population 250,000. Amadahni's sister city is Atencallah. Atencallah mostly functions as a port city, for both sea and ley traffic (it's illegal to land a ley-ship in Amadahni, except in a very few specific emergency cases). Amadahni is located in the center of an enormous crater, part of which has started to collapse into the sea. Atencallah is on the ocean edge, along the ring of barrier mountains.

The continent's only university is in the city of Huicoa, population 40,000. Huicoa is an hour's ley-hop from Atencallah, or a day's boat ride. Huicoa's temple district is something of a tourist destination.

The continent's flora and fauna are similar to prehistoric Earth's, though from a variety of periods rather than any one.

Frisland

Frisland started as an island that was swallowed in its entirety by the ley. It's part of an archipelago of ley-islands, that are all within a day's hop of each other. Frisland is a small empire of ley-islands, and is vaguely steampunk in aesthetic and technology level. Frisland is currently ruled by an Empress Regnant. The island's flora and fauna are almost entirely Earth-like.

The capital is the city of Dalsburg.

The city of Holmsford is home to a decent-sized university.

Magic

Everyone brings their own magic system with them, but the "native"/easiest to learn magic involves mostly focusing energy to alter your own body. Typically used for shape-shifting and supersoldier-type applications (super strength, enhanced reflexes, better speed, better eyesight), though it can't make permanent changes. There's also large-scale magic that lets you alter the world, albeit slowly. Powerful mages can sink parts of themselves into the landscape, generally used to prevent other people from altering it.

The most common external magic is illusions. Space warping is thought to be an extension of the illusions, in the form of illusions made real.

It's possible to store magical energy in something external to yourself, letting you draw on significantly more magic when you need to.

Elemental magic, runic magic, and artifact magic are the most common non-native magic types in use. Non-sharable (usually bloodline-locked) magic represents the majority of types, but sharable magic is overrepresented in what people actually use.

There's serious studies of magic (across multiple disciplines; the effect of magic on anthropology, history, biology, language, and literature are all examples of sub-fields), mostly carried out by the universities at Elgadzhi and at Huicoa. There's been some attempt to unify classification systems and measurement techniques between the two. New transplants to Liminal can earn a decent stipend answering questions or even cooperating with experiments if they have a novel or rare magic system.

Technology

A few Liminal societies are approaching or in the beginning of their own version of the industrial revolution. The overall technology level is roughly equivalent to the early Age of Sail period, but there's some anomalies thanks to magic. Many smaller ley-ships have a rudimentary form of autopilot; they can essentially keep themselves on a straight course over a short distance (ley-ships larger than a yacht are too complex for this). Heatless, magical lamps are common on ley-ships, and can usually be found in public buildings and the houses of anyone middle class or higher. Magical means of refrigeration exist and are decently wide-spread.